

PALM BEACH PALM & CYCAD SOCIETY

LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY

Monthly Update

February 2009



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Officers

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Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman
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Front Cover: *Coccothrinax borhidiana*

Back Cover: *Zamia splendens*

UPCOMING MEETINGS

GENERAL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2009
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Mounts Botanical Garden
Speaker: David McLean
Subject: Cold Care of Living Palms

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2009
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Ruth Sallenbach's Hone
6285 S. Military Trail, Lake Worth
(561) 965-5430

Winner of the January 7th Name Drawing Prize
was **Celio Moya**
who was present. He was awarded a
Palm Society Tee-shirt.

Searching for *Zamia prasina*

At the January 7, 2009, general meeting, Palm Society members were treated to a very interesting presentation by Michael Calonje, Cycad Biologist at Montgomery Botanical Center. Mr. Calonje shared experiences of his September 2008 expedition to Belize in search of *Zamia prasina* in the wild.

Zamia prasina is now listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, and it is estimated that less than 100 plants remain in the wild.

This cycad was first described in a horticultural catalog by William Bull in 1881 yet remained an obscure species until very recently. Some of these cycads were collected in an expedition by former Fairchild Botanical Garden superintendent Stanley Kiem in 1970. Two of these plants were planted at Fairchild Tropical Gardens but were stolen in 1992. John Janovec and Amanda Neill stumbled upon a population of these plants at the

bottom of a sinkhole while doing research in 1997 and returned in 1999 and 2001 on Montgomery Botanical Center Expeditions. There was then concern about what damage may have been done to this species in the wild when Hurricane Iris occurred in 2001. It was later theorized that the hurricane assisted the species by opening up the forest canopy.

The 2008 expedition involved a journey to remote sinkholes in the Maya Mountains of Belize where populations of this cycad were known to exist. To get to these remote sinkholes involved a seven-hour walk due to the fact that many roads were under water. Mr. Calonje and his colleagues walked for four hours and then spent the night in a logging camp that was unoccupied during the rainy season. Their sleeping accommodations were in a bus that had all the seats removed and their beds consisted of slats of wood with cardboard on top to act as a cushion.



Michael Calonje

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The expedition was successful. They were able to locate three *Zamia prasina* populations in the rainforest mountaintops and sinkholes. The largest populations were found at the bottom of sinkholes. Exploring the massive sinkholes was difficult to say the least. To descend, the scientists had to cling on to roots of plants to make their way down. Once at the bottom of the sinkholes, the scientists were forced to work through heavy downpours. There they found populations growing under the overhang created by the tilted sides of the sinkhole wall. The protection of this wall and the well drained soil at these locations provided perfect conditions for this cycad. They found approximately 140 large plants at

the bottom of each sinkhole. The plants appeared to be very old and even though the base of some plants had rotted out, they continued to grow. They found both male and female cones at various stages of development. In addition, in the surrounding forest, they found one of the largest *Zamia variegata* plants ever seen, with a single leaf that was 12 feet tall.

To those of us who have heard of expeditions of this type and thought how wonderful it would be to participate in one, little do we know of the harsh conditions experienced by those who venture out in search of that loved plant. It is truly a labor of love.

Submitted by Brenda Beck



Morning Sun at Jupiter Inlet
© Copyright 2008 Carol Bean FreeLargePhotos.com



Palm Trees Along Beach Drive in Juno Beach
© Copyright 2008 Carol Bean FreeLargePhotos.com

NEWS OF NOTE:



Researchers Resurrect Extinct Judean Date Palm Tree from 2,000 Year Old Seed. For photos and story go to:

http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2008/0612date_palm.shtml

This Month's "Thank You"

Membership Meeting Refreshments

Martin Dougherty
Elise Maloney

Ted Shelton

Plant Auction Donations

Dale Holton

John Irvine

Welcome New Member

Bit Shaw

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members:

As I am sure you are aware, the Palm Society is limited as to what we can do with our newsletter due to the cost involved in publication. To work within our budget, we are forced to alternate between black and white and color publications.

Despite our limitation on presentation, we will strive to make this publication as informative as possible.

I would like to include as much member input as possible. If you have found that perfect solution to a problem, have that perfect balance of plants in a bed that brings you joy, or have any other pictures or stories to share, please e-mail them to me at Beck4212@aol.com.

Brenda Beck

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