

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The wet weather continued through last month, with heavy flooding in parts of the country. We were spared the worst of this, although those members who attended the New Forest Show may still be washing the mud off their shoes! In general, the lack of sun during July means that plants have been reluctant to flower, although a few of them were making the most of the sun this last weekend.

Announcements

The branch took part in the **New Forest Show** towards the end of July. Unfortunately this year the show organisers restricted us to just 6 tickets (2 per day for 3 days, with additional tickets costing £5 each) and this meant that not everyone who wanted to help at the show got a chance to attend. Overall, the show was a success, with plant sales being close to figures achieved in previous years. However, it was very wet and muddy throughout the week.

There will be a **change of speaker** at next month's meeting, so please amend your programme cards. **Marlon Machado**, a well-known cactus expert and author from Brazil will be visiting the UK and has agreed to give a talk on the "Cacti of Brazil" at our next branch meeting on 4th September. Tom Radford was originally scheduled to give a talk on Asclepiads on that date but has kindly agreed to give his talk at a later date.

Our last main event for the year will be this coming weekend (11-12 August), as part of the Summer Garden Show at Broadlands. We will be holding a

Branch Show on Saturday and will then re-arrange the inside of the marquee to form a display on Sunday. If you are taking part in the show or helping in our marquee then you are entitled to free entry to the event – just use the back entrance (@ Romsey Rapids) and follow the signs for exhibitor car parking.

Last Month's Meeting

Philip Clemow had brought along 3 photographs featuring a Puya which had come into flower during the weekend when we held a display at Hilliers arboretum in June. The photographs showed an overall view of the plant, and there was also a close up of the unusual bluish-green flowers. Like an Agave, the plant dies after flowering. The plant was around 10 years old, and Hilliers have another Puya which will flower in due course.

Wild West

Neil Oakman started his talk by stating that he was not really a cactus grower. He has a few cacti in his collection, but his main interest is in the other succulents. In March-April 2003, he was part of a party of six with varied interests who decided to visit Baja, Arizona and California. They flew into San Diego and stayed in a motel on the first night. They met up with Dylan Hannon from Los Angeles and he joined them for the first few days of their trip.

They travelled to Tijuana, on the border of the California and Mexico and then headed south into Baja. Baja California is actually part of Mexico and consists of northern and southern states. Their first stop was in the foothills of the Sierra Juarez. A combination of fires and El Nino the year before led to a particularly good display of wild flowers during their visit. We saw a white flowered non-succulent Euphorbia, *Penstemon spectabilis*, *Salvia columbariae*, and a lupin. *Escholzia californica v. peninsularis*, the Californian poppy was growing everywhere. In the middle of some gravel was a well camouflaged grasshopper and we also saw a lizard sunbathing on a rock.

Driving on, they could see cacti growing up on the hillsides. Neil said they tended to spend a night or two camping and then booked into motels in between. He also mentioned that American hire car companies did not allow cars to be taken into Mexico, unless extra insurance (in their case, \$25 per day) was taken out.

They found *Mammillaria dioica* which had cream flowers with a dark midstripe. It is widespread in the northern part of Baja. They also found a *Dudleya* but were unable to identify it. The next photo showed a piece of cholla (*Opuntia*) stuck on the jeans of one of the party's members. Many of chollas have the ability to attach themselves to passing animals and use this as a method of dispersal. A set of Leatherman multi-tool pliers came in handy to extract the spiny segment.

Dylan pointed out *Asclepias albicans* which had white flowers with typical recurved petals. They stopped for a lunch break overlooking the island of Miramar in the gulf and were treated to a flying display by frigate birds. The females have a white throat and the males are completely black although they form a red pouch during the breeding season. They also saw an osprey. At the end of the weekend it was time to bid farewell to Dylan who had to return to Los Angeles, but the rest of the party continued down the coast, and headed inland. *Solanum elaeagnifolium* is a relative of the potato and has purple flowers. They also came across two species of *Bursera* in Baja - *Bursera microphylla* and *Bursera hindsiana*.

A pachycaul succulent found in this area is *Fouquieria splendens*, which grows into large bushes. The next picture showed a white daisy-like flower which no-one had been able to identify. There was also an annual lupin and an attractive shrub, *Encelia farinosa* which is also known as the brittle bush. It is a woody perennial which is grazed by cattle in the area. *Dalea schottii* is the Indigo bush. The first of many ferocacti they found was *F. peninsulae*. A lycium with red berries is another relative of the potato. A shrub easy to overlook because it's growing throughout the area is the yellow flowered creosote bush, *Larrea tridentata*.

They eventually rejoined the main road south, Mexico 1. On seeing more cacti they started stopping and looking around. Mexico 1 is a single lane road so one has to be careful with the traffic as to where you do stop. They found *Cylindropuntia arbuscula* and *Opuntia prolifera*. The flowers on these were nice, it's a pity the plants are so large

and vicious. *Pachycereus pringlei* is known as "cardón" and we saw the flowers at the top of one of these plants. Neil admitted he was standing on a rock to take the picture. Some cardóns are 200 years old and can weigh 10 tons and reach 20m in height – indeed these are the tallest of all cacti.

Machaerocereus gummosus forms black floppy bushes whereas *Machaerocereus eruca* grows flat to the ground – they only found the former although both species are supposed to occur in Baja. *Idria columnaris* is a giant pachycaul succulent which goes under the common name of the Boojum tree. There was a profusion of flowers at the roadsides. The sand verbena *Abronia gracilis* grows in great profusion and the desert mallow *Sphaeralcea ambigua* has orange flowers. On their way back up this road a week later, all the flowers had finished flowering so their timing had been fortunate. They spotted another cholla, *Opuntia biglovii*, at quite a distance off the road. It had yellow flowers. They also came across *Agave shawii* in flower, and we saw a close-up of the flowers. They then headed off for Bahia de Los Angeles (Bay of Angels). In the distance was a purple mass of sand verbenas. They spotted what they thought was a red flower on a cliff and went to investigate – it turned out to be a red-spined *Ferocactus gracilis*.

At their motel, each room had a mural of local sealife – their room featured a pelican and soon enough they saw a brown pelican and also some gulls. They had wanted to go dolphin/whale watching in the Bay of Cortez but the weather was not suitable (it was too windy) so instead they went to Valle Las Flores. The cardón here were particularly large, some being 50-60ft tall. They were also no longer seeing *Fouquieria splendens* – it was replaced by *Fouquieria digeutii* - this has many-branched stems and is generally much untidier. *Agave deserti* was quite widespread. The next day it was still too windy to sail into the bay so they continued their exploring. A Boojum tree had an arcing tip as if it was pointing somewhere. There was a proliferation of sand verbenas and Californian poppies. They found a 3 inch long striped caterpillar feeding on the poppies and came across *Opuntia acanthocarpa*.

Taking a dirt road to San Borja, they found a cristate *Machaerocereus*. This was also their first look at ancient cave paintings and rock art. Confined to these central parts of Baja, some of the images are thought to be 1500 years old. A group of American students were studying the images,

many of which are stylised and abstract, mainly featuring human and animal shapes.

They came across *Calliandra eriophylla* (fairy duster) – the ones in Baja have red flowers, whereas in Arizona the blooms are pink or white. They also found *Euphorbia misera* with multiple branched stems and a fruit forming, and the normal form of *Lophocereus schottii*, which he thought was more handsome than the monstrose form which is widespread in cultivation. There were also bromeliads, an example being *Tillandsia recurvata*. They eventually reached the junction between the Northern and Southern states. There is a border patrol and they were almost thrown into jail because they had bananas with them; you are not allowed to take any fruit across the state border.

They stopped at Guerrero Negro, and were eventually able to book a boat to take them whale watching in the lagoon. The men who run the boats catch fish for a living at other times of the year, and they are trained by local conservationists to avoid disturbing the whales. Neil showed several pictures of grey whales and also a dolphin, a brown pelican and an osprey with a fish in its talons.

Next day, after a breakfast of eggs and chilli sauce, they visited a rocky hillside near San Ignacio. A plant of *Opuntia invicta* was quite tatty, with very few of the pads appearing to be alive or growing. They also found *Echinocereus brandegeei*, *Lemaireocereus thurberi* with dark spines and an unidentified *Ferocactus*. We also saw a natural garden of a collection of succulent plants growing under the protection of some bushes. At San Ignacio they were able to get permits to visit more cave paintings.

Cerro Colorado (“cactus hill”) is claimed to contain the largest diversity of succulents in Mexico. *Pachycereus* growing here were *P. pectinaboriginum*. They also found *Mammillaria lewisiana*, and *M. dioica*. *Ipomea peninsularis* was a tuberous cucurbit which was scrambling up a cardón. There was a very dull looking *Opuntia phaecantha*, *Agave serrulata*, big fans of *Pedilanthus macrocarpus* and *Euphorbia misera* with some rather insignificant flowers. They also came across *Cochemiea* (*Mammillaria*) *setispina*, *Myrtillocactus cochal* and *Lophocereus schottii* in flower. *Ferocactus rectispinus* was about 4 feet tall and was in flower.

They headed for the coast and the port of Santa Rosalia, seeing a flying display of blue footed

boobies along the way. Their guidebook mentioned that there was a church of particular interest at Santa Rosalia – the Santa Barbara church had been designed by Gustave Eiffel of Eiffel tower fame. They eventually found it; it had interior steel beams and was clad in cast iron. Their hotel in Santa Rosalia was an old French colonial building with silk panels on some of the walls. Some of shops and houses were painted in bright colours. Since there was a limit on the time they wanted to spend in Baja, this was as far south as they went. They began to retrace their steps past San Ignacio and wanted to head towards Sierra de San Francisco to see more cave paintings.

Argemone gracidelanta is a mexican poppy and has white flowers. There was a vicious opuntia with dark red flowers. They saw a corral made from cereus skeletons. A picture of a turkey was followed by the worrying sight of two 2 turkey vultures, perhaps eyeing their next meal. From their camp site at Sierra de San Francisco, they could just see the Pacific ocean. This area was one of the few flat areas they found and the ground was soft enough to allow them to drive in their tent pegs. A view from the campsite showed the Pacific ocean and Neil remarked that the vegetation was lush on this side of Baja.

It was necessary to hire a guide to see the cave paintings at Cueva del Raton. We saw a few examples of the art – again, mainly human figures and animals. Nearby, they came across several plants of *Echinocereus engelmannii*, with flowers in slightly different shades of pink and magenta. The mexican blue palm *Brahea armata* has blue-grey leaves. They also saw *Mammillaria setispina*, *Dudleya rubens* and *Agave deserti* growing amongst the rocks wherever an outcrop offered some protection.

They proceeded to head up Mexico 1 towards Mexicali. Just north of Sierra de San Francisco, they saw *Cardiospermum corindum* with inflated papery seed pods. Catavina is one of the top succulent spots in Baja, and amongst the big boulders there were big succulents growing here. They found a cristate cardon, and the widespread *Mammillaria dioica*. A little lizard had lost its tail. Just north of Catavina at El Marmol is a deserted onyx mine. The equipment abandoned there in the late 1950s looks like it's only been left for a year or so.

The desert mistletoe *Foradendrum californicum* grows on the mesquite trees – different mistletoes grow on different hosts. Heading north for

Rosarito, they came across *Rosa minutifolia*. *Harfordia macroptera* has curious inflated seed pods and is known as Rabbit's purse. They also found a red flowered ferocactus and a mammillaria with yellowish flowers.

Along this area, there are grape vines and farms – some parts of the land are irrigated and quite fertile. Much of the fruit produced goes to California. There was also a prickly pear farm. A glochid-less variety of *Opuntia* is grown and sliced pads are sold in supermarkets and eaten as vegetables. We saw the desert lavender - *Hyptis emoryi*., and the northern king bird. Altogether they saw 105 different birds on the trip, and 68 were in Baja. They spotted the white leaves of *Dudleya pulverulenta* shining on the cliffsides – on closer inspection the plants had several offsets. A juniper was identified as *Juniperus californica*. As they headed towards Mexicali, they passed wetlands which were good areas for birdwatching and spotted a great egret. At Mexicali, some of the party left for San Diego and the rest set off across the top of Mount Arizona, towards Tucson.

They reached the Organ Pipe national monument which is named for the collection of *Stenocereus thurberi* found here. They also came across *Echinocereus nicholii* and *Fouquieria splendens*. *Opuntia fulgida* is called the chain fruit cholla and is unusual in that it forms flowers and new fruits on the old fruits. In this region, the cardón is replaced by the giant Saguaro, *Carnegiea gigantea*. He managed to collect a few seeds from a pink flowered *Mammillaria grahamii*. A plant of *Agave palmeri* was about to flower. Animals in the area included a ground squirrel, a cactus wren and a large lizard which was 2 feet long. A *Delphinium parryi* had the right coloured flowers but the shape of the flower was quite different from what we grow in our gardens.

The Buenos Aires national wildlife refuge is a mixture of mixture of wetlands and dry habitats. They saw *Ferocactus wislizenii* with flowers and seed pods, growing 20 feet from the river bed and also came across *Agave deserti*. At the Coronado National Forest, they found *Echinocereus rigidissimus* and wildflowers such as *Penstemon parryi* and the evening primrose *Oenothera cespitosa* and *Oenothera californica*. There were also examples of the plane trees - *Platanus wrightii*.

In Tucson, they stayed with Greg Corman, who runs a business landscaping gardens using native succulent plants which don't need as much water

as conventional gardens. agaves, They visited the Tucson botanic gardens where he spotted an Inca dove nesting in the branch of a broken saguaro. A couple of Greg's favourite spots were Sabino Canyon and Mount Lemmon. At the former, they found *Mammillaria microcarpa*, *Opuntia engelmannii* and *Juniperus deppeana* (called the alligator juniper since the pattern on its bark looks like a crocodile's skin). He also spotted a well camouflaged white-tailed deer. Mount Lemmon is 9157 feet above sea level and is a popular ski resort.

For the final leg of the journey they went through Phoenix and headed into California where they entered the Joshua tree national monument. The Joshua tree is *Yucca brevifolia* which forms large tree-like plants with tall stems. On this occasion, the plants looked a little dry. They also spotted a coryphantha. the purplewax *Nama demissum* which is not much bigger than the gravel it grows on, and the desert dandelion *Malacothrix glabrata*. We saw the flowers of *Ephedra californica* which is a primitive cone bearing plant, and *Datura deltioidies*, all parts of which are poisonous – it is used by the native Indians as a narcotic. Neil mentioned that Daturas are annual or biennials and the flowers point up whereas the related Brugmansias from South America are woody or shrubby and the flowers hang down. We saw the ghost flower *Mohavea confertiflora* and a nice specimen of *Foquieria splendens*. *Opuntia basilaris* was in good condition and we saw the strange desert trumpet *Eriogonum inflatum* – this plant forms a swelling in its stems, caused by larvae which grow inside the plant.

They met up Dylan Hannon at the Rancho Santa Ana botanic gardens which specialises in growing native plants. He was disappointed by the gardens – the plants were not well labelled and not in good condition either. The weather means that Dylan's collection can be grown outside with just a shade break. Dylan took them to the Huntington botanical gardens and we saw a picture of a large bed of cacti. They finally saw *Machaerocereus eruca* here, after never having found it in Baja. They also met John Trager who grows all sorts of exotic things including cacti, succulents, euphorbias and orchids.

Finally, they travelled down to Vista to meet Steven Hammer. Neil said that Steven just wins you over with his enthusiasm. The plants were being grown in shade houses and there collections of Haworthias and a Mesemb house. We also saw a

shot of Steven's Glottiphyllum collection. The talk ended with a night view over Los Angeles.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 10 entries in the table show at the July meeting.

	Cacti – Echinopsis Group	Succulents – Aloe Group
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Chamaecereus (orange)	(1) J Roskilly Aloe erinacea
	(2) -	(2) B Beckerleg Aloe erinacea
	(3) -	(3) J Roskilly Aloe peglerae
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Acanthocalycium spiniflorum	(1) B Beckerleg Aloe plicatilis
	(2) J Roskilly Chamaecereus x (lemon/orange)	(2) J Burnay Aloe peglerae
	(3) -	(3) J Burnay Aloe plicatilis

Ivor Biddlecombe

Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held at 79 Shirley Avenue on the 16th of July.

Four new local members have registered with the society during this year.

Recent meetings and events were discussed. The last day at Whiteley was rained off, but the displays there and at Hilliers had both been successful. The Branch dinner at the Luzborough went well.

Preparations for the New Forest Show in July, and the Zone 11 Quiz and Broadlands Show/Display in August were discussed. Tickets for the New Forest Show had not yet arrived and the organisers were only going to allocate us 6 tickets, with the branch having to purchase additional tickets if needed.

A members' vote on three potential designs for a new branch badge was taken at the July branch meeting and one design emerged as a clear favourite.

Vinay Shah

Snippets

Wanted – Slide Projector

Has anyone got a redundant slide projector? With the new digital technology, many people will have slide projectors they no longer use. Peter Down does illustrated talks to various clubs (not on cacti) and his machine broke the other day. If you have a spare projector, please contact Peter with a price.

Next Month's Meeting

Our next branch meeting will be held on September 4th. There is a change to the advertised talk since we wish to take advantage of a visit by Marlon Machado, who will be giving us a talk on the "Cacti of Brazil". Marlon is well respected as an expert in his field and he has published many works, including articles for the BCSS Journal.

The September table show will feature the **Gymnocalycium Group** (Cacti) and **Mesembs - excluding Lithops** (Succulents). Please note that members are allowed to submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Gymnocalycium Group includes *Gymnocalycium*, *Brachycalycium* and *Neowerdermannia*.

The Mesemb family is large and includes over 120 genera, the names of which are listed in the Handbook of Shows. Lithops are specifically excluded, but plants belonging to the *Argyroderma*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Faucaria* and *Nananthus* subgroups are allowed. Some of the more common eligible species include: *Argyroderma*, *Gibbaeum*, *Pleiospilos*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Ophthalmophyllum*, *Faucaria*, *Glottiphyllum*, *Lampranthus*, *Trichodiadema*, *Aloinopsis*, *Fenestraria*, *Frithia*, and *Titanopsis*.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 11 th	Aug	Romsey	Southampton Branch Show (11 th) + Display (12 th) & Plant Sales @ Summer Flower and Garden Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Sun 12 th			
Fri 17 th	Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening @ Janet & Peter Collard's
Sat 18 th	Aug	Portsmouth	No Meeting
Tue 4 th	Sep	Southampton	Change of Speaker: "Cacti of Brazil" – Marlon Machado
Sat 15 th	Sep	Portsmouth	"The Succulent Scene" – Jean Ellis
Mon 17 th	Sep	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Fri 21 st	Sep	Isle of Wight	"Socotra" – David Porter
Tue 2 nd	Oct	Southampton	"Confessions of a Cactogenarian" – Anthony Mitchell

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