

# PALM NEWS

The palm borer *Paysandisia archon* continues to wreak havoc with cultivated palms in southern Europe. **The first study of its reproductive biology in France revealed some important clues to the borer's destructive capacity.** Roxane Delle-Vedove et al. (European Journal of Entomology 109: 289–292. 2012) found that nearly three-quarters of the individuals studied were sexually mature just three hours after emergence as adult moths. Mating peaked between 14:00 h and 15:00 h, and 87% of the females were fertilized and laying eggs 30 hours after mating. These findings may help researchers develop monitoring tools as well as control measures that disrupt or diminish the borer's reproductive output.

**Palm squirrels (*Funambulus palmarum*) do more good than harm in coconut plantations** in southern India. A recent study by A.K. Chakravarthy and N.E. Thyagaraj (Mammalia 76: 193–199. 2012) examined the impact of palm squirrels in coconut plantations, where they were believed to feed on nuts and cause economic losses. Field observations, pollination studies, gut content analyses, laboratory feeding tests and exclusion experiments established that, contrary to expectations, palm squirrels play a beneficial role in coconut plantations. Palm squirrels are important pollinators of the coconut, and fruit set was reduced by 19% when palm squirrels were excluded from the flowers. Moreover, palm squirrels also feed on insect pests. This is one of only a handful of reports of mammal pollination of a palm and the first for coconut, which was found in previous studies to be pollinated by wasps, bees and the wind.



Arum Prabhu



J. Dransfield

**A new monograph of *Orania*** has been published by A.P. Keim and J. Dransfield (Kew Bulletin 67: 127–190. 2012). The work documents the extraordinary diversity of the genus in New Guinea. Of the 28 species recognized in this new work, three occur in Madagascar, and 25 occur in Malesia, 11 of which are described as new to science and are beautifully illustrated with line drawings by Lucy T. Smith. Many of the newly described species are lovely palms, and we hope they will be brought into cultivation in the near future. **A taxonomic revision of the rattans of Africa (Arecaceae: Calamoideae)** by Terry C.H. Sunderland represents a milestone in our understanding of the diverse and peculiar climbing palms of the whole continent of Africa. The paper has recently appeared in the on-line journal Phytotaxa (51: 1–76. 2012). The monograph, also beautifully illustrated with plates by Kew artist Lucy T. Smith, can be downloaded for free from <http://www.mapress.com/phytotaxa/content/2012/f/pt00051p076.pdf>.

Alarmed by diminishing numbers of the Cuban national tree, *Roystonea regia*, the government of Cuba is supporting a massive reforestation effort on the island. Milian Rodriguez Lima, a coordinator of the Palm Department of the Cuban Botany Society, recently announced that the Agriculture Ministry, Azcuba Business Group and the National Association of Small Farmers are backing an effort to **plant three million royal palms in one year.**