



# THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Feb. 2021

NEWSLETTER

## Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

*In this issue, our very own Dr. John Dransfield inaugurates a continuing series of narratives acknowledging the International Palm Society and recognizing the synergy between academic palm botanists and our mission of research, education, and conservation.*

I joined the Palm Society (as it was then) in 1969, as a research student in Cambridge University, UK. This was not the first time I had come across the society, as I had met a group of members from Florida in 1968 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, while I was doing the fieldwork for my PhD on *Eugeissona* and *Johannesteijsmannia*. This fun-loving bunch of palm enthusiasts, including many of the stalwarts from the early days of our society, wanted to see *Maxburretia* and *Johannesteijsmannia* in their natural habitat. When I joined the society, I also splurged some scholarship money to buy a complete set of *Principes*, a wonderful resource to look through filled with inspiring articles and photos and a purchase I have never regretted.



In 1970, I took my first salaried job working on rattans at the National Biological Institute in Bogor, Indonesia, based in Herbarium Bogoriense and the Kebun Raya. In those pre-internet days when airmail post would take as much as three weeks to reach the outside world, Indonesia could feel pretty remote, but during the four years I spent in Indonesia, Hal Moore was a constant correspondent who did much to keep my spirits up. Hal was the pre-eminent palm biologist; based at the LH Bailey Hortorium in Cornell University in New York State, he was also the editor of *Principes* and a close friend of our founder Dent Smith. From the very beginning Hal strove to produce a journal that would appeal to as wide an audience as possible, from palm scientists to enthusiastic growers. Hal also visited me in Bogor in 1971 during one of his field trips aimed at collecting material for his *Genera Palmarum*, and it was wonderful to interact with the leading palm scientist. During my four years in Indonesia, I travelled widely, made many palm collections and also exported palm seed to Lucita Wait and De Armand Hull, who managed the Palm Society's Seed Bank. In recent years it has been a real thrill occasionally to see old palms in collections that originated from my time in Indonesia.

## Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

In 1975, back in UK, I began my job at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew researching on palms, a position I held until my retirement in 2005 (by which time our Society had become the International Palm Society and *Principes* had become *PALMS*).

In 1980, Hal Moore died. He had served the Society as Editor since the very beginning and his unexpected loss was felt acutely. Before he died, he had arranged that his co-worker Dr. Natalie W. Uhl at Cornell and I should serve as associate editors, so in the months after Hal died, Natalie and I buckled down to prepare the next few parts for printing and to develop a *modus operandi* for co-editing the journal. Natalie retired from the co-editorship in 1999, and Scott Zona joined me to edit the journal ever since. We have tried to follow Hal Moore's original concept for the journal to provide a window on the palm world.

When Hal Moore died, he had been working towards his *Genera Palmarum* that was to have been a critical scientific account of all palm genera. Any such available information at the time tended to be obscure and fragmentary in difficult to obtain journals so there was a real need for *Genera Palmarum* to collate critically what we knew of the family. Cornell University invited Natalie and me to complete the work. Fortunately for me, my bosses in Kew agreed, and then began the most rewarding and exciting scientific collaboration of my life. Over the next five years I would spend two one-month periods a year in Cornell University, funded by the National Science Foundation, working with Natalie towards the writing and completion of the book. Early on, I was determined that we should publish the book at a price that could be afforded by students (and of course, amateur enthusiasts). We met representatives of several university presses and I think we were both taken aback by the high price of the finished work. It was at this point that we talked with Allen Press, who printed our journal, about the possibility of joint publication – jointly between The Bailey Hortorium and the International Palm Society. We realized that we should need to raise money for such a joint publication, so we went cap in hand to a board meeting of the IPS and laid out the possibilities. We were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the response. The IPS started a major funding drive for *Genera Palmarum*, headed by the indefatigable Pauleen Sullivan of the IPS Bookstore. Every issue of the journal showed a palmeto on the back cover with the money raised shaded on the trunk of a palm tree. Special events were held including an extravagant garden visit to the home of Mardy Darian to see many unusual palms, all adding to the funds for publication. Well over \$60,000 was raised, which guaranteed our ability to produce the first modern critical scientific reference book on palms and including the possibility of using color; this was an astonishing service the IPS made to palm research. Not only that, the IPS also organized a pre-publication sale of the book. With orders for over 1000 copies made and paid for pre-publication the IPS had, in fact, no need to eat into the \$60,000 raised, which then became the basis of the Revolving Publications Fund, now subsumed into the Endowment Fund as our publishing aspirations have changed. *Genera Palmarum* (1987) with a print run of 5000 plus some deluxe leather-bound copies sold out completely and a further 1500 copies were printed in paperback. I shall always be immensely grateful to the Society for playing this major role in the publication of this standard text.

The IPS continued to play a significant role in the publication of new palm literature; for example, *Palms of Madagascar* (1995) was a co-publication of IPS and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. With a print run of 3750, it sold out in about 6 years with the IPS proportion of the profits ploughed back into the IPS funds. In 2008 a second and very different edition of *Genera Palmarum* was completed, and IPS again played a major role in its publication by placing an order, pre-publication, for a significant number of copies to be sold in US.

## Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

Throughout the over 50 years I have been a member of the society I have been greatly impressed by the generosity of the society in helping to fund floristic and conservation research on palms. I have also been delighted by the friendship of many IPS members, their tolerance of palm boffins such as me, and their sheer craziness about palms. Looking back over the last 50 years I am astonished by how much more we now know about this family of amazing plants and what a significant role the IPS has played in the accumulation of knowledge through continuing to publish the journal, for supporting palm research (particularly by young researchers), and in targeted palm conservation. One of our great strengths as a society is the fact that we are a group of all sorts of different individuals, with different expertise, and with different outlooks, but all united in a passion for palms. I believe we can all be immensely proud of what has been achieved, but there is still so much more to do.



Dr. John Dransfield (kneeling, left) pressing palm specimens in Madagascar, with Joro Rakotoarinivo (navy blue shirt) looking on, while Jeremy Razafitsalama (green shirt) takes notes. October 2003.



## IPS Affiliate Showcase

The International Palm Society boasts over 30 affiliates. While the IPS focuses on its mission of research, education, and conservation, local clubs provide members with garden tours, growing tips and access to rare palms. Furthermore, many publish highly desirable periodicals which are valued by many enthusiasts far afield. For this reason it is common for IPS members to belong to more than one local chapter. This month:

### The Hawaiian Island Palm Society

by Mary Lock

Aloha from the Hawaii Island Palm Society, [www.hawaiiislandpalmsociety.com](http://www.hawaiiislandpalmsociety.com). We owe our start to Norm Bezona, who joined the International Palm Society in 1961, while working as an agricultural extension agent in Florida. When Norm returned to his roots in Hawaii, he floated the idea of establishing a branch of IPS to a landscaping class he taught at Hawaii Community College in 1974. At the first meeting Donn Carlsmith became the first president and Norm vice president. Our fabulous growing climate in the Hawaii has been luring palm society members from Florida, Southern California, and elsewhere for decades. Hawaii is home to many beautiful private and public gardens as well as celebrated palm nurseries including the world-famous Floribunda Palms. The highlight of a HIPS membership is our annual lineup of private and public garden tours and the chance to take home an incredibly rare prize at our Palm Auction in February. Our society's legacy is the palm and cycad collection at the Panaewa Rainforest Zoo and Botanical Garden. We planted the first palms in the late 1980s and have been maintaining and expanding the collection to this day. Though all our events in 2020 were cancelled, we look forward to once again sharing our passion for palms.

*Editors note:* HIPS publishes a lovely quarterly electronic newsletter which is well worth a visit.

<https://www.hawaiiislandpalmsociety.com/Newsletters>

HIPS tour of Carlsmith garden's *Socratea* grove.



Current HIPS President Rick Kelley standing under his *Marojejya* forest planted from one-gallon pots 8 years ago.

## Celebrate 65!



### DENT SMITH FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Your participation will ensure many more years of palm related research, education and conservation.

Please help the IPS by donating today!

**PALMS.ORG/DONATE**



Your participation in the 65th anniversary campaign will allow the IPS many more years of research, education, and conservation. Fundraising for this endeavor will close on September 1, 2021. And then we can look forward to our 70th anniversary in 2026.

The Dent Smith Founder's Society\*  
Gold: \$10,000, Silver: \$5000, Bronze: \$1000

\*All Founder's Society level contributors will be Recognized in the December, 2021 PALMS journal.

Other Donation levels: \$500, \$250, \$100, \$50, \$25 or \$10.

The International Palm Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Federal Tax I.D. 59-0829820 All or a portion of this gift may be tax deductible, less any goods or services received. Consult with your tax advisor regarding deductibility.

## PIMBY (Palms In My Back Yard) San Diego, California by Andy Hurwitz



Chile's *Jubaea chilensis* may be best seen in habitat at Campana National Park or at Cocalan, a private reserve, where over 50,000 individuals are growing. With COVID-19-mandated travel restrictions, those of us in Southern California can enjoy these specimens of exceptional girth right here in our backyard.

Mission Bay Park in San Diego includes 1200 acres of land. Here we find a splendid grove of cultivated *Jubaea chilensis* (photo, left). In Jim Wright's photo from 1992 (below), many of the palms were still very small.





## PIMBY



The fabulous mature palms (scale provided by IPS member Cindy Adair).

## Complementary Tropical Plant Societies

The Heliconia Society International (HSI) is a very collegial group of tropical plant lovers. The HSI publishes a quarterly newsletter, brimming with gorgeous photos, growing tips, and scientific research. It's always a welcome sight in my mailbox. Like us, they sponsor a biennial that looks very enticing. Even hardened palm-nuts tend to drool when confronted with these beauties. It's not surprising that several members of the IPS are also happily registered with the HSI.

# JOIN THE HELICONIA SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

[www.heliconia.org](http://www.heliconia.org)

USD \$25/year PDF quarterly Bulletin

Dedicated to all 8 families  
of Zingiberales.



The purpose of HSI is to increase the enjoyment and understanding of Heliconia and related plants of the order Zingiberales through education, research and communication. The quarterly Bulletin covers a wide range of interests, from cultivation research to plant exploration to news from our biennial international conferences and tours. Visit [www.heliconia.org](http://www.heliconia.org) to see archived Bulletins online.