

---

March 2007  
Volume 1, Issue 1

---

## Inside this Issue

- 1 Welcome from the Chair
- 2 Species survival plans start to take shape
- 3 Panama 2008
- 4 Proceedings of Cycad 2005
- 5 Registration with IUCN/SSC
- 6 Global Cycad Assessment
- 7 CSG Website
- 8 Profiles of new members
- 9 News from members

---

IUCN/SSC Cycad Specialist Group  
C/O SANBI  
Private Bag X7  
Claremont, 7735, South Africa

Contact: Bridget Meier  
[meier@sanbi.org](mailto:meier@sanbi.org)

---

CHAIR: Dr John Donaldson

---

### 1. Welcome from the Chair

For some time now, we have been thinking about a newsletter for the Cycad Specialist Group, so it's a great pleasure to introduce you to the first issue. I hope that you all enjoy it and find it a valuable means of communication.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Bressler Foundation towards the running of the Cycad SG, Bridget Meier has been employed to assist

the Chair and she will be collating items for the newsletter. I am always amazed by the exciting projects CSG members are involved in so please let Bridget know what you are doing.

This newsletter is meant to share news about our work in the CSG, upcoming events, and other items that make the network more effective. It is not meant to compete with other cycad society publications and therefore won't feature long articles. Let us know what you think.

### 2. Species Survival Plans

At the CSG meeting in Mexico, we discussed developing species survival and recovery plans for cycads. In July 2006, the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, together with the CSG held a Population and Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA) workshop to develop a species survival plan for *Encephalartos latifrons*. The workshop report is available on the CSG website  
<http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sgs/csg/>

### 3. Panama 2008

The 8<sup>th</sup> international conference on cycad biology will be held in Panama City, Panama, from 12-18 January 2008. This represents the eighth in a series of meetings held every three years since 1987 and now organised under the auspices of the CSG. Key dates are:  
1 March 2007- 2<sup>nd</sup> Announcement  
1 May 2007- 3<sup>rd</sup> Announcement  
30 June 2007- Deadline for abstracts  
31 August 2007 - registration

Enquiries to Dr Alberto Taylor  
[sidney@cwpanama.net](mailto:sidney@cwpanama.net)  
Look for updates on the conference website  
[http://www.igc.up.ac.pa/vice-ip/cycad\\_vip.htm](http://www.igc.up.ac.pa/vice-ip/cycad_vip.htm)

### 4. Proceedings of Cycad 2005

Most of you will be eagerly awaiting news of the Proceedings of Cycad 2005.

Dennis Stevenson reports that the final document is with the copy editor and printer and he expects to see it published by July 2007.

### 5. Registration with IUCN/SSC

All CSG members should have been contacted by Nathalie Velasco of IUCN/SSC about the Commission online registration system (CoReg). Nathalie said she "...will send a message to all members providing them a username and password in order for them to enter our CoReg to add, change, or remove any information from their personal registration form (online). This information will appear in the Knowledge Network and it will be important to keep it up to date."

If members have not been contacted by Nathalie, please contact her at [nathalie.velasco@iucn.org](mailto:nathalie.velasco@iucn.org)

### 6. Global Cycad Assessment

The CSG has been working with the IUCN/SSC - CI/CABS Biodiversity Assessment Unit to complete a global cycad conservation assessment along the lines of the global amphibian assessment. John Donaldson and De Wet Bosenberg have been leading the project, which will be completed by end of March 2007. Data sheets have been sent out to most members of the Cycad SG and if you have any additional data, please contact De Wet as soon as possible.  
([bosenberg@sanbi.org](mailto:bosenberg@sanbi.org)).

### 7. CSG website

Jody Haynes has put together a website for the CSG. Check it out at <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sgs/csg/>

## 8. Profiles of new members

**Dr Harvey Ottley** received her PhD in zoology from the University of New England, working on crocodiles! She became involved with cycads as a member of the Palm and Cycad Society of the Northern Territory, Australia, and was contracted in 1996 to develop a management plan for cycads by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory.



Harvey with a poster on the botanic garden collection

Harvey's background research into cycads gave her a deep appreciation for all cycad genera and she was involved in the initial stages of the George Brown Botanic Garden's (Darwin) new cycad garden, which has representative plants from throughout the world. She hopes with her scientific background and enthusiasm that she can make a positive contribution to the Cycad Specialist Group

**Dr. Javier Francisco-Ortega** is an Associate Professor at Florida International University (FIU) and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG). He is the head of the "Molecular Systematics and Conservation Genetics Laboratory" jointly operated by both institutions. Javier's laboratory is currently conducting research on the conservation genetics and phylogenetics of a wide variety of tropical plant groups, including cycads (see news from members).

**Dr. Patrick Griffith** is Executive Director of Montgomery Botanical Center in Coral Gables, Florida, USA. Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC) is a non-profit institution dedicated to advancing science,

conservation, and education through scientific plant collections. MBC curates a leading collection of population-based, scientifically documented cycads.



Patrick trained as a botanist and has worked in research, plant conservation, and floristic inventory. His current academic

interests are: the conservation role of botanical collections; the relationship between collections and research; and quantifying the effectiveness of *ex situ* conservation.

## 9. News from Members

**Tim Gregory** is working with **John Donaldson** on adapting the American Zoos and Aquariums Association (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP) mechanism, structure, and software to suit the needs of similar Cycad Survival Plans for *Encephalartos latifrons*, *E. hirsutus*, and *E. middelburgensis*. He represents the University of California Berkeley Botanical Garden in this regard as they have a significant number of individuals of these three species that were acquired in 2001 from a sting operation on a cycad smuggling ring.

Tim is working on descriptions of several new species of *Dioon* and is continuing with exploration to find new species and new populations of cycads in Mexico, where he is working together with SERBO (Sociedad para el Estudio de los Recursos Bioticos de Oaxaca), an NGO in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Tim is also collaborating with Dr. Chelsea Specht at UCB on two projects – one to isolate DNA microsatellites that can be used to identify individual plants in order to optimally manage *ex situ* populations; and a second to use the same technology to study evolution in *Dioon*.

**William Tang** reports that he is still involved with conservation work in China, focusing on *Cycad debaoensis* and the relationship between the plant and the villagers who share the same habitat.

Education has played a key role in the success of this project, in the adoption by the villagers of a conservation ethic for this plant, and the significant reduction in poaching.

William has also been involved with the CSG subgroup on invasive pests and the production of a report and pest alert for the *Cycas aulacaspis* scale (see CSG website) and profiles for other invasive pests of cycads.

**Javier Francisco-Ortega** reports that he has a graduate student using microsatellite markers to document levels of genetic variation in *Dioon*. Conservation genetic studies of cycads using SSRs have also been started on species of *Zamia* endemic to the Caribbean Basin, as part of a project led by Dr. Alan Meerow at USDA. Javier's laboratory is also exploring alternative fast evolving single/low-copy genes to obtain phylogenetic reconstructions within several genera of cycads, including *Ceratozamia*, *Dioon*, and *Zamia*.

More recently, Javier's laboratory has started collaboration with **John Donaldson** on conservation genetics and microevolutionary patterns in species of *Encephalartos*. Javier's research is also being undertaken in close collaboration with **Andrew Vovides** and Jorge Gonzalez Astorga (Jardín Botánico de Xalapa, México), **Dennis Stevenson** (New York Botanical Garden), and David Bogler (Missouri Botanical Garden).



**Dennis Stevenson** collecting leaf samples for a cycad barcoding project he is working on