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## The Biennial Meeting of the International Palm Society (IPS) in Caracas, Venezuela

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The 1994 Biennial meeting of the International Palm Society was held in Caracas, Venezuela, from Sunday, June 12, to Thursday, June 16. Beginning Friday, June 17, were 13 different post-biennial tours, each lasting from two to ten days.

Caracas is located in a mountain valley at 900 meters elevation above sea level and has a mild tropical upland climate that is nearly ideal for growing most tropical and subtropical palms. Caracas is less than one hour's trip from lowland tropical and mountain cloud forest environments, each with different palm floras. The Biennial was based at the Hotel Avila, an older luxury hotel located in a setting of lawn, flowering trees, palms, cycads, and other tropical plants.

IPS President Jim Cain selected Caracas as the 1994 Biennial site following the previous Biennial in late 1992. He initiated contacts with Jesus Hoyos F., President of the Asociación Venezolana de Palmas (AVEPALMAS) who then formed the AVEPALMAS Biennial Planning Committee, consisting of Jesus Hoyos F., Sven Nehlin, Francisco Mondali, Roger Cardona, Fred Stauffer, Harry Gibson, Francisco Guánchez, and August Braun. The Committee met regularly to review planning for the proposed Biennial. E-Mail communication between AVEPALMAS and the IPS President was established by AVEPALMAS Vice President Sven Nehlin, who provided guidance on critical questions during the Biennial planning. Francisco Mondali and Roger Cardona provided fax services. Jim Cain negotiated the contracts for lodging, meals, and events with Hotel Avila and those for almost all in-country services through Lost World Adventures (LWA).

The Lost World Adventures personnel carried out their assignments with gracious efficiency. Andrew Gilchrist, LWA Operations Manager, was responsible for all in-country arrangements, and ensured that each day's operations went smoothly. He and Jim Cain selected and planned the post-biennial tours so that they would be of interest to

palm enthusiasts. Hugo Ortiz, Manager of the LWA Caracas Office, booked all buses, catered meals, and arranged simultaneous translation of lectures. Mariela Perez, Customer Liaison for Lost World, arranged airport transportation and return flight confirmations, and stayed at the hotel to solve any problems that arose during the conference.

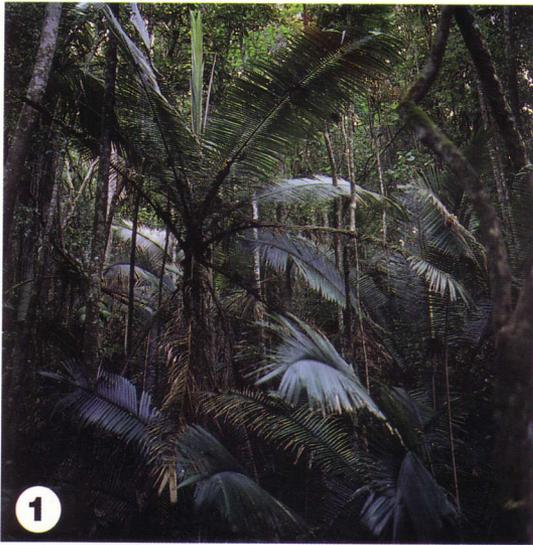
IPS members came from 14 countries and included palm taxonomists, seedsmen, commercial growers, landscape designers and contractors, and nurserymen, although most of us were non-commercial palm enthusiasts. There were over 30 people from Venezuela participating in the Biennial, many of whom were associated with our local host institutions, the Fundación Instituto Botánico de Venezuela (FIBV), and the Asociación Venezolana de Palmas (AVEPALMAS).

AVEPALMAS provided knowledgeable guides for the Biennial tours, and Sven Nehlin wrote the English language tour guidebook. The careful planning and participation by our two local host institutions made the Biennial a success.

Our host institutions conducted a three-day palm fair at the Caracas Botanical Garden, Friday, June 10 through Tuesday, June 14. Distribution of free seeds of native palms and sale of palms in containers took place during the fair.

We made our first field excursion to El Avila National Park on Sunday, June 12, a day before the meetings formally began. The park is located on the steep mountain range immediately north of the city. Four-wheel drive vehicles took us to an old coffee estate of Los Venados at an elevation of 1,437 meters (4,715 feet). From there, we hiked up hill through cutover land into older cloud forest. AVEPALMAS guides encouraged us to hike up the steep trail and provided information on the park and local vegetation.

First seen along the trail was *Geonoma pinatifrons*, then *Ceroxylon klopstockia* (Fig. 1), *Catoblastus praemorsus*, *Bactris setulosa*, a sec-



1. *Ceroxylon kloppstockia* in El Avila National Forest.



2. *Ceroxylon interruptum* in cloud forest near Colonia Tovar.

ond *Geonoma*, and a single tall *Dictyocaryum fuscum*. At the top of the ridge we walked to the now inoperative cable car station for refreshments, and strolled to the defunct Hotel Humboldt for a beautiful view of the Caracas valley. We then returned in four-wheel drive vehicles to Los Venados for lunch.

On Sunday evening, we gathered at a welcoming reception followed by three slide lectures. Dr. Otto Huber, an authority on Venezuelan ecology and the co-author of the 1988 *Vegetation Map of Venezuela*, spoke on the phytogeographic zones of Venezuela. Bernard Fischer, who has published extensively on South American palms in *The Palm Enthusiast* (the journal of the South African Palm Society), and Adrian van Rensen, Editor of *The Palm Enthusiast*, presented a slide lecture tour of South American palms. The presentation surveyed over 40 genera and illustrated the striking diversity in morphology, ecology, drought and cold tolerance, and ease of cultivation. Many of the slides presented were of exceptional quality. Henk Beentje of Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, then lectured on the characteristics and habitats of several very different *Ravenea* and *Louvelia* palms of Madagascar, which Henk had researched on the island.

On Monday, the IPS Board of Directors and members of IPS Standing Committees met all day at Hotel Avila. Most non-directors left on two buses for an all-day trip to Colonia Tovar, a mountainside village in the cloud forest zone originally

settled by immigrants from southwest Germany in 1843, and very isolated until recent years. We ate a very good traditional meal at the Kaiserstuhl restaurant and looked in at the tourist oriented shops and took in the buildings, many with German decorative details. On the return trip, we stopped to photograph tall examples of *Ceroxylon interruptum* (Fig. 2) rising from cleared slopes. Sven Nehlin later guided us at a site with remaining cloud forest where we observed *Catoblastus praemorsus*, *Geonoma undata*, *Geonoma simplicifrons*, *Chamaedorea pinnatifrons*, *Bactris setulosa*, *Euterpe acuminata*, and a group of *Euterpe* with red crownshafts. We also observed a tree sloth feeding on a newly opened leaf of *Catoblastus praemorsus*. We made a lot of noises, which caused the sloth to go up, and down, and up into the crown again, to escape from our harassment.

On Monday evening, members of AVEPALMAS joined us for the Biennial reception and dinner held at the Hotel Avila. Honored guests included Francisco Guánchez of the Caracas Botanical Gardens, Francisco Monaldi, IPS Life Member from Venezuela, and Jesus Hoyos, President of AVEPALMAS. Caracas honoree August Braun was unable to attend. After dessert and coffee, the main speaker for the evening, Dr. John Dransfield of Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, presented a slide lecture on the palms of Madagascar. He discussed over 55 palms in an interesting and entertaining way, and gave us examples of thought-



3. Lunch under the Tent, Caracas Botanical Garden.

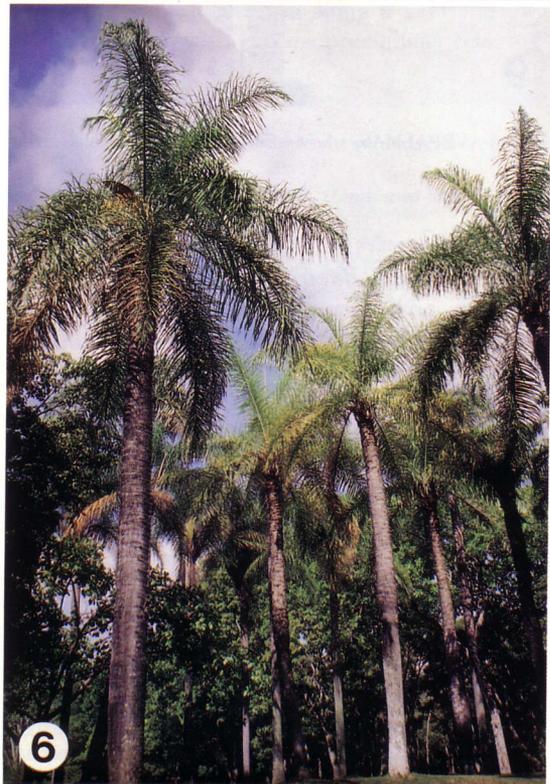
provoking problems faced in classifying Madagascar plants. His lecture prepared us for many name changes, including the probable discontinuation of some generic names. It was at dinner that many of us learned that the *Palms of Madagascar*, by Drs. John Dransfield and Henk J. Beentje, will be published in 1995, jointly funded with costs and profits to be shared by Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, and the International Palm Society.

Tuesday's program was a full day of activities at the Caracas Botanical Garden. The Fundación Instituto Botánico de Venezuela and AVEPALMAS had organized a full morning of lectures and research papers. Concurrently during the day were tours of the herbarium and library, as well as the sale of books and periodicals published in Venezuela on environment, botany, and palms, and the continuing sale of palms in containers.

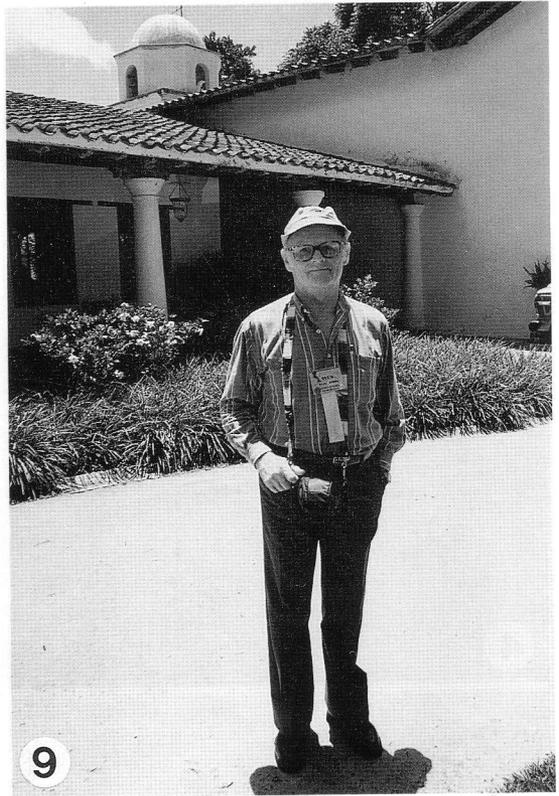
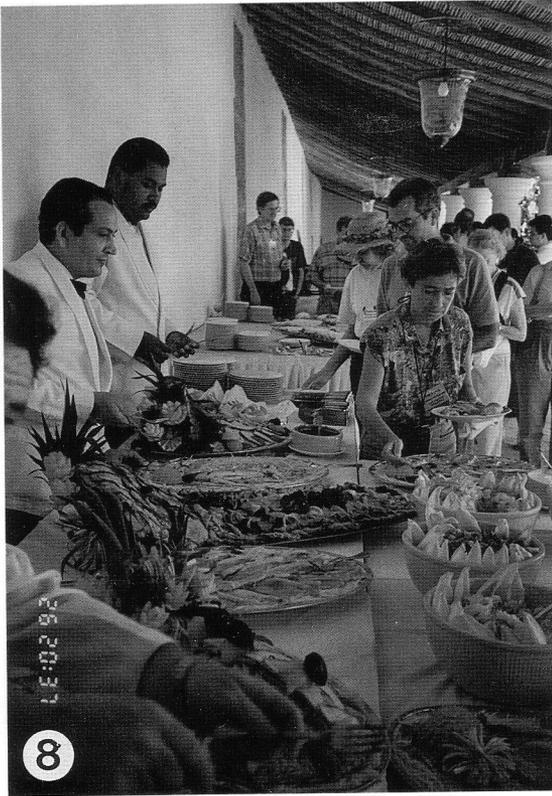
The morning lecture session began with a welcome by Francisco Guánchez, Director of the Fundación Instituto Botánico de Venezuela. His talk gave us an overview of the Institute and the Caracas Botanical Garden, which is administered by FIBV. Jim Cain, IPS President, spoke on palms in the Caracas Botanical Garden and their evo-

lution over time that compared the Garden's palms 25 years ago to the collection today. Francisco Monaldi, architect, spoke about the non-profit Paria Project Foundation, and its activities in rain forest conservation. Hector Pacheco, Lagoven agronomist, spoke on research results of experimental planting of criollo-Malaya variety of hybrid coconut in the Orinoco River Delta area of Amacuro State. Francisco Guánchez, botanist, spoke on the Amazonian piassava palm of the genus *Leopoldina*, its economic uses and its threatened status. Jesus Hoyos F., botanist, spoke on the moriche palms of the genus *Mauritia* and their uses by indigenous peoples of eastern Venezuela in a joint presentation with Francisco Delascio, botanist, who spoke on medical and other uses of palms by the native peoples in Venezuela. The morning session ended with Fred Stauffer, agronomist, speaking on the palms of the Venezuelan cloud forest in the Henri Pittier National Park.

The afternoon activities began with a luxurious lunch under a white tent set in the botanical garden (Fig. 3). After lunch, a few of us went to the Institute library to view some of the plates in the folio-sized volumes of Von Martius's *Historia Naturalis Palmarum*. The rest of the afternoon we



4. *Roystonea venezuelana* in Guatopo National Park. 5. A *Sabal mauritiiiformis* group in Parque del Este. 6. *Acrocomia aculeata*, Parque del Este. 7. The patio garden at Hacienda Carabolo.



8. Lunch at Hacienda Carabobo. 9. Vice President Sven Nehlin of AVEPALMAS, whose efforts made the Biennial such a success.

toured the garden in small groups guided by August Braun, other garden staff, and AVEPALMAS members. The Caracas Botanical Garden is one of the largest and oldest palm collections in the Americas with over 250 species in 89 genera. (See Phil Bergman's article in this issue of *Principes*.) Completing the afternoon was a reception hosted by the Fundación Instituto Botánico de Venezuela and AVEPALMAS. A flock of wild macaws came to feed in the fruiting *Mauritia* palms overhead as the afternoon drew to a close—almost as if this was part of the arranged entertainment to cap the day.

For Wednesday, we were given a choice for the all-day field trip—cloud forest environment in the Henri Pittier National Park or the more tropical lower elevation Guatapo National Park. In Guatapo Park, older secondary forest is adjacent to the paved road. We stopped at several locations to observe *Roystonea venezuelana* (Fig. 4), *Euterpe microcarpa*, *Oenocarpus bataua*, *Aster-*

*ogyne spicata*, *Bactris* sp., *Aiphanes* sp., *Geonoma* sp. and other plants of interest. The buses also stopped so that the participants could get a look at a group of capuchin monkeys crossing the road. After a streamside lunch break, a group of us went on a one-hour hike on forest trails guided by Sven Nehlin (Fig. 9). This was an extremely satisfying walk, and I especially enjoyed Sven's commentaries as we walked through the forest containing tree-ferns, heliconia, cyclanths, and numerous plants in the understory. Older trees were festooned with bromeliads and other epiphytes.

The group that went to the Rancho Grande Biological Station in Henri Pittier National Park also had a rewarding day. They were guided by AVEPALMAS member Fred W. Stauffer, who had just published an article in the January 1994 issue of *Principes* on the palms in this cloud forest. The palms seen that day were *Dictyocaryum fuscum*, *Hysopathe pittieri*, *Bactris setulosa*, *Geon-*

*oma pinnatifrons*, *G. simplicifrons*, and *G. spinescens*.

On Thursday morning, we visited Parque del Este. This is a city park with multiple functions—including a zoo, an aviary, a planetarium, recreation areas, and extensive open spaces with groupings of Venezuelan and foreign palms. The park was designed by the famous Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, in collaboration with John Stoddard and others.

The number of palm species is not great, with a recent survey recording 22 species in 17 genera. However, the visual impact is striking because groups of individuals of a given species were carefully placed for visual impact on an open grass landscape. Noteworthy native palm groupings included *Roystonea venezuelana*, *Seheelea macrocarpa*, *Sabal mauritiiiformis* (Fig. 5), *Acrocomia aculeata* (Fig. 6), and *Bactris major*. Striking groups of *Neodypsis decaryi*, *Pritchardia pacifica*, and other imports were also present.

Our afternoon destination was Hacienda Carobolo. Our bus took us through suburbs on the slopes above the city, then along a very narrow road on the top of a narrow precipitous ridge to

the entrance of an old coffee estate. The old house and work rooms with coffee drying patio have been remodeled by our hosts, Dr. Oscar Martinez and his wife, into a beautiful period residence with the patio garden (Fig. 7) designed by Burle Marx. A superb lunch, considered by many to be the epicurean event of the Biennial, was served in this patio garden area (Fig. 8). Following lunch, we visited our host's commercial tissue culture laboratory, producing improved forms of *Eucalyptus*, bananas, orchids, and other plants mainly grown for export to other tropical countries. According to Dr. Martinez, palms and cycads are other targets for potential culture at the laboratory.

On Thursday evening, we attended the final IPS banquet, which featured typical Venezuelan cuisine at the Tarzilandia Restaurant on the edge of Caracas. The restaurant had an outdoors motif with many tropical plants and birds surrounding the diners. The next day, many of us left for one of the post-biennial tours that took us to distant and isolated areas of Venezuela, but that is another story.

### General Interest Articles, (Continued from p. 203)

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