THE INTERNATIONAL PALM SOCIETY
Conserve. Learn. Grow.

Apr. 2025 NEWSLETTER

The Palm Day Edition

International Palm Day Is April 17, 2025!

April 17 is International Palm Day, a day to recognize the plight of endangered palms, their fragile ecosystems, and their roles in the environment. It is also the birthday (in 1794) of Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, the Father of Palms. Join us in celebrating palms! How will you celebrate?

IPS members celebrated palms on a visit to Singapore's Gardens by the Bay, a world-class palmy landscape.

Lord Howe Island

Mary Lock takes in the view from Goat House Cave at about 1500 feet up Mt Lidgbird on Lord Howe Island.

Soil Fungi and *Howea* Speciation

IPS Vice President, Mary Lock, who recently visited Lord Howe Island, home to *Howea*, *Hedyscepe*, and *Lepidorrhachis*, has contributed fascinating information about the process by which *Howea* diverged into the two species, *H. forsteriana* and *H. belmoreana*:

> I was listening to Merlin Sheldrake's book, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*, while digging out old irrigation lines this summer. I had to stop mid-shovelful when I heard him start telling a story about two sister species of palm on Lord Howe Island.
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> *Howea forsteriana* and *Howea belmoreana* diverged from a common ancestor on Lord Howe Island after the island was formed off the east coast of Australia. *Howea forsteriana* and *H. belmoreana* are genetically isolated because they do not flower at the same time and they prefer different soil compositions. *Howea forsteriana* is found on both alkaline calcareous soil and the more acidic volcanic soils. By contrast, *H. belmoreana* is restricted to the volcanic soils. But it is the role mycorrhizal fungi play in *Howea* speciation that landed the story in Sheldrake's book.

Howea forsteriana pictured at left with calcareous rock on Lord Howe Island; a tall *Howea belmoreana* at right thriving in a sunny clearing within the low forest at the base of Middle Hill, Lord Howe Island.

It was no great surprise that when I tracked down the original article, there was our friend Bill Baker from Kew among the authors. The story of how two sister species of *Howea* coexist and evolved on a tiny island is laid out in a 2017 article in *New Phytologist* [https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/nph.14850]. The authors presented evidence that *H. forsteriana* and *H. belmoreana* may have diverged in response to adaptations needed to expand into calcareous soil, the ancestor of *H. forsteriana* forming an optimized relationship with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) that penetrate the root and set up shop between and inside plant cells. When *H. forsteriana* moved back to acidic volcanic soil, it could survive, but it wasn't as fit as *H. belmoreana*, whose ancestor never left volcanic soil, thus it hasn't displaced its sister species. The main barrier to interbreeding is the shift in flowering time between *H. forsteriana* and *H. belmoreana*; it is probable that the AMF relationship forged in calcareous soil played a role in the shift in flowering time of *H. forsteriana*—and in this case, provided the genetic barrier resulting in the new species.

A stand of *Hedyscepe canterburyana* (mingled with *Howea belmoreana*) emerges from the low, misty forest about 375 meters up the steep eastern escarpment of Mount Lidgbird on Lord Howe Island.

News from Local Palm Society Chapters

Letter from Troy Stephens, Northern California Palm Society:

Hello Everyone,
My name is Troy and I've been volunteering in the Lakeside Palmetum (founded by the Northern California Palm Society chapter in 1982) for a few years now amongst a few other gardens in the Gardens of Lake Merritt in Oakland, California, and I felt like it might be nice to give you guys an update on how the collection is doing.

I've been enjoying planting seedlings of palms not yet in the garden in hopes to add to our collection amongst other companion plants that fit the theme of the garden (ferns, bromeliads, etc.). It can be hard to get things established due to a handful of factors including raccoons, weed whackers of the city workers, and the errant groups of children running through the garden beds, but there are indeed some successes! Long-term member (and former volunteer manager of the Palmetum), Darold Petty, was nice enough to give me a *Rhopalostylis baueri* (the form from New Zealand's Raoul Island formerly known as var. *cheesemanii*) seedling a couple of years back, and despite being almost completely destroyed by raccoons twice now, it is really starting to show promise even as a young plant.

Trithrinax campestris in bloom, at left, and *Chamaedorea linearis* in bud at the Lakeside Palmetum, Gardens at Lake Merritt, Oakland, California

Most of the established, older specimens that we have been acquainted with for years now are doing quite well and enjoying recent rains. The mature pair of *Ceroxylon vogelianum* have been flowering freely and I am constantly on the lookout for fertile seed, yet somehow in the hundreds of fallen fruit I've picked up, only one seed so far has seemed viable. The solitary old *Hedyscepe canterburyana* is still standing and growing despite a cavern at the base of the stem chewed by rats so many years ago. One new occurrence that Ihadn't noticed before is the presence of seedling *Caryota maxima* under the canopy of the established *Caryota gigas*. I've counted about around 6 or 7 individuals, but the source of the seed is a bit of a mystery to me. [Editor: *Caryota maxima* Himalayan variety removed long ago after fruiting may be the source.] I am aware there were some plants that had flowered and fruited over 10 years ago, but the seedlings seem only maybe a couple of years old so I'm not sure how to explain the gap in germination, but exciting nonetheless.

The garden is primarily being tended to by one of our members, Kyle Milligan, who leads a group on Saturdays to do a lot of the day-to-day tasks like weeding, mulching, and irrigation. (We are seeking volunteers!) He is always eager and interested in hearing the opinions and advice of our members, so if you ever catch him in the garden, please don't hesitate to say hello. And if it's been a while since you've visited the Palmetum and you're in the San Francisco Bay Area, it is a great time of year for a visit; all the plants are lush and vibrant.

Back-to-Back April Events in South Florida

On Monday, April 7, the South Florida Palm Society had their general membership meeting at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. Chip Jones, owner of Jones Landscaping, presented "Understanding Peru from a Palm Perspective." Seeing unique plants in habitat leads Chip to grow unusual specimens and use good plants to make gardens described as "good jungles." After the presentation, an auction of donated plants took place. The chapter's meetings are open to members and non-members.

On Saturday, April 12, the chapter's Spring Garden Tour took place at Mike Harris's exquisitely landscaped four-acre property in Cooper City, between Fort Lauderdale and Miami. Mike's collection includes about 600 species of palms. Many other beautiful plants blend in nicely with the palms throughout the rolling grounds. Lunch was served and the tour was free for SFPS members.

We're sharing news from chapters affiliated with the International Palm Society around the world. Please send your news to editor Jason Dewees at loulu.fan@gmail.com / loulufan@gmail.com.

Save the Species Campaign Update

Nicolas Rinck, of the Institut Agronomique néo-Calédonien (IAC) / New Caledonia Agronomy Institute, a recipient of an International Palm Society Save the Species grant, reported on 3 April 2025, on progress in the conservation of the target species, *Basselinia vestita*:

> Dear IPS Conservation Committee,
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> Following our latest exchanges, I wanted to warmly thank you again for your continued support and inspiring vision for a long-term conservation partnership. The germination of *Basselinia vestita* seeds has been successful, and while the seedlings are still developing in our IAC nursery, we are now ready to take the next step on the ground.
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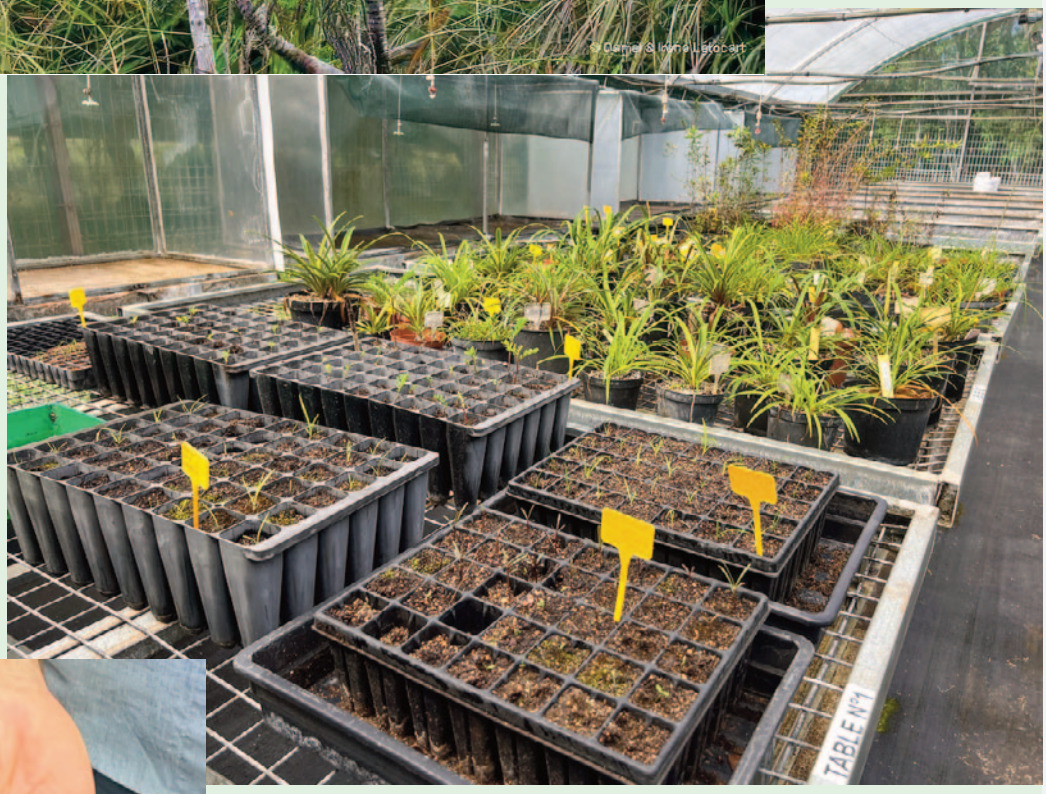
> In collaboration with the customary authorities of the Katricoin tribe, we are set to initiate the creation of a demonstration nursery on site. This space will not only host *Basselinia vestita* in due time but also serve as a platform to valorize other rare and culturally emblematic palms from the area. This is a key step in building capacity within the community and preparing for future reintroduction efforts.

Check out Nicolas's photos on the next page.

The target of the 2024 Save the Species campaign: *Basselinia vestita.*



The nursery where native New Caledonia plants are being raised

Seeds of *Basselinia vestita.*

International Palm Society Travel

Visit the Rio Grande Valley in Texas – IPS 'Weekend Biennial'

Join us in December, 2025, when we visit sunny Brownsville, Texas. The IPS and the Palm Society of South Texas will join forces to celebrate the native *Sabal* palms of the Rio Grande Valley. Friday night 12 December – Sunday afternoon, 14 December, 2025. Capacity: 50. Registration information will be forthcoming.

Sabal mexicana pictured in the Sabal Palm Sanctuary in the southernmost part of Texas.

Peru Midterm IPS Board Meeting and Tour 2025

The midterm board meeting and tour for directors and benefactors is scheduled for 13–21 September, 2025. Visit palms.org/membership/ to become a benefactor. Capacity is limited.
Arrival in Iquitos, Perú (IQT)
Departure from Chachapoyas, Perú (CHH)
Capacity: 60

Save the Date: 2026 International Palm Society Biennial in Vietnam

Hanoi to Da Nang with a post-tour trip to Peninsular Thailand.
Begins February 23, 2026.
Vietnam capacity: 100.
Thailand capacity: 50.

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