

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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### Editorial

The dry weather I mentioned last month continued throughout June and someone told me that this has been the driest start to the summer for something like 80 years. Certainly I've had to water my outdoor plants almost every day and any that I've missed have dried up within a few days. About the only advantage is that the grass has stopped growing so hasn't had to be cut as often.

In my conservatory, plants of a few more genera have flowered during the last month. Although the weather outside has been very dry, the temperatures so far this summer have remained at fairly reasonable levels.

### Announcements

The **Branch Dinner** was held on 25<sup>th</sup> June at the Luzborough. Sixteen members came along, and I think everyone had a good time.

For those of you who do not know, any member is allowed to bring along **plants for sale** at our monthly meetings or at shows and displays. It goes without saying that the plants must be healthy and in good condition. Just make sure that each plant has 2 labels in the pot – one with the name of the plant and the other with your initials and the price of the plant. The branch charges a 10% commission at branch meetings and 15% at shows.

Later this month (27-29 July) the Branch will be putting on a display at the **New Forest Show**. Preparations for that will be finalised at the committee meeting later this month. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of

July, the branch will also be putting on a display at the **Solent Fuchsia Show**.

### Last Month's Meeting

#### Plants of Interest

Bruce Beckerleg showed some variegated Agaves which he had got at the National Show. They looked similar but did have slightly different names – *Agave cv. Ohi-kissyoten Nishiki* and *Agave patonii variegata Ohikitsusyote Nisiki*. Both were variegated. Someone from audience asked whether those names actually meant something like “don't water in the winter”!

Next were two plants of *Echeveria lilacina*. The first, from Specks was a nicer form than another plant which Bruce had got from Freshacres. In his view, the Echinopsis hybrid "Violet Beauty" is one of the hybrids worth growing - many of the other hybrids are no better than the species. There was also *Lobivia carmineoflora* and a couple of *Gymnocalyciums*, all in flower. One of the gymnos was *G. neuhuberi* – this was one of Brian Plunkett's plants which he had bought last year, and it was flowering for him for the first time. *Rebutia albipilosa* is quite pretty and looks quite nice even when not in flower. It is more difficult than some, but not as difficult as *R. heliosa*.

Finally was a hybrid of his own making - a *Lewisia* called “Bex” which has red flowers. *Lewisias* can be hard to keep alive year after year, but this one had lasted several years. It had had lots of flowers this year. If grown outside they flower once, but in a greenhouse, they can flower multiple times.

Paul Klaassen pointed to a tray of *Fraileas* which he had brought along - these are small plants and you can grow the entire genus in a small space. They are very diverse in appearance. Some of them had started to form buds and they can set seed without opening the flowers. The plants are not long lived so it is worth starting off new plants from seed every few years. He had put the plants out in the garden and after receiving some rain, they had plumped up nicely.

## What I Saw Last Winter

We moved on to Paul's presentation for the evening. He explained that during the last winter and spring, he went on some trips with Cliff Thompson, amongst others. Paul mentioned that the first trip were to Brazil: to Rio Grande do Sul, with Marlon Machado as their guide. Next, he and Cliff went to Minas Gerais. After Christmas, they were joined by Marlon in Bahia. They then went on to Cuba, and proceeded to California, where he gave a talk at a cactus meeting. Next, they went with some Japanese enthusiasts to Baja California, and finally to Monterrey in Mexico before returning to the USA and flying back home.

Paul started his presentation with the URL which points to his blog on the Internet. For those who have no idea what that sentence means, Paul maintains notes of his trips on a rolling diary which is accessible by anyone on the Internet at: <http://cid-5965a61fa486aae7.spaces.live.com/> (you can also view some of the pictures from the talk)

In Rio Grande do Sul, they travelled around 4000km on roads of variable quality. The recession was having an impact and many of the roads were in poor condition and not being maintained. Some of the best plant populations were in Uruguay, but it's very difficult to get rental cars there, so they had to limit their exploration to Brazil. There is lots of diversity with many different genera in each state, and on this occasion they studied *Frailea* and *Parodia* in detail. We saw *Cereus hildmannianus* with some nice healthy plants growing from the carcass of an older dead plant. *Echinopsis oxygona* has nice flowers in shades of white and pink. However, there isn't much to see after the flowers die. Some of the plants had shorter spines, and to him, these looked more attractive.

We saw some shots of the landscape, and Paul commented that Marlon thought it resembled Wiltshire! We saw several examples of the genus *Frailea*, starting with *Frailea bueneckeri* ssp. *densispina* and *Frailea castanea*. We also saw some shots of *Rhea americana*, the flightless bird local to this area, and which seems to use the herds of livestock for protection. *Frailea cataphracta* had to be marked out in the picture - they were just small dots in the sand. We saw one of the plants which had been dug out and the length of the taproot was several times the diameter of the plant. This tends to pull the plant into the ground during dry spells, which explains why they are hard to find. Everything was very green, unlike the Atacama Desert in Chile. We saw *Frailea fulviseta*, followed

by *Frailea gaucha* (sp nova) which is due to be described by Marlon - the name being derived from the local name for cowboys. We saw it growing amongst the resurrection plant. These *Fraileas* had large yellow flowers. Paul mentioned the temperatures were quite comfortable - around 20°C, sometimes reaching 30°C. They were fortunate to have Marlon with them, otherwise it would have been hard to know where the plants were located. *Frailea gracillima* ssp. *horstii* was growing amongst rocks covered in moss, as was *Frailea mammifera*.

We saw Marlon laying on the ground while taking some photographs. *Frailea phaedisca* "perbella" had attractive tight spination which criss-crossed over the plant bodies. Next was a white/yellow striped caterpillar followed by *F. phaedisca* ssp. *phaedisca* which had much shorter spines. Paul mentioned that the clumps of several plants in the photographs were actually individual plants growing next to each other because the seeds tend to gather together. We also saw Woody Minich laying on the ground taking close-up photographs.

*Frailea pumila* had brown spines. The plants of *Frailea pygmaea* "aureispina" were taller and had lighter coloured spines. *Frailea pygmaea* ssp. *pygmaea* was squatter and had white spines. The annual rainfall in this area is greater than the UK. *F. schilinzkyana* (*perumbilicata*) had neat spination.

Moving on to *Gymnocalycium*, *G. denudatum* had shiny green bodies and lovely spider-like spines. They seemed happiest growing in grass or in the shade of a shrub. We also saw *G. horstii* ssp. *bueneckeri*. Some of the stems were marked - sometimes the plants get badly beaten up. *G. horstii* ssp. *horstii* is named after Leopoldo Horst, who was one of the great explorers of this region in the 1970s. His son Ingo Horst now runs a nursery which they visited later during the trip. *G. uruguayensis* had yellowish flowers. Paul mentioned there were plantations of pine trees and eucalyptus being grown here and he wondered on the long term impact of these foreign introductions.

Now for some epiphytic cacti. These were growing on trees or rock faces. We saw *Lepismium cruciforme* and *Lepismium houlettianum*, which had flat multi-lobed leaves - the spray from a waterfall kept them moist. *L. lumbricoides* consisted of long thin strands rather like *rhypsalis*, and we saw *L. warmingianum* growing pendulously.

Paul showed pictures of some *Opuntias*, however, he stated that the names that he used (*O. brunnoegemma*, *O. rubroegemma*) are not

recognised by the new Cactus Lexicon. The plants had pads a few inches long, with spines up to 2 inches long, and some of the pads bore red fruits.

The Genus *Parodia* has undergone quite a few revisions, and several genera have been merged into *Parodia*. (*Brasilicactus*, *Brasiliparodia*, *Eriocactus*, *Notocactus*, *Parodia*, *Wigginsia*). We started with *P. haselbergii* ssp. *graessneri*, which was dotted around the hillsides. The tubular green flowers are adapted for hummingbird pollination. Whilst here, they came across a nest of armadillos which contained several youngsters. These were quite shy - with good reason since they are treated as a delicacy. We saw *P. haselbergii* ssp. *haselbergii* which has wider flowers. The yellow spined form of *P. graessneri* was supposed to be found at Santa Catarina. They took long distance pictures of the plants on the cliff faces and raced back to the car to magnify the pictures and see if they could spot the plants. We also saw a view from a narrow ledge looking over the edge. Paul said it was about a 100 foot drop but there were various cacti to break your fall! *Parodia alacriportana* is a fairly standard *Parodia* with yellow flowers.

Paul mentioned that most of the time, they got to the plants just before the peak of flowering or just after, but it was too soon to harvest seeds. Showing a picture of a lake, Paul stated that the bottom of this lake was the type locality of *Parodia rechensis*. He explained that a dam had been built here along with the lake, to produce electricity. They were shown the last of the plants which still exist, and these were being protected by a group of tarantula spiders!

We saw examples of *P. eriocactus leninghausii* being grown in the nursery of Ingo Horst. They went to see the plants growing in habitat and this involved abseiling down a cliff. The plant has a slanted apex because the plant grows against the cliff faces and the plant is trying to look outwards. They saw lots of the plants on the cliff sides. *P. eriocactus magnifica* was protected by a fast flowing river, so again telephoto zoom lenses were required. There were some incredible sized clumps growing on cliffs opposite them. Paul mentioned there were various river systems and each seemed to have a unique plant growing there.

We saw *P. notocactus buiningii*, photographed on a wet day. The best plants of these plants were across the border in Uruguay. *P. notocactus crassigibba* had pink flowers with yellow anthers in the centre. This species usually has yellow flowers. They also found *P. crassigiba werner* montrose with offsets growing at the areoles and the plant offsetting like

mad. *P. notocactus gaucha* (sp nova) was being pointed to by Marlon. *P. linkii* and *P. oxycostata* both have yellow flowers - *P. linkii* has smaller flowers and less ribs, and they were doing well, being amongst the first to re-colonise the granite rocks, indicating there was a good seed bank in the soil.

We also saw *P. notocactus mammulosa* and *P. notocactus muricata*. Sometimes growing in the rocks, they were also found growing under a pine tree where the soil must be very acidic, but the plants looked OK. *P. notocactus ottonis* is the species on which Marlon did his PhD in Zurich, although bureaucracy stopped him from finishing the course. They found the yellow spined form of *P. n. scopia succinea* which had yellow flowers with a red stigma. *P. parodia* itself is not found in Brazil and comes from Argentina/Bolivia. We also saw *P. wigginsia erinacea*.

The next state they visited was Minas Gerais. They started at Belo Horizonte and headed northwards to Monte Claros and Pedra Azul. They travelled around various cactus habitats. The lesser roads were being prepared for tarmac but this meant they weren't being repaired any more, so the back roads were in poor condition. Again there was huge diversity in this state, and the genera *Arrojadoa*, *Arthrocerus*, *Brasilicereus*, *Cereus*, *Cipocereus*, *Coleocephalocereus*, *Discocactus*, *Melocactus*, *Micranthocereus*, *Pilosocereus*, *Tacinga* and *Uebelmannia* are found here.

Paul took us through a selection of the plants they found. *Arrojadoa eriocaulis albicoronata* is quite sought after in collections but rather miserable looking in nature. If the weather is too dry, the top of the stem dries off, leaving a tuberous root. *Arrojadoa penicillata* clearly showed the ring cephalium which grows at joints along the stems. The new growth carries on through the ring. *Brasilicereus* is not a plant he's ever seen in cultivation. The plants had tall sprawling stems, and the flowers were nothing much to write about. There were also some pictures of bromeliads with very sharp teeth on the edge of their stiff leaves. These were dyckias, and they were probably more dangerous than the cacti.

The trunks of *Ceiba pentandra*, the Kapok tree, had pointed stubs growing out from the trunks. Paul thought these were maybe good to rub your back against if you had an itchy back but you probably wouldn't have much of a shirt left afterwards. *Cereus jamacaru* is a multi-branched tree cactus which can grow to a height of several metres. With

*Cipocereus crassisepalus*, the new growths were nice looking plants. *Cipocereus minensis* had striking blue fruits on them. These look like plums and do have a fruity taste to them.

*Coleocephalocereus* (originally *buiningia*) have a side cephalium and we saw picture of Paul posing next to one with a few tufts - the others in the party thought it somewhat resembled him! Some of the cephaliums had small yellow flowers and insects such as a small grasshopper and beetle. They found plants of *C. aureus* (*C. elongatus*) about 1 metre high in a new location which had not previously been mentioned in literature. The area wasn't that secluded - they saw a school bus pass by several times. These environments are in danger because limestone is wanted for quarrying, and we saw a large block of the cut stone.

The edge of the rock clearing was a more interesting area where they found *buiningias* of all sizes, growing with *pilosocereus*, and *opuntias* (*tacinga*). Some of these plants need extra heat and so are not seen in cultivation. We also saw *Coleocephalocereus purpureus*. Paul mentioned the local farmer was trying to clear the site and was spraying the plants with herbicide. They were also twice removed from the site by wardens.

We saw *Discocactus pseudoinsignis* with a cephalium. Their flowering is triggered by a full moon the night before, and since the flowers are pollinated by hawkmoths, the flowers have a strong scent. The other plant they found was *D. placentiformis*. A nice purple flower belonged to a member of the *Velloziaceae*. Their attempts to find *Discocactus horstii* were frustratingly thwarted due to the need to apply for a permit to visit the park where the plants are found, along with the fact that no-one was actually willing to issue them the permit. We saw a few pictures of a member of the *Eriocaulaceae* growing in the quartz - these have "bobble head" flowers on the end of a tall flower stem and they are very popular for flower arranging in Japan.

They found some really good specimens of *Melocacti*, including multiple headed plants and also plants with multiple cephaliums. There were also a number of younger plants which had not yet started to form the cephalium. The plants shown included *M. bahiensis*, *M. concinnus*, *M. ernestii*, *M. levitestatus*, and *M. zehntneri*. The flowers of *Micranthocereus* tend to open late in the day - at 2 or 3 pm, and they are pollinated by hummingbirds. We saw orchids with pseudobulbs and a yellow flower, and other one with pink flowers growing in

the shade of a rock crevice. *Pereskia* is a leafy green plant which would be hard to classify as a cactus until you notice the spines - it is believed to be a primitive ancestor of the modern-day cacti that we are used to seeing.

*Pilosocereus lanatus* relies on lots of wool for protection from the sun and we saw it with fruits and also insects in the cephalium. Paul mentioned that some members of the *pilosocereus* rely on the hair for protection instead of the blue skin. The *Pinosias* in the landscape are only found in Brazil and North America, and these must have evolved when the two continents were joined together. We saw a large plant of *Pilosocereus multicostatus*. The flowers had a powerful stench to attract bats. The blue bodied plants have golden spines and are attractive. Another *pilosocereus* was both woolly and had a blue body. There was an unnamed vine with showy pink/white flowers. We saw several close-ups of the *Pilosocereus* buds on a blue bodied plant with a side cephalium, and also the different stages of growth of the flowers of *Pilosocereus pachycladus*. A photo of Paul posing next to a clump of *Pilosocereus* with one of the stems wearing his hat indicated that the plants were several feet tall. There were some solitary plants and also others forming multiple stems from the base and also candelabra types such as *Pilosocereus fulvilanatus*. Paul said there was evidence that commercial collectors had gone through the area with a machete. Plants from the *Opuntia* family which occur here belong to the genus *Tacinga*.

*Uebelmanniana pectinifera* is one of the jewels of the cactus world. The seedlings germinate under the quartz gravel and the pH is very acidic - it was measured as 3.5. The juvenile plants are very different in appearance compared to the older plants. The plants must endure quite a sandblasting from wind and the quartz pieces. The plants were in good condition and some had formed an orangeish flower bud on top. A bridge in this area was rickety so they reported it to the village and we saw pictures of the bridge being repaired, with Cliff supervising the construction. Some of the plants had whitish bodies which contrasted with the back spines. Others had more greenish bodies. *U. flavispina* is considered a subspecies of *U. pectinifera*, and again the young plants are very different from the mature plants. There was an occasion last year at High Wycombe branch where a Czech speaker thought the young plants were a new species.

The 4-angled "sticks" in the background were *Euphorbia sipolisii*. Paul mentioned that everything seemed greener than his last trip in 1999. We saw a

violet flowered bulb of some type, and a red star shaped 6-petalled flower. There was a ficus (Cheese Plant) and also some sort of toad lily with pink/purple flowers. Next we saw quite a large snake which was coiled up and seemed content not to move – Paul later learned that this was a type of rattlesnake. There were also groups of spiny bromeliads.

After the break, we saw images from a third state in Brazil - Bahia. This is the state where Marlon lives. They again drove around 4000km on variable roads, and the further north they went, the worse the roads were. This state also contains a wide diversity of cacti, but instead of discussing 19 genera and 71 species, Paul said he had picked out two of three stories of note.

We started off at Serra Escura, where a unique cactus grows. A mature student called Marylan Coelho had shown her professor a picture of a plant which he was unable to identify. A cutting was sent to Marlon, who was excited enough to catch the next bus down. The plant had a ringed cephalium and is a member of the *Arrojadoa* – it has since been named *Arrojadoa marylanae* in honour of the discoverer. Marylan is an active member of an action group which studies cacti and is involved with conservation. We also saw *Tacinga palmadora*, *Pilosocereus pachycladus* and *Espostoopsis dybowski*.

Paul mentioned that Marlon is due to publish some work which will bring *Stephanocereus leucostele* into *Arrojadoa*, and move the remaining *Stephanocereus* (*luetzelburgii*) into a new genus linked to *Pilosocereus*. We saw a mixture of species growing amongst the mountainous terrain - some tall but thin stemmed plants, groups of thicker plants, a blue bodied *Pilosocereus*, and then an *Arrojadoa* with a ring cephalium and magenta flowers, and *Melocactus ernstii* growing amongst the white rocks. We saw some more melocacti and groups of the columnar plants growing along the cliff face. There was also a group photo of Marylan, Cliff, and Paul. One day, Marylan had found people from a mining company exploring the mountain's substrate - being limestone/marble, it might have had commercial value. They protested to the local authorities and within a week the mining company staff disappeared, although they left some of their equipment and explosives behind. We also saw *Stephanocereus leucostele*.

In the 1970s, Alfred Buining had found *Melocactus conoideus* at Vitoria da Conquista. In 1999 Brian Bates (now living in Sucre) and a group made up of

a local botanist, dentist, GP, lawyer had read the article by Nigel Taylor which called for the plants to be protected, They made a case to the local council for the area to be protected. Up until then, locals had used the area to collect substrate for building projects and also as a dumping ground for waste. In addition, fires (both from lightning and caused deliberately) were damaging the vegetation. In 1999 they had only managed to find a group of 6 plants of *M. conoideus*. Eventually a large fence was constructed around the area, but the posts were damaged by the fires. The late Keith Grantham suggested that the local substrate be used to make concrete fence posts, but this would be a daunting task since the fence covered 100km and the original had taken 3 years to put up. With Keith's help, Marlon made a proposal to the BCSS conservation fund, and all this happened at a time when plants belonging to the late Ken Etheridge were sold off to raise funds for the fund. Subsequently, the BCSS fund did release money to aid the project.

Marlon hadn't visited the site for many years but their trip last year showed the results had been incredibly encouraging. People had resisted the temptation to turn the site into a park, so the natural state had been preserved. Instead of 6 plants as in 1999, there were now thousands of plants. Marlon reckoned that it took 10 years for a plant to form a cephalium and many of these had done so. It was encouraging to see a project like this succeed and for the locals to have learnt the value of preserving the habitat and the plants.

Next, they went looking for *Melocactus azureus*. The type locality was near an expanding village, and the locals were removing the plants because they were viewed as dangerous for the children. Their visit here was on a rainy day. The local children knew Marlon, and came out to greet them. They found several clumps of the bluish-bodied plants. The children were walking around barefoot so it was easy to see why their parents would want to get rid of the plants. Marlon looked at the local maps and suggested 10 other areas which might be suitable habitats for this plant. They visited these locations and at each of them, they found upwards of 10000 plants, so by the end of the day, they were a lot happier, knowing that the plant was no longer threatened.

The next port of call was Cuba, during February/March 2010. Paul mentioned that although there are cacti in Cuba, he had never seen any presentations about the plants from that country. We started with some tourist pictures. One of the shots

featured the Havana Hilton, which was taken over to become Fidel Castro's headquarters in the 1950s.

We saw a picture of members of the party sampling the local rum-based cocktail, followed by several shots of old cars, many of which were gleaming and restored to a wonderful standard. Paul said many of them have a Toyota engine under the chassis. Many parts of Havana are run down or beaten up, but some parts are well maintained. We saw a row of orange coloured "coconut" taxis - these can carry a couple of people. On another instance Paul said that he saw 12 people cram into a conventional-sized taxi. We saw more pictures of the tourist areas, with fortifications and examples of ancient history and Spanish influence. The old government buildings were based on the Capitol in Washington.

There was music everywhere and people were relaxed, It seemed like there was no unemployment but Paul wondered whether everyone was working just 1 day a week. The shops frequented by the locals had shelves which were mainly empty. Nearby was a derelict train yard - the railways were used to transport sugar cane from the fields to the refineries, but they got some good pictures of the disused engines.

The first cactus we saw was a *Nopalea* - with red flowers growing on pads - the genus is related to *Opuntia*. This was quite commonplace across the island. The flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds and we saw a couple of shots of the flower being visited by a bird. Next was an *Euphorbia* together with a lizard which was licking the yellow flowers. The next image showed the cover of the book "Melocacti of Cuba" by Zoltan Rigerszki, Gerard Delanoy, Endre Ujreti and Anselme Vilardebo. This was the reference work they used to find the various melocactus species around the island. Many of the melocacti are forms of *M. harlowii*. Starting on the south coast, they found *Melocactus harlowii* "nagy". However, access to *Melocactus harlowii* "evae" was not possible since it was located in Guantanamo Bay, and the sight of guards with machine guns was somewhat intimidating. They also found *M. harlowii borhidii* and *M. harlowii harlowii*, as well as *M. harlowii candicans* with red spines in the fresh growth and *M. harlowii acunae* growing on rocky outcrops on the coast. The seed pods in the cephalium were pink and white. There were also some unidentified agaves with blue-green leaves. A shot of the base of Cliff's show showed the spines of these cacti were a real danger.

A visit to the Havana Botanical Gardens was disappointing because it had been hit by a hurricane

3 years ago, and had been destroyed and not rebuilt. Although Cuba does not get into the news headlines that often, the damage from earthquakes and hurricanes is just as much of an issue as it is with the other Caribbean islands. An unusual plant had clusters of 5-petalled flowers which were white and tipped in purple. *M. harlowii acunae lagunaensis* and *M. harlowii acunae* were growing on the cliffsides and on the plains too. *Opuntia stricta* (syn. *O. dilleni*) was a sprawling plant.

At Holguin, they were looking for *Melocactus curvispinus holguensis*. The area they wanted to visit was fenced off but they found an old man, and showed him a picture of the plants they were looking for. The man went away and came back with a bagful of plants which he had dug up! Paul and Cliff bought the plants and then showed the man how to replant them. At the Parque Monumento Nacional he met some people dressed up as Christopher Columbus and the native Indians he met in 1492. The museum is allegedly the spot where Columbus first set foot in the Americas.

At La Palma, they found a few examples of *Melocactus holguiensis*, in a small area about the size of our meeting hall. Further on, they found a tree acting as habitat for a variety of plants - there were bromeliads (tillandsias), rhipsalis and orchids all growing epiphytically. *Selenicereus pteranthus* was also growing on a tree. On another tree, there was a termite's nest half way up the trunk, and a *Selenicereus* was growing out from the nest.

*Melocactus perezassoi* was growing in all sorts of inhospitable terrain and had to be photographed from a distance. *Melocactus matanzanus* hails from near the town of Matanzas. It is probably the commonest melocactus in cultivation. Unfortunately they didn't have the right paperwork to enter the research station where the plants are found, so had to be content with just seeing a few examples planted out in the garden. The final few pictures from Cuba showed the holiday resort they stayed at for 3 days, at the Bay of Pigs. The last picture from Cuba showed 6 cocktails - Paul said they had to try them all because they were included in the price!

The final part of the talk described a visit to Mexico. They went to two islands (Isla Cedros, Isla Natividad) in Baja and then on to the mainland. They were accompanied by Eunice Thompson (from Los Angeles) and 8 people from Japan, including Kobayashi, the president of the Japanese Cactus Society who wanted to see *Dudleya pachyphytum* in habitat. Paul gave a talk at a meeting of the South

Coast branch and they then got on a plane which had been chartered by the Japanese.

The first plant was *Pachycormus discolor* which is a shrubby succulent. It was of interest to the Japanese because some of the plants resembled a large bonsai. *Mammillaria goodridgi* had white flowers with a pink midstripe, and bright red berries. We also saw *Ferocactus chrysacanthus* plants with both red and golden spination. *Dudleya cedreosensis* is supposed to be an invalid name, and there was another plant which looked like a *Dudleya* but which they were unable to identify. *Echinocereus maritimus* was putting on a good show, with reddish yellow flowers which were barely able to emerge from the fierce spination.

To see more plants required a climb to 1500 feet, quite a feat given the age of some members of the party! *Agave sebastiana* in flower was an impressive sight, with clusters of yellow flowers atop a 12 foot tall spike. *Mammillaria* (Cochemia) *pondii* had hooked spines and bright scarlet-red tubular flowers. They found *Dudleya pachyphytum* growing in the rocks along the coastline, quite close to some agaves. The older leaves were light green tinged with red and the newer leaves were bluish white. From a high vantage point, we saw a beautiful view of the azure water.

Moving on to Natividad, we saw a sign about the black vented shearwater. This puffin like bird makes its nest in burrows and is protected. They had arrived during the breeding season and were informed by wardens that they were not allowed to explore the habitat, and all pictures had to be taken from the car, which would have made photographing some of the smaller plants impossible. The authorities did relent and they were able to take pictures of *Mammillaria hutchinsoniana* which had attractive flowers with a midstripe. Plants of *Ferocactus fordii* were all leaning into the sun, and some of these had bright bicoloured red/pink flowers growing in the crown. We saw some more unidentified dudleyas, some of which had coloured up nicely in the sun. We saw more plants of *Echinocereus maritimus* with yellow flowers, and a sprawling version of *Mammillaria pondii* where one of heads was growing along the ground.

The final part of the trip showed the visit to Saltillo, Coahuila and Monterrey. They went through Huasteca canyon which has some very scenic views. Agaves grow on inaccessible steep cliffs and they can only be photographed by a zoom lens. We saw huge examples of *Agave victoria reginae*, some of

which were 3 feet across. Paul said the size of the plant on the cliff faces was limited because if the plants got too big, they would just drop off. However, the plants growing on the ground could get much bigger. They found *Agave albopilosa* after climbing a sheer rockface. First described in 2007, this plant has some commercial potential because of the unusual fluffy tips at the end of the leaves. Apparently someone has collected 5 plants which are now being propagated in the USA, so there should thousands available soon. Although removal of plants from habitat is illegal and can't be condoned, mass production of the plants should reduce the pressure to deplete the plants from habitat. We saw a turbinicarpus in flower, and they found the other painted agave - *Agave fernandiregis* and also an ariocarpus growing just a foot away. These agaves were about a foot across and the markings on them were impressive. There is a cultivar doing the rounds in California which has three spikes on the leaf tip – Paul said in practice this means you get three cuts on your leg instead of one!

On the 15th of April, Paul left Los Angeles to return home - within a few hours of landing, the airspace in Europe was closed down due to the volcanic ash from Iceland!

Vinay Shah

## Table Show Results

There were 13 entries in the table show at the June meeting.

	<b>Cacti – Parodia Group</b>	<b>Succulents – Crassula Group</b>
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Notocactus magnificus	(1) B Beckerleg Graptopetalum suaveolens
	(2) T Grech Parodia leninghausii	(2) J Roskilly Adromischus cooperi
	(3) -	(3) J Roskilly Crassula hottentot
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Parodia schwebsiana	(1) B Beckerleg Crassula titanopsis
	(2) J Burnay Notocactus sp.	(2) T Grech Crassula sp.
	(3) -	(3) J Roskilly Adromischus speherica

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, and will feature a talk on Peru by Cliff Thompson.

The August table show will consist of the **Mammillaria group** (cacti) and the **Euphorbia group** (succulents). Please note that you can submit more than one entry in any of the classes.

The Mammillaria group contains *Mammillaria*, *Bartschella*, *Cochemia*, *Dolichothele*, *Krainzia*, *Leptocladodia*, *Mamillopsis*, *Mammilloidia*, *Oehmea*, *Phellosperma*, *Porfiria*, *Pseudo-mammillaria* and *Solisia*.

The Euphorbia group only contains *Euphorbia*.

A reminder for committee members that a committee meeting will be held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 10 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Isle of Wight	"What I did last winter 3" - Paul Klaassen
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Portsmouth	"What I did last winter" - Paul Klaassen
Mon 19 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting @ St Winfrids, Totton
Tue 27 <sup>th</sup>	Jul-	New Forest	Display / Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, Brockenhurst
Thu 29 <sup>th</sup>			
Sat 31 <sup>st</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Display/Plant Sales @ Solent Fuchsia Show, Community Hall, Titchfield
Tue 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Aug	Southampton	Southern Peru – Cliff Thompson
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening at John & Claudia Roberts
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Aug	Portsmouth	no meeting
Tue 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Southampton	South-West USA 2009 - Ian Woolnough
Sat 11 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Isle of Wight	Flowers of the Sea - Mrs Simpson
Sat 11 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Romsey	Display / Plant Sales @ Romsey Show
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Portsmouth	Cacti, Succulents & their Problems - Tony & Suzanne Mace

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