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## PALM BRIEF

### *Pritchardiopsis* Lives!

Perhaps because it sounds like a personal patronym (which it is not!), I have long had an interest in the endemic New Caledonian palm *Pritchardiopsis jeanenneyi*, the only fan palm native to that palm-rich island of the south-west Pacific. Yet it seemed that my interest came too late. According to Langlois in the Supplement to Palms of the World (1976), this palm had literally vanished, a victim of multifarious stresses including mining, forest clearing, and consumption of its "cabbage" by convicts at the Bay of Prony penal colony. In the course of three trips to New Caledonia, I was too busy with other faunal and floral preoccupations, and made no effort to "rediscover" *Pritchardiopsis*.

But all was not lost. Having recently obtained copies of Dowe's Palms of the South-west Pacific (1989) and Moore and Uhl's The Indigenous Palms of New Caledonia, I learned that a single mature specimen of *Pritchardiopsis*, surrounded by about thirty of its offspring, and all confined to a single hectare, had been located in a remote area near Baie de Prony, at about 200 m altitude, in the later 1970's. The identification had been confirmed by botanists at ORSTOM in Noumea.

Before my most recent expedition to New Caledonia in December 1991, I wrote ahead to my colleague Jean-Louis d'Auzon of the Association pour la Sauvegarde de la Nature Neo-Caledonienne, of which I am a member, and asked if it would be possible for our chartered ship to visit Baie de Prony to see what we could find. But time did not allow; our expedition was taking us north from Noumea, to Belep and the d'Entrecasteaux Islands, and Baie de Prony was to the south. But d'Auzon did draw my attention to the existence



The author with *Pritchardiopsis* in the garden at ORSTOM in New Caledonia. Photo by S. Pritchard.

of four specimens in cultivation in the ORSTOM gardens in Noumea.

I was able to visit the gardens in my last days in New Caledonia. The plantings were unlabelled, and, while gardeners and scientific staff were extremely courteous, there was nobody able to direct me to the *Pritchardiopsis* specimens. So I had to find and identify them myself. The description in the Langlois book had indicated that the leaf of *Pritchardiopsis* was distinctive in being wedge-shaped (only about one-sixth orbicular), and only about 18 inches long, with a 12-15 inch petiole. But Beccari's material, on which this description was based, was clearly immature; the illustration of the mature tree in Dowe's book showed leaves about a meter wide, with 1.5 m petioles, and more than 75% orbicular.

Finally I found the little grove of about four young trees—healthy and beautiful, and with leaves identical to those in the photograph of the single mature wild specimen (Fig. 1). So *Pritchardiopsis* not only lives, it may even have a future!

Another seemingly extinct monotypic genus of

palm was rediscovered by John Dowe while researching in Vanuatu for his Palms of the South-west Pacific: *Carpoxyton macrospermum* was found in cultivation in 1987 on the island of Espiritu Santo, and with rumored existence on two other islands, although probably indeed extinct on Aneityum. Man's impact on natural ecosystems and rare species of the South Pacific has been so disastrous that we hardly deserve this "second

chance" with species that we hardly cared about until it was almost too late. To throw away this opportunity now would be truly unforgivable.

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## CHAPTER NEWS AND EVENTS

### News from Southern Queensland, Australia

Make your plans to attend the 1995 Annual Show and Sale at the Mt. Coot-tha Botanic Gardens in Brisbane on March 4 and 5. The associated dinner (on March 4) will be held at the Indooroopilly Golf Club (about 2 kilometers from the Gardens). Mr. Loran Whitelock of California will be the featured speaker at the Saturday dinner with a presentation on "aspects of cycads". Loran is one of the most knowledgeable cycad experts in the world and known as an interesting speaker.

The South Queensland Group, P.A.C.S.O.A., met on September 19. Len Butt paid tribute to Harold Caulfield, who passed away last August. Harold was a very knowledgeable person who made a great impact on horticulture in the Brisbane area during his years as Curator of the Botanic Gardens. At this meeting, Will Kraa displayed two unusual palms: *Rhapidophyllum hystrix* from the United States and *Coccothrinax crinita* from Cuba. Cheryl Basic gave a very informative presentation on two botanic gardens in Hawaii and two bromeliad collections.

The group held an outing on Sunday, October 16, at the City Botanic Gardens. A regular meeting was also held on November 21 at the Bread House.

The 1994 Christmas Party took place on November 27 at the home of Jeanne and John Price in the Grange. Within this seeming suburban surrounding, members and guests were surprised as to the size of the land and the range of trees behind their residence.

### News from New South Wales, Australia

On November 15, the Sydney Branch of PAC-SOA held a general forum on Palms and Cycads, with a wide variety of plant problems and questions discussed. Some members brought in rare specimens for discussion. They met with renowned cycad expert Ken Hill making a presentation on "The Cycads of New South Wales".

The Sydney Branch Christmas Party was held at the home of Ian and Norma Edwards on December 3. Members and guests enjoyed an informal walk around their large garden, followed by BBQ.

### News from North Queensland

The North Queensland Palm Society held a field trip to the Cairns-Mossman area on October 29 & 30, 1994. The meeting began on Saturday morning at Terry Mead's El Arish Nursery and his private garden which features many rare and unusual Madagascan palms. The group then departed El Arish for a lunch in Cairns. This was followed by a tour of Flecker Botanic Gardens, conducted by Peter Shannahan, Botanic Gardens' Interpretive Officer. A barbecue was held that afternoon, then the group drove to Mossman to stay in the White Cockatoo Motel.

On Sunday, the tour departed Mossman for Allan Carle's Botanical Ark at Wyanbil. This is a magnificent garden featuring rare fruit trees, palms and gingers. Later in the morning, Maria Boggs, proprietor, gave a conducted tour of Maria's Palmetum, Australia's largest palm collection. Lunch was taken on the way to the Licuala State Forest palm grove walk, near Mission Beach. That com-