



# THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

May 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, the New York Botanical Garden's palm biologist, Dr. Andrew Henderson, tells his story:*

I came to New York from the UK in August 1982. To English eyes it seemed a foreign city, dirty, dangerous, noisy, energetic, and energizing. I had come to begin work on a Ph.D. in the joint graduate program between the New York Botanical Garden and the City University of New York. I was interested in palms from my time as a horticultural student at Kew Gardens in London. I had worked for a short time in the Palm House there and, of course, was impressed by the beauty of palms. I also remember, just before I came to New York, sitting outside a pub on Kew Green, watching a game of cricket. A botanist from the Kew herbarium joined me, Ray Harley. I told him I was about to go to the US to do a Ph.D. and asked him what would be a good group of plants to study. He said "Oh, you should work on palms. The big expert in the family in the US has just died, and no one there is doing systematics of palms." Ray was referring to Harold Moore, who had died in October 1980. And so palms it was.

My thesis research was on the systematics of the stilt root palms (*Socratea*, *Iriartea*, *Iriartella*, *Dictyocaryum*). My advisor was Dr. Iain Prance, a renowned tropical botanist. I could hardly have had a better mentor. I also greatly benefited from the help and support of Dr. Michael Balick. One of my first field trips was to Colombia, in early 1985. There I was lucky to meet Rodrigo Bernal and Gloria Galeano, two palm botanists also just starting out but already way ahead of me. I learned a lot from them, and subsequently we had several memorable field trips together, not only in Colombia but also in Panama and Peru. I also remember my first trip to the herbarium at Cornell in Ithaca. The herbarium had been built up by Harold Moore and had become one



Dr. Andrew Henderson in Vietnam

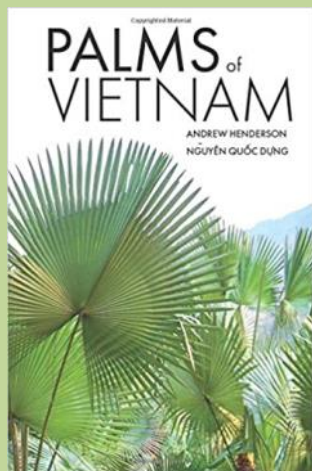
## Sixty-Five Years of the International Palm Society

of the best palm herbaria in the world, a mecca for palm botanists. There I met Natalie Uhl and John Dransfield, working together on *Genera Palmarum*. Subsequently I made several trips to Ithaca and especially remember sitting in Natalie's office and listening to her reminisce of her times at Cornell and the people she had worked with. After I finished my dissertation, in 1987, I worked for a while as a post-doc at the New York Botanical Garden and then was hired as a full-time researcher.

For much of the 1990s I worked on Neotropical palms. With Rodrigo and Gloria, I worked on a field guide to Neotropical palms. This was published by Princeton University Press in 1995 (*A Field Guide to the Palms of the Americas*). I also worked on Amazon palms and published *Palms of the Amazon* in the same year. During these years I had always been interested in the ecology of palms, particularly pollination. Very little was known of palm pollination in those days, and the general opinion was that they were probably wind pollinated. How wrong this turned out to be. Now we know much more about pollination and the intricate and complex ways that palms interact with insects, particularly beetles. And there is still so much more to learn.

In the early 2000s I made the first of many field trips to Asia and began working on a *Field Guide to the Palms of Southern Asia*. This was published in 2009. In particular, I remember my first trip to Vietnam in 2005 and being amazed by the diversity of palms, many of them undescribed. I decided there and then to concentrate on the palms of that wonderful country. I was fortunate to meet Dr. Nguyễn Quốc Dũng on an early trip, and we have collaborated ever since. We summarized our research in a book *Palms of Vietnam*, which was published in 2019. Apart from the palms of Vietnam, I have been occupied over the last 10 years with a revision of the rattan genus *Calamus*. This was published in the journal *Phytotaxa* in 2020, just as the lockdown began.

I must have joined the IPS in late 1982 or early 1983. I don't remember which, in fact I don't remember a lot of things now. I have been present at a few IPS biennials – in Australia, Hawaii, Florida, and Costa Rica. One activity I have greatly enjoyed over the years is organizing palm tours for IPS members. We have had several tours in the Amazon and one in Vietnam, and it's been a great pleasure getting to know the different groups of IPS members and, of course, looking at palms. I have also received ten grants from the IPS Endowment Fund over the years. These grants have helped with our study of the palms of Vietnam. It has become increasingly difficult over the years to find funding for relatively small projects such as field trips, but the IPS remains an excellent source of grants for palm research.



Note: If you don't already own it, Dr. Henderson's terrific field guide, *Palms of Vietnam*, will be a welcome addition to any palm aficionado's library. Please see the excellent review of this book by John Dransfield published in *PALMS* 63 (4), p. 182. 2019.

## 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!



[CLICK TO DONATE](#)

## IPS Webinar

Join us for our next webinar The event will take place on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, 2:00 p.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!

### "Pacific Island Palms" by Don R. Hodel

Donald Hodel has traveled extensively in the Pacific for over 45 years in his pursuit of palms as a research interest as well as a hobby. He will discuss and illustrate some of his most memorable and favorite palms in habitat on islands from Hawaii in the northeast to New Caledonia in the southwest, Taiwan in the northwest, French Polynesia in the southeast, and points in between.

[CLICK TO REGISTER](#)





## PIMBY (Palms In My Back Yard): South Texas by Chuck Malloy

*Chuck Malloy is the president of the Palm Society of South Texas, an IPS affiliate organization and shares his passion for growing found coconuts.*

Most of us have had the pleasure of walking down a beach looking for seashore treasures. Whether it is shells, trinkets, driftwood, or a message in bottle, all of us have our preferences for the discoveries we hold dear. On Texas' southernmost coast of Boca Chica/SpaceX and South Padre Island, we have other treasures that catch the fancy of all palmists: palm fruits floating up unto our beaches... coconuts. Our southern neighbor, Mexico, has an extensive coastline, and with the currents of the Gulf Stream the treasures could have floated to our beaches from as far away as the Yucatan Peninsula, Vera Cruz, or anywhere along the northeast coastline of Mexico.

Spring is the preferable time of year to take a drive on the beach and look for fruits in the sand or floating ashore with the tides. I like to make the "coco run" with Jennifer, another palmist and the local Extension Agent for Horticulture. We take our vehicle and load it up with our finds. We do the full horticulture thing trying to identify plants growing, as well as the seeds washing up. When we get home, we split the bounty and try to get the nuts to germinate. We have collected many types and hybrids, from Malaysians to Fijis and other Tall cultivars. The longer the fruits have been at sea, the more the germination percentage goes down. Nuts heavily encrusted with ship worms do not fare well either.

Due to the palm quarantine, *Cocos nucifera* as a sprouted plant is prohibited by the Texas Department of Agriculture from entering into Texas from Florida, due primarily to Lethal Yellowing. It is also susceptible to Lethal Bronzing Disease and Red Palm Mite. Seed collection is a much safer approach, and when they are delivered to your back yard for free, suffice to say it's a pretty good deal.

This was the original coconut found on May 2015 that started our harvesting and germinating coconuts in South Texas. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Herrera.



## PIMBY: South Texas



October 2015. Seed bed of coconuts with Coco Chanel, the only sprouted coconut, a Golden Malaysian Dwarf. This was at my home. Photo by Chuck Malloy

Our home in Los Fresnos, TX, is a 10A zone with an occasional freeze. We have three coconuts growing in the ground, but my prime specimen is named Coco Chanel. What else after all, would you name a classy looking coconut palm? She is a Golden/Orange Malaysian Dwarf. (Due to our recent freeze, chocolate is the new golden or green). We give all our palms names as they are our plant children.

We collected the elegant “Coco Chanel” off SPI beach Memorial Day week in 2015, and she sprouted in September the same year. Out of twenty or so fruits, she was the only one to germinate for me, and Jennifer had one germinate at her home. I kept Chanel potted for about a year and a half and planted her in the ground in April. She has survived some freezes and appears to have cold hardened due to gradual exposure. She survived the January 2018 freeze wrapped in nursery-grade frost blankets. Chanel put out her first inflorescence at four and a half years which did not mature, and later at five years, she exploded with five inflorescences. Although she dropped 70% of the fruits in early development, she developed four fruits which would have matured by this Summer. Two weeks after the recent freeze, Chanel pushed out an inflorescence. Some of the male flowers developed but no fruits did, and the inflorescence eventually failed. Due to the recent freeze, she dropped all four fruits. She has some promising color showing in the meristem area, adding lush hope after the severe weather spell we in this South Texas region are not used to experiencing. As with Chanel, only time will tell whether many of our palms will regrow!



## PIMBY: South Texas

There are many areas here in South Texas that have coconuts from Brownsville and Port Isabel to Corpus Christi and South Padre Island. Some palms are more than 30 years old and have survived many freezes, hurricanes, and summer drought. Upon recent inspection of the oldest coconuts here in South Texas, the situation is looking dire. Three months after the freeze, the green/golden growths appear to be declining. Some owners have already removed mature coconuts that appeared dead. As for me and some others, “never give up” has become the mantra we lean on as palmists.

Recently, we made our first “coco run” of the year and plan to germinate and replant coconuts in South Texas with this passion for palms forever in mind: Save Our Palms!



Past President Darryl Smith and current President Chuck Malloy standing next to “Little Darryl,” a Golden Malayan Dwarf grown by Darryl. Photo courtesy of Elena Byron.

A Golden Malayan Dwarf in Port Isabel, TX. This palm has been cut down since the freeze. Photo by Chuck Malloy.



## PARTING SHOT



IPS Director of Jeffry Brusseau sent along this photo and message:  
"I thought you might enjoy this shot from Hearst Castle. Hard to believe how this palm is still healthy with this amount of damage."