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### BACK COVER

Fruits of *Pelagodoxa henryana* collected from a tree growing in Suva, Fiji. Photo by J.L. Dowe. See article p. 185.

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Elegant and graceful specimens of *Coccothrinax argentea*, growing in the Jardín Botánico 'Rafael M. Moscoso' in Santo Domingo. Photo by S. Zona.



## NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PALMS

This year's Biennial, in the Dominican Republic, was an outstanding event. Organized in large part by IPS Board Member Leonel Mera and IPS President Paul Craft, the event gave attendees a chance to see palms that are not often seen, even by locals. Attendees came away with indelible memories – and full memory cards – of the country's beautiful palms. No one will soon forget *Coccothrinax boschiana* growing in splendid isolation on limestone cliffs overlooking the blue Caribbean Sea, or hundreds of *Pseudophoenix ekmanii* as seen from a helicopter. The unforgettable sight of *Coccothrinax spissa* on a hillside in the golden light of the late afternoon (Front Cover) was truly sublime. Attendees enjoyed seeing a newly constructed golf and country club where the native *Acrocomia aculeata* was rescued from land being developed and used as the signature palm throughout the project's grounds. Never has *Acrocomia aculeata* looked more beautiful.

As seasoned Biennial attendees know, there is more to Biennials than just beautiful palms. Biennials are educational as well, and on this trip, attendees were treated to presentations by Elena Beare, Ricardo García, Santiago Orts, Fernando Roca, Franco Simonetti and Raúl Verdecia. Attendees also enjoyed food, music and dancing, and a tour the historic colonial center of Santo Domingo. At the final banquet, as IPS members said good-bye to one another, everyone spoke enthusiastically of the Dominican Republic and its spectacular palms.

We were gratified that half of this year's Biennial attendees were from outside the USA. The IPS is truly an international organization, and we look forward to growing participation from our diverse membership. The next Biennial will be in Costa Rica in 2008 and promises to be every bit as memorable. We hope to see you there!

From time to time, nuts of *Attalea* palms are unearthed in unexpected places in Britain and the Netherlands. These almost indestructible endocarps have been dredged up from sediments in the North Sea, have been found partially encrusted with lime in a chalk quarry in southern England and discovered in a Roman archaeological site on the banks of the Thames in London. Several of these finds were sent for identification at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, where they gave rise to all sorts of speculation! Were they fossils from the Eocene or even Cretaceous periods? Were they known to the Romans, who somehow obtained nuts from the as yet undiscovered New World? In fact the nuts are clearly recent – apart from the encrustations of lime, the internal structure appears fresh. The nuts are contaminants of these sites – they have either been dumped with other rubbish in the chalk quarry, have fallen in and contaminated earlier deposits or simply been washed out to sea. However, this all begs the question of why the *Attalea* nuts should be in Europe in the first place. A recent paper in *Environmental Archaeology* 11: 247–251 (2006) by Marloes Rijkeljkhuizen and Louise van Wijngaarden-Bakker described the use of *Attalea* (and coconut) in the Netherlands from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries as a source of material for making buttons and other objects. Exploration of Dutch shipwrecks has shown that the *Attalea* nuts were imported directly from South America. Objects made from palm endocarp were mostly buttons, but they include one remarkable object illustrated in the paper: a statuette of a stocky man, beautifully carved from an *Attalea* endocarp with a neat row of buttons down the front of his coat – but the buttons here are made from bone rather than palm endocarp!

THE EDITORS