



THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Apr. 2021

NEWSLETTER

Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

This continuing series illuminates the synergy between palm botanists and our mission of research, education, and conservation. Scientists and devoted enthusiasts are invited to share their rich experiences. In this issue, IPS Director and Montgomery Botanical Center palm biologist Dr. Larry Noblick tells his story:

I joined the US Peace Corp in 1978 and spent two fascinating years in Brazil. I was given the task of reviving and restoring a university herbarium that had been long neglected. Insects were making substantial headway into destroying it. Besides disinfecting and remounting the collections, I also added a lot of new collections. I collected everything, but I began to notice that no one was collecting palms, at least not the enormous ones. Needless to say, palms are not easy to collect, especially the larger ones, but they are a valuable part of the flora and the economy. When I finished my term as a PC volunteer, I started looking for a place to study for a degree focusing on palms but decided instead to return to Brazil when I was invited back to continue building the herbarium that I had initiated for the Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana.

In the fall of 1986, after working over four years in Brazil, I returned to the US to begin graduate work at the University of Illinois at Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Sidney Glassman. I was inspired to join the International Palm Society (IPS) in 1987 after Dr. Glassman and I attended a palm meeting at Cornell University where I had the pleasure of meeting a number of other palm experts: Andrew Henderson, Rodrigo Bernal, Gloria Galeano, Francis Kahn, John Dransfield, Barry Tomlinson and several more.

In 1994, I attended my first IPS Biennial in Venezuela. I took advantage of the trip to stay another couple of weeks to do collecting for the Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC). I caught a bus to Barquisimeto in the northeastern part of the country and met with Dr. Robert Smith, an American working and living in the country.

Collecting *Syagrus orinocensis* in Venezuela



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He generously lent me his jeep and two of his students, and we proceeded south across the llanos, an area similar to the Florida Everglades or the Brazilian Pantanal, and over the Orinoco River into the Amazonian part of the country. With Robert, I also made collections in the eastern branch of the Andes just north of Barquisimeto. We made several valuable palm collections, many of which still grow at MBC.

When I was able to get all the proper permitting in place, there were several times that I extended the IPS Biennials into collecting opportunities for MBC. Unfortunately, because of permitting, I missed the 1998 Biennial to Thailand. I had spent a year and a half negotiating permits for collecting in nearby Indonesia, but my permits did not come through in time for me to participate in the Thailand Biennial. Nevertheless, I have never regretted that missed Biennial, because the Indonesian expedition was awesomely successful, and I made several Indonesian friends. I have fond memories of watching the large fruit bats returning to the garden in the early morning hours to roost in the trees near the guesthouse where I stayed. I mused that this must have been what early flying dinosaurs looked like.



Larry with *Deckenia nobilis* in the Seychelles.

In 2000, I stayed after the New Caledonia IPS Biennial to collect with Gilles Pierson. Besides being a palm enthusiast and gifted nurseryman, Gilles was a celebrated island marathoner, who took great pride in leaving his collecting colleagues desperately panting behind as he effortlessly ran up and down mountains. He did introduce me to other islanders who were more my speed, and they all went far beyond what was expected of them to help me collect palms and to make my New Caledonia experience a memorable one. I was treated by one islander to fruit bat prepared in a fine wine sauce – a unique experience that was a bit overrated. Another very energetic lady led the charge up a hill to some palms through a patch of fire ant

infested bracken ferns. It pained me a lot to see her suffer so for her enthusiasm, but it also alerted me to an experience I did not wish to share and prompted me to search for an alternate route to the palms.

I once requested financial support from the IPS for a collecting expedition to Paraguay in 2002, which they readily granted. I had calculated the trip costing more than what it did. When I arrived in Paraguay, I expected to spend a large portion of my money to rent a vehicle for the entire trip, but Tomas informed me that the Museum had a truck that we could use, but it needed repairs. I paid for the repairs, gas and oil, and we were able to save all of that car rental money. Also, having the mind-set of a former Peace Corp Volunteer I did not require fine hotels nor did Tomas, and we both knew how to live cheaply, staying in cheap quarters and eating economically. Needless to say, I came back from the expedition with extra money, which the IPS board graciously consented for me to use on future research expeditions. Over the years, I have found the IPS to be generously supportive of palm researchers. The palms grown from that Paraguayan trip are a part of my current research projects.

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the IPS for their palm research. In 2006, I was elected to the position of Administrative Secretary to replace the very capable Libby Besse. In that same year, I temporarily took on the job as treasurer, a job that I was glad, as a botanist, to pass on to someone better qualified.

Attending the IPS meetings has given me the opportunities to meet many interesting palm people throughout the world. In 2006, with the help of Elena Beare, an IPS Director from Uruguay, I was able to arrange a collecting trip to her country, and the palms from that trip are an important part of my current research today.

Even the interim IPS board meetings between the Biennials have been productive for me. In 2009, I extended my time in Belize to do collecting with IPS members based at the Belize Botanical Garden, and in 2015, another director and I visited the Seychelles on our way to Madagascar to see the monotypic palms of the Seychelles, including the very rare double coconut in habitat. Ultimately, I did have another opportunity to experience Thailand during the 2016 Biennial, and it was wonderful and well worth the wait as are all of the IPS Biennials.

Financial support from Montgomery Botanical Center and from the generosity of Jill Menzel have allowed me to attend all of the IPS meetings and Biennials since becoming a director. IPS directors are volunteers, we receive no compensation nor special favors. We are just a group of enthusiasts who are interested in seeing the International Palm Society succeed in its efforts to promote palm education, research and conservation. I am proud to be part of such an organization.



Look carefully to spot Larry Noblick climbing *Mauritia flexuosa* in Venezuela.

Celebrate 65!

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.

The International Palm Society's 65th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign

Your participation will ensure many more years of palm related research, education and conservation. Please help the IPS by donating today!



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IPS Webinar

Join us for our next webinar The event will take place on April 25th, 2021, 11 a.m. ET. The event is free, but you must register in advance (click button below). Not an IPS member? No problem! You can join for free!

"Combatting the Red Palm Weevil:
Agrint IoT Tree Technology"
presented by Yehonatan Ben Hamozeg

After years of development, Agrint has created the IoT Tree technology. This innovative solution is based on a durable, energy-efficient sensor that is highly sensitive to the slightest movement of the larvae at their early stages of life, and thus provides early detection of their activity, regardless of their size or the size of the tree. The company has adapted its sensor to detect the Red Palm Weevil larvae, an insect causing catastrophic damage to palm trees worldwide. Thereby, the company became a global pioneer in the field of early detection of larvae in trees in its first targeted market of 4 billion palm trees.

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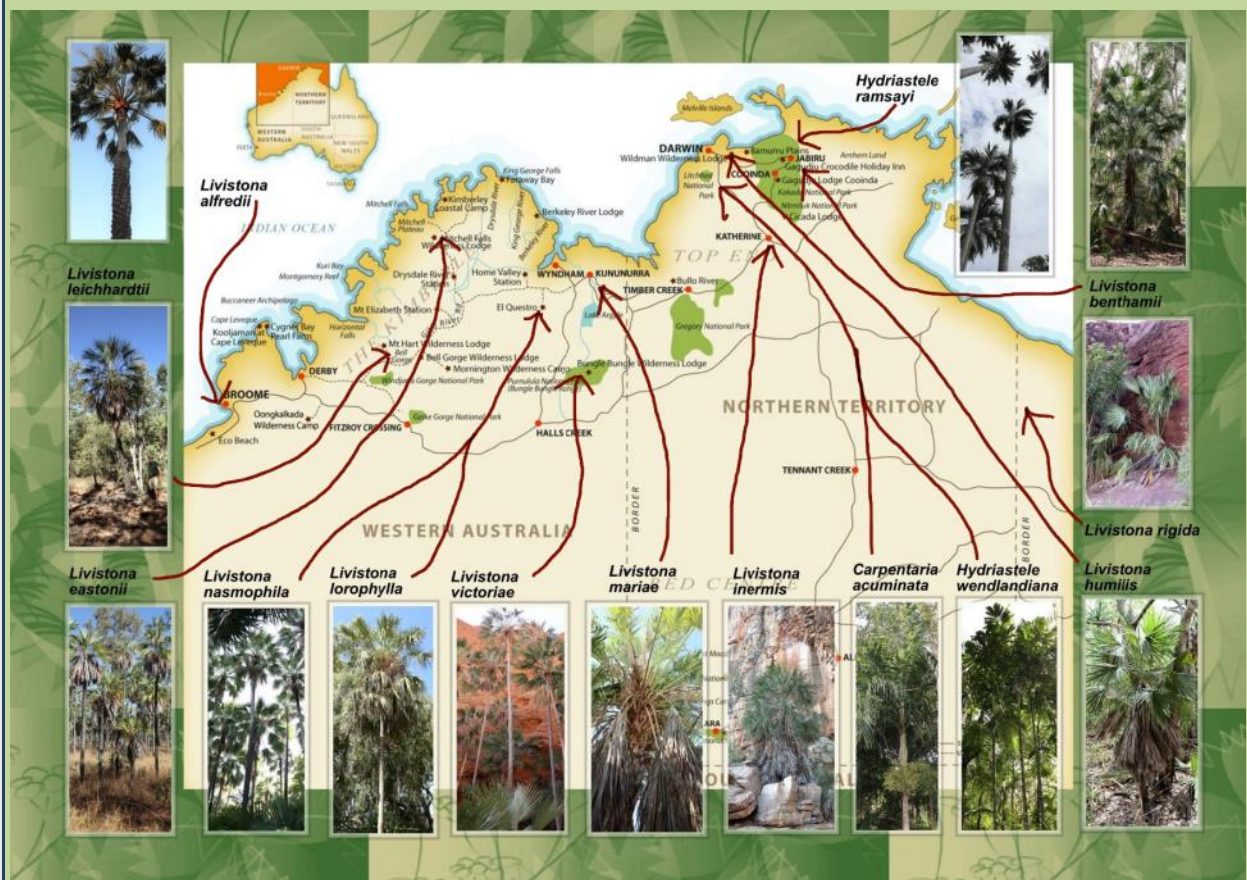
PIMBY (Palms In My Back Yard): Australia, Part 1 by David Tanswell

IPS director David Tanswell took advantage of pandemic mandated travel restrictions by furthering explorations in his "backyard." And when you're from Australia, that's quite a spread!

PIMABBY (PIM-Australian Big-BY): A Story of Three Gorges, Two Palms, and a 4865 km Road Trip

PIMBY takes on a whole different connotation when you talk about Australia. Our Big Backyard is the whole of the Outback and the Top End. In September 2020, an easing of COVID-19 restrictions coincided with a window between operations after a retinal detachment. Like everyone, I was chomping at the bit for an excuse to travel. What better than an outback road trip! Of course, whether consciously or not palms are always in the back of my mind.

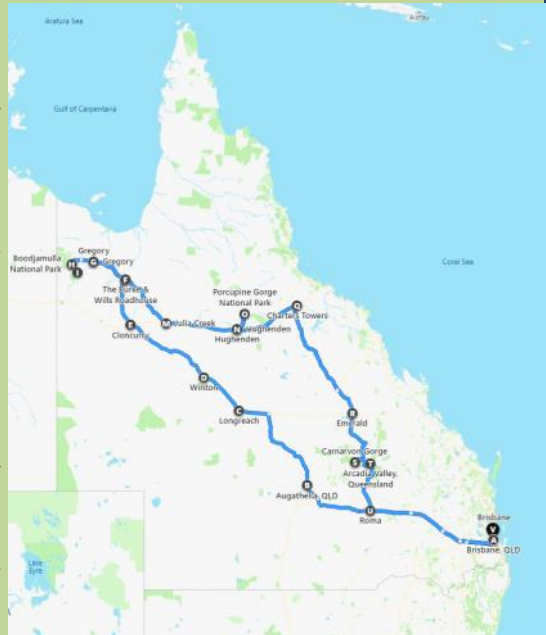
Over the years I have visited just about all east coast native palms in habitat. In 2019, I was lucky enough to join a group for a 4000-kilometre camping trip across the Top End from Darwin to Broome. It is not just coincidence that the usual tour group destinations across the Northern Territory and the Kimberley coincide with the palm habitats. Permanent water and shade are the attraction for both palms and people, and this generally occurs in sandstone gorges carved out over the millennia. That trip bagged 13 native palm species, 11 in habitat and 2 cultivated as street trees not too far from their habitats. Of these, 10 were *Livistona* species, *L. benthamii*, *L. humilis*, *L. inermis*, *L. mariae*, *L. victoriae*, *L. lorophylla*, *L. nasmophila*, *L. eastonii*, *L. leichhardtii*, and *L. alfredii*. So at that point I had seen almost all *Livistona* species in habitat. Locations are shown on the map.



PIMBY: Australia, Part 1

Back to the 2020 road trip – the palm I was missing to complete this Top End package was *Livistona rigida* found in Lawn Hill Gorge near the Queensland/Northern Territory border in the Gulf Country, a very long way from home, a 4865-kilometres round trip as shown on the map. My brother and nephew were up for sharing the driving, so we chose a 10-day time slot that suited all, checked emergency supplies, fuel stops, mobile phone coverage and accommodation on route and took off. Beyond the coastal ranges, the country was undulating to flat, with distant vistas across ever changing hues of native scrub and improved pasture. The country was very dry, as we got closer to our destination.

The gorge and surrounds are an oasis in the hot, dry semi-desert, which relies on its short, sharp wet season for survival. The gorge, on the other hand, is spring fed from the Barkly Tablelands a few 100 kilometres west in the NT, and the contrast of the red/ochre cliff faces and emerald-green vegetation is stunning. The *Livistona rigida* grows on and at the base of the cliffs below the seepage line and follows the Lawn Hill Creek a permanent water course that makes its way to the Gulf. The population included seedlings to tall mature adults and plenty of seed on the ground baked hard in the cruel sun. Seedlings and non-trunking juveniles have a red tinge to the leaves and petioles, which was more intense on plants growing in full sun. The palms along the creek are flooded seasonally with evidence of previous flooding high up the trunks.



These photos (below) are juvenile *Livistona rigida*.



PIMBY: Australia, Part 1



Above, *Livistona rigida* at Lawn Hill. Below, *Livistona rigida*.



PIMBY: Australia, Part 1

With time at a premium on our return trip, we made a flying visit to two other gorges, Porcupine Gorge near Hughenden, a mini Grand Canyon but no palms, and Carnarvon Gorge to see the *Livistona nitida* and the *Macrozamia moorei* in habitat before returning home to more eye operations and more COVID-19 lockdowns!



Livistona nitida



Macrozamia moorei