

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial .....	1
Announcements .....	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
Members Evening .....	1
Table Show Results.....	4
Bookworm Corner .....	5
Forthcoming Events .....	6
Next Month's Meeting .....	6

## Editorial

January passed quite quickly – especially if you count the days without rain! One side-effect of the wet weather is that we have had very few really cold days this winter, so the cost of heating your plants will hopefully be lower this year for everyone.

## Announcements

Copies of the **Branch Programme** for 2014 are available from the front table.

If you haven't already done so, do **renew your BCSS membership**. You should have received renewal forms with the Journal (in December) or you can also pay online via the BCSS website – visit <http://www.bcss.org.uk/fees.php> for further details.

Another local **new member** - Miranda Stevenson from Bishops Waltham - joined the BCSS in January, and we hope that she will be able to come along and enjoy our monthly meetings.

Some very sad news from our President, Peter Down. His wife Yvonne had been in good health, but suffered a stroke on 12<sup>th</sup> January leading to a coma. She did not recover and passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. Although she did not share his love of cacti, she came to our branch dinners and also welcomed members who visited to see Peter's collection. She did enjoy the plants when they were in flower.

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February, following a private cremation, there will be a service of thanksgiving and celebration of Yvonne's life at St. Winfrid's Church, 92 Salisbury Road, Totton at 2:45pm. This will be followed by afternoon tea. Parking will be a

problem as the church is undergoing repairs and many people will be coming. Peter hopes branch members who knew Yvonne can attend. He advises people to come early to get a seat and suggested that people park in the sideroads or use the bigger car parks in Totton town centre.

Our secretary **David Neville** won't be at the meeting this month because he has being booked into the Southampton General Hospital for the second part of his surgery. He mentioned that he is likely to be in hospital for 5-7 days and it may again be several weeks before he is given clearance to drive.

## Last Month's Meeting

### Members Evening

The January meeting followed the usual format of branch members showing some of their pictures or giving a short talk. First off was **Paul Klaassen**, who had prepared a 10 minute video. The first image was of Paul in front of a large selection of wines, a picture which had been taken in Argentina in 2010, and which he had used as a Christmas greeting card. He mentioned that his talk was about just one cactus from Chile. Last year, he and Angie visited Chile in October, and they didn't get to see this particular plant for reasons which would become obvious later. The plant had been featured on the front cover of Cactus World in 2006 and it was *Eriosyce napina* ssp. *riparia*.

Paul mentioned that sometimes there are plants in habitat which you find on every visit, such as the *Copiapoa columna alba* with a crest that he and Angie have nicknamed "Smiler" – you can walk through a whole field of plants straight to it. The habitat for this *Eriosyce* which grows at El Trapiche is a little different. Originally classified as a *Theloccephala*, it was first published in Cactus World 2006 by Helmut Walter and Wendelin Mächler. Some consider it to be similar to ssp. *tenebrica* and ssp. *fankhauseri*.

Paul mentioned he had been to the habitat of this plant 5 times. We also saw *Eriosyce heinrichiana* which *E. riparia* might hybridize with, and *Copiapoa coquimbana* which grows nearby. We

also saw the much larger plants of *Eulychnia acida* x *Eulychnia chorosensis*, along with some large fruits. This valley is the valley of Choros (Quebrada Choros). The original plants of riparia were found originally by Rodolfo Wagenknecht, a Chilean inspector of roads, and he reported them to Paul Hutchison who placed a herbarium specimen. The plants are very difficult to find without flowers since they are dried up and grow flat on the ground. It was a wet year on one occasion, so the plants were more swollen that year. We saw a view of the Choros Valley on a Google map. Paul mentioned that with Google Earth you can get live views of the area. A picture taken of the locality last year showed that they were widening the road and also putting up fences on either side. Pylon number 227 is the marker for riparia – the plants grow right around that pylon.

The next set of pictures were taken from 5 different visits – when the ground is dry, the plants pull themselves into the ground and you can see a tell-tale edge in the ground between the original and new body sizes. They are no bigger than a 50p piece and in a dry year you see very little of them. The location has been kept very secret because there were less than a hundred specimens. “riparia” actually means river site, but it’s so dry here, it’s difficult to see where the rivers were, even in the past. On their most recent trip, as they approached Pylon 227, they were dismayed to see that it had turned into a building site, with large trucks and diggers there. So perhaps it’s RIP for riparia? Juan Acosta had collected seed in 2006, and this goes under the JA40 collection number, with both seed and seedlings offered for sale. We saw from plants from the collection of Juan and Florencia. With the new information about the destruction of the habitat, instead of selling seed, they will now raise the plants and also use grafting to create multi-headed plants which are also more floriferous.

Paul had time to cover another story, this time dating from 2001. They were traveling along the Pajosa to Taltal coast road and came across plants of *Copiapoia cinerea* ‘albispinus’ dug up from the ground and laying on the roadside, with strips tied to the roots - and the roots had also been dusted with sulphur. Rudolf Schulz and Attila Kapitany were with him on this occasion and they were very upset – was this an illegal collection site? Rudolf felt like camping out there to catch the criminals. When they got back to Taltal, they saw a lady walking along the road with a clipboard – an official of some sort so they stopped and asked if she knew anything about the plants. She turned out to be a botanist employed by the Chilean government – she explained that construction projects are registered with the

government and they identify any plants which are threatened or endangered, and save them, for replanting. Paul hoped this was the case for riparia too and that the plants were saved and moved to a new, as yet unidentified, location. Meanwhile, the seed bank by Spiniflores will be used to try and reintroduce the plants into the wild. Paul mentioned that with Copiapoas – when you examine a habitat, you tend to find clutches of plants which are 50 years apart. This is due to the conditions in the Atacama Desert - only once every 50 years are the conditions right for seeds to germinate and put on enough weight to survive the next series of dry years. Let’s hope the plant described in 2006 does not RIP in 2013!

Next to speak was Angie Money and she also had a video. Since the video was set to music, she told us the story first. Paul wanted to show her a place he had been to in 2007, which was south of Santiago – a place called Laguna de la Laja, where only one cactus and a succulent are found. The cactus was *Maihueniopsis poeppigii* and the succulent was *Viola congesta* (a rosulate species). The viola grows as a rosette and has layers of khaki coloured leaves with small red notches around the edges. They grow at high altitudes, and in 2010, they saw them in December, growing at 3000m.

The scenes showed by Angie were taken at the base of volcanic mountains and all around them were dark volcanic rocks. They were at altitudes of 3000-3500m and a lake in background was a freshwater lake, formed from melting snow from the Andes.

The other thing they wanted to see in this area was related to a tragedy which occurred in May 2005. The Chilean Army were doing exercises and a group of 474 soldiers - including many new conscripts - were sent out in bad weather without being prepared or equipped properly. They were caught up in 2 metres of snow and there were 45 casualties from the incident. Angie said she wanted to capture the images of the desolate area and the dark volcanic rocks which gave the area an eerie feeling. The men were found 3 weeks. A colonel was sent to jail for 5 years for having authorised the exercises. The bereaved families try and maintain the graves and there is now also a formal monument “Tragedia de Antuco” which has been erected there.

After the break, we resumed with some pictures which I had taken in 2011. David and I visited Arizona. The day after landing in Tucson, we decided to visit Miles Anderson. He grows plants to sell and also has an impressive collection of plants accumulated over the years. The “greenhouses” are simple framed constructions with netting or

polythene. A view of the insides of one showed lots of benches, with space between each to get at the plants. He has several different greenhouses to accommodate different types and sizes of plants. Severe winter in Arizona since our visit means that he lost quite a few of his plants because of unusually low temperatures. In the winter, polythene covers are used for insulation, and these are taken down in the spring.

We started with some of his Lithops, with several different species being grown in fairly small pots. Next we saw a *Huernia* in flower, along with *Pseudolithos cubiformis*. A closer view of the *Pseudolithos* showed the flowers and long seed pods. David mentioned that this plant flowers from the same peduncles, year after year. Next was a large *Euphorbia* hybrid Miles had created. We saw more mixtures of Lithops, in slightly larger pots. *Neoporteria (Thelocephala) aerocarpa* had a lovely pale cream flower. *Coryphantha schwarzi* had bodies with neat clusters of spines. *Mammillaria wiesingeri* looked nice in juvenile form. Next were a mixture of *Astrophytum myriostigma* hybrids with 3-4-5 ribs and large variations in the amount of flecking. An orange flower from an *Echinopsis* was growing near a group of *Stenocactus*. Some of the benches had a random assortment of plants with a dozen different species growing within inches of each other. A nice *Neoporteria* flower was open near a small group of *Uebelmannia pectinifera*. Plants of *Epithelantha micromeris* had nice white spination. A *Peniocereus* had long stems waving around, with some young *Ferocacti* nearby, with bright red spination. A nice *Melocactus* had several heads – was it really multi-headed or were there multiple seedlings in the pot? It was *Melocactus matanzanus* which comes from Cuba. A strange *Mammillaria* plant had dark green and light green tubercles – this might be insecticide or watering causing the chlorophyll to come and go. A really red flower was that of *Echinocereus coccineus*. We saw some more *Astrophytums* – these were *A. asterias* hybrids, with different amounts of flecking on them. *Ariocarpus trigonus*, *Ariocarpus agavoides* and *Ariocarpus retusus* were easy to grow for him. There were also *Euphorbia obesa* hybrids with different body markings and patterns. A mixed group of plants featured *Ariocarpus*, *Neoporteria*, *Turbinicarpus* and a very red spined *Echinocereus rigidissimus*. An *Astrophytum capricorne* had a large yellow flower with a red ring in centre.

Now for some larger plants. These *Ariocarpus myriostigma* were chunkier. *Mammillaria crucigera* was going dichotomous. A shot of a mixture of plants must have contained a hundred different species! Ted asked about watering and David

mentioned that the plants were in the main watered manually. A nice variegated *Agave parryi* was followed by an *Agave victoria reginae* with white variegation. A group of *Ariocarpus fissuratus* were probably rescued habitat collected plants – these are rescued from land clearances and sold off. Plants of cristate *Ariocarpus kotschoubeyanus* were growing on grafts. More ancient plants of *Ariocarpus kotschubeyanus* were bigger than anything you'd see in the wild. We saw various assortments of grafted plants including some of his stock plants used for propagation. An *Echinocereus* had produced three nice pink flowers with white centres and *Echinocereus dasyacanthus* had a yellow/green flower. We saw more Lithops, this time specimen plants in bigger pots. *Neoporteria occulta* had pale cream flowers. Another specimen of *Echinocereus rigidissimus* consisted of nine bright pink-spined heads in a pot. A really large *Pelecypora aselliformis* had about 50 heads and offsets on it.

Three plants of *Echinocactus grusonii* with shorter curved spines were growing in a bowl. Specimens of *Copiapoa cinerea* with light green bodies and dark spines looked beautiful. There were about a couple of dozen plants of *Echinocactus horizonthalus* – which were grapefruit sized. David mentioned these are very tricky and slow in cultivation. Larger plants of *Ariocarpus fissuratus* must have been cultivated for years. We saw more *Ariocarpus*, and some grafted *Astrophytum asterias* plants. Two of the *A. asterias* plants on their own roots were new hybrids Miles had produced, by crossing heavily flecked parents.

A huge *Euphorbia obesa* with dozens of heads and offsets mid-body must be some type of hybrid. We saw more *Euphorbias* and some of his larger plants, including football sized *Discocactus* and the largest *Uebelmannia* David had seen. Outside the greenhouses, growing in his yard were *Saguaros (Carnegiea gigantea)* with buds forming. There were more pictures of *Euphorbia* and *Anacampseros*, and *Haworthias* and *Aloes*, including the pale green *Haworthia fasciata* “Lime Green”. We also saw *Gymnocalycium denudatum*, *G. spegazzinii* and *G. andreae*, with the flowers hiding the plant bodies. *G. bayrianum* had nice white flowers and *G. mihanovichii* has dark bodies.

Younger plants of *Melocactus matanzanus* were pretty, but coming from Cuba it does need higher temperatures. *Rebutia perplexa* had pink flowers and *M. hahniana* had a ring of flowers. It was offsetting, whereas plants sold in the UK tend not to offset. We also saw *M. zeilmanniana*, *M. candida* and various *Notocacti* in flower, including *N. lenninghausii*. An *Adenia* looked exotic and plants

growing in deep pots were *Welwitschia* seedlings. We also saw *Haworthia koelmaniorum* and *H. limifolia*, and some Gasteraloe hybrids. A large aloe hybrid was followed by one of the parents – there is a lot of interest in the USA in creating new Aloe hybrids. Last was an *Uncarina* from Madagascar, and the final picture featured a nice shot of David and Miles.

The final speaker was David, and he mentioned he had some random pictures he had taken at a Cactus Garden in Gran Canaria, in the Canary Islands. He had been to the gardens once with Margaret Corina and decided to visit them again at a different time of the year. The gardens are in a fairly remote part of the island, at a town called San Nicolas – the Cactualdea. There is no easy path through the mountains, so you have to take a circuit half way round the island. The plants are mostly common things, stuff but densely planted and there are lots of nice things to see and photograph.

The first plant was a *Beaucarnea (Nolina) recurvata*, the pony tail palm. It grows into a big tree eventually if given the space. A leafless stem was actually a *Didierea madagascariensis* – he not seen it in a bed before – it needs 10-12°C minimum in the winter. *Pachypodium lameri* had a tapering trunk – you don't see that on young plants. In the background were the lovely blue leaves of a yucca. Moringa was a madagascan bottle tree it had fine foliage. Another *Pachypodium lameri* was branched – they don't usually do this until they are 20-30 feet tall - so perhaps it had been damaged. A large *Echinocactus grusonii* had some evidence of flowering in the main head. It will produce more as it ages. The attached offsets were not ready to flower yet. A *Kleinia* is a native of the islands.

More typically solitary *Echinocactus grusonii* had also flowered. A *Ferocactus stainesii* had bright red spines. *Oreocereus celsianus* was offsetting – it was a nice plant in good condition. Two white columns were young plants of *Cephalocereus senilis*. This is a very slow growing plant. They were 8 feet tall, but there was no sign of the cephalium yet. In the distance, you can see the hillsides of volcanic rock which look barren, although in reality there are small plants growing out there. A large plant of *Aloe dichotoma* was nice - you never see it as a mature specimen in the UK. There were blue-gray plants of *Pachycereus pringlei*. There were more white columns of *Cephalocereus senilis* and these did have cephaliums. The cephalium is only produced on one side and it's the same for all the stems – it tends to form on the cooler/shadier side of the plant to prevent the flowers drying out too quickly.

Agaves are spectacular when flowering and there was one here with a nice short flowering stem on this plant. There were lots of palms growing on the island and he would have taken more on interest in them if they would grow outdoors here, but most are tender exotics. *Agave attenuata* is widely used in gardens and is safer to have around with soft leaves and no sharp tip. The flowers are formed on a simple unbranching spike unlike the previous Agave.

David mentioned there were 2-3 places in the Canaries where there are plants bedded out like this and the cactus gardens at the Botanic gardens at Gran Canaria are superb. Most of the other islands such as Tenerife also have gardens worth visiting.

Vinay Shah

### Table Show Results

There were 10 entries in the January table show.

	Cacti – Echinocactus	Succulents – Aloe
Open	(1) D Neville <i>Ferocactus ingens</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Aloe haworthioides</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Leuchtenbergia principis</i>	(2) T Smith <i>Gasteraloe sp.</i>
	(3)	(3) I Biddlecombe <i>Aloe erinaceae</i>
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Ferocactus macrodiscus</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Aloe erinaceae</i>
	(2)	(2) S Wilson <i>Aloe "Snow Flake"</i>
	(3)	(3) I Biddlecombe <i>Aloe "Lizard Lips"</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Bookworm Corner

Well what happened to January, that sort of flew by! Speaking of flying, I opened the cacti greenhouse door a jar today to let a bit of air movement about and when I went back to close-up I found four house sparrows having a fly around! Luckily when I opened the door fully and stood well back they all shot out, only one small top heavy Echeveria had been knocked off the shelf, no damage done. Perhaps they had been snacking on the horrid death (false widow) spiders that live far too happily in the greenhouse (hopefully!).

Spring is starting to sneak into the garden with snowdrops, sweet violet, dwarf iris and winter flowering honeysuckle in flower. The hardy fuchsia is producing another batch of flowers, this seems only to stop flowering if it is frosted and we seem to have a wet mild winter rather than a proper cold frosty winter. Mind the mild winter has helped to keep the heating bills down!

As I suspected, our own David Neville is not at tonight's meeting, he informed us that he was going into hospital for another operation. But of course if you read last month's newsletter you will know that he has in fact gone off to his desert island with a pile of Mammillaria, Euphorbias, compost and the New Cactus Lexicon!

### **'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'**

#### **January**

This was a mix of members' talks and I haven't really got any recommendations from this medley of topics.

#### **February**

Tonight we have our own Tom Radford presenting 'Photographing Plants', which has given me a challenge on which books to recommend! Good examples of close up photography can be observed in both '**Lithops – Treasures of the Veld**' (Hammer S.A.), '**Mammillaria – a colour supplement**' (Pilbeam J.). For habitat photos have look at '**Cacti & Succulents in Habitat**' (Preston-Mafham K.). Finally for a good mix of close up

and habitat shots the '**New Cactus Lexicon**' (Hunt D.) is well worth a look. Have a look at the books in the library with a fresh eye and see what you think! All of these books can be found in '**Featured Book Corner!**'

*Sue Wilson*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our meeting in March will be special since it is designated as our anniversary meeting. Please do make an effort to attend! Our speakers will be Tony and Suzanne Mace and we'll try to make it an evening to remember.

The March Table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia & Gasteria** groups (succulents). Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Opuntia group contains *Opuntia*, *Airampoa*, *Austrocylindropuntia*, *Brasiliopuntia*, *Consolea*, *Corynopuntia*, *Cumulopuntia*, *Cylindropuntia*, *Grusonia*, *Maihuenia*, *Maihueniopsis*, *Marenopuntia*, *Micropuntia*, *Nopalea*, *Pereskia*, *Pereskiopsis*, *Pterocactus*, *Puna*, *Quiabentia*, *Rhodocactus*, *Tacinga*, *Tephrocactus* and *Tunilla*.

The Haworthia and Gasteria groups contain *Haworthia*, *Astroloba*, *Chortolirion*, *Poellnitzia* and *Gasteria*.

For committee members, a reminder that a branch meeting is due to be held on 11<sup>th</sup> March, at Dot's.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 8 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction, Members' Slides
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Portsmouth	Cliff Thompson, 'Brazil Part 3'
Tue 4 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Southampton	Our Collection (Suzanne & Tony Mace)
Sat 8 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' Talks
Tue 11 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Portsmouth	Plants in my Greenhouse (Stirling Baker)
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup> Apr	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Isle of Wight	Nature in Close-Up 3 (Colin Haygarth)
Sat 19 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>

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