

# CACTUS COURIER

*Newsletter of the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society*

Volume 54, Number 3

March 2008

**March 15, 2008**

**12:00 NOON !!**

**Joslyn Senior Center  
724 N. Broadway, Escondido**

*Note 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday  
& earlier starting time!*

## *“High and Dry in Argentina”*

• Andrew Wilson •

No, we were not stranded without a penny in our pockets; we were high in the Andes of northern Argentina enjoying the magnificent cacti and scenery of that remote area. Last November, together with Stan Yalof (Palomar) and Tom Demeritt (San Diego), I

*[Andrew Wilson]* took a trip there. We had grown each *gymnocalyciums*, *lobivias* and *rebutias* for years but this was the first time to see these and other southern hemisphere cacti at home.



At Quebrada de Toro the redoubted travelers led by Guillermo Rivera (front right) pose before *Trichocereus pasacana*. On the left, Stan takes the pledge, while Tom and I stand central to the rear with heads covered.

Leaving the sixteenth century city of Cordoba we traveled northwards, crossing dry salty flatlands and passing through thorn-thicketed valleys each filled with all types of cacti, and gradually climbed to the eastern slopes of the high Andes. The cacti of the lower regions are numerous and highly interesting but there is so much to cover that I'll limit the talk to the very different species we saw above ten thousand feet. Compared to the landscapes of Arizona and Baja where cacti grow these were quite different. At these altitudes perhaps that should not be surprising, but it was! The mountainsides were indeed totally dry with large areas of them totally bare, the tropical sun (we were just inside the tropic of Capricorn) was intense but the air was cool. There were no pine trees, nor indeed very much of any vegetation, but great stands of giant

*Trichocereus* cacti and terrestrial bromeliads that appeared in many places.

It had not rained for many months and at lower altitudes many cacti still waited to bloom. Yet, these giant cacti had begun. There were two *Trichocereus* species, *T. terschecki* and *T. pasacana*, the former in the more southern and the latter in the more northern areas of our trip. Like many cacti of South America they have been re-named, several times. Right now they are placed under *Echinopsis*; *T. pasacana* is now *E. atacamensis*, an unfortunate choice as Atacama is on the other side of the Andes! Both grow to thirty feet tall. At its upper elevations above 11,000 feet where we saw many, *T. pasacana* reaches only about half that height.



The main stem of *Trichocereus pasacana* is over two feet in diameter.

Set in the backdrop of the Andes the forests of cacti presented a spectacular scene. It was remarkable that almost nothing, other than cacti and a few bromeliads, was growing at these altitudes. With no sign of grasses they emerged from bare mountain scree. At their bases grew specimens of much smaller

cacti such as *Gymnocalycium spegazzini*, *Pyrrhocactus umadeave* and *Mahueniopsis boliviana*, the latter related to our opuntias. They showed bloom but their clearly defined geometries set into the stones provided adequate reason to keep our attention for some time.



*Mahueniopsis boliviana* emerging from mountain scree.

Onwards and upwards, our journey continued until we arrived close to the border with Bolivia. The scenery was flatter and llama herds tended by Indians became more noticeable. Llamas and alpacas live on the short, stubby and sparse vegetation that grows in such regions, which are generally referred to as puna. Eventually, we reached a place of almost complete desolation. There, at about 12,000 feet, a tiny cactus called *Yavia* grows. It was first found less than ten years ago and so far, it is the only known site for this

extremely rare species. How amazing for anyone to uncover such a small cactus species in such a vast, remote area! Our trip leader was upset that since his previous visit there, a significant fraction of the few dozen original plants appeared to have vanished. He spent almost an hour in a very small area before he could locate those remaining. The rarity of the species draws interested parties like ourselves from around the world as well as greedy collectors to the site.



*Yavia cryptocarpa*, one of the rarest of all cacti, grows in complete isolation

There were many more special places where we climbed up the mountains, observed the results of great geologic upheavals, saw *cleistocacti*, *lobivias* and

*oreocacti* in bloom and watched condors circle overhead. We will talk about them too.

# BOARD MEETING • PLANT SALES • BRAG PLANTS • EXCHANGE TABLE

## Plant-of-the-Month:

### REFRESHMENTS

**Phyllis Flechsig**                      **Martha Hanson**                      **Jerre Doughty**  
**Lorie Johansen**    **Connie & Red Bernal**                      **Betty Pearce**                      **Jacob Bennett**

### *PCSS Name Badges*

Vicki Broughton will be collecting \$5.40, cash or check, for the new name badges. Or you may mail to: P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033. Be sure to print your name clearly.



### February Brag Plants

#### Cactus

- 1<sup>st</sup> *Stenocactus multicostatus*  
Lorie Johansen
- 2<sup>nd</sup> *Matucana conothelos & Lobivia oxyblastra*  
Peter Walkowiak
- 3<sup>rd</sup> *Cephalocereus senilis*  
Don Nelson

#### Succulents

- 1<sup>st</sup> *Aloe plicatilis*  
Rese Brown
- 2<sup>nd</sup> *Dudleya caespitosa*  
Dick Henderson
- 3<sup>rd</sup> *Lachenelia carnosa*  
Andrew Wilson



### **OBSERVATIONS**

Ron Chisum

I went by the Palomar Garden a couple of times last week. The rains, followed by a week of warm weather, have worked their miracle on the plants. All the winter growers look great. The Aeonium section is gorgeous and several of the aloes are in full bloom. Richard Henderson has been working diligently to keep things tidy. It's a big garden and more volunteer help is needed. We are making an effort to increase attendance in the garden. Both volunteers and friends are welcome. You do not have to pull weeds if you don't feel like it. Do not forget your camera. We will

have a lot of plants blooming this year. Additionally, the rapid growth means there will be some cuttings available. The next meeting of the Palomar Garden Committee will be the first Saturday of the month at 11:00 AM April 5th.

I was thrilled at the turnout of our last meeting. We could have used more treats for the food table, but that is a minor thing. We had four new members sign up. "Thank You" to those members who brought someone to the meeting. Additional thanks go to Vicki for her publicity efforts.

Although we have had some nice weather, a word of caution: Do not break out the fertilizer and garden hose yet. March can be a sneaky month. There is still plenty of opportunity for rain and cold nights. Use water sparingly to keep ROT from killing your plants. Also, a friend called me with a sad story of a columnar cactus which broke under it's own weight. My advice was to check the break for rot. Cut out or cut off any problem area ( if there was any). Place the top portion on rocks or chunks of wood to get it off the wet ground and give it time to callus. Plant the "cutting" in mid April or May after the threat of heavy rain has passed. Do not water it in. Do not put a basin around it. Ignore it and it will likely be just fine.

**April 26th is the PCSS members Plant Show. Bring your best plants, and invite your friends to see why we enjoy our plants so much.**

I continue to need material, suggestions, and comments for this column. Either tell me in person or email me at rachisum@cox.net. Thanks.

RON





***Garden Days***  
*Dick Henderson*

The last Garden Day found Ron Chisum, Charlie Armbruster and Richard Henderson working away at Palomar. We are told a number of people dropped by to see what was up. Great! Maybe next time they can lend a hand!

I am also told that “Garden Committee” is kind of intimidating. Too official, and serious. In that case, why don’t we come up with something a little more casual? If you have some suggestions, let’s give them a try.

The next meeting of the “Garden Task Force” (yes, I do have a thesaurus!) will be the first Saturday of April. Come on out and see what the Garden has to offer.



Purmamarca



Vicuña in the Puna

*Don't let this be the last Cactus Courier you receive!  
Time to renew your membership...*

**Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society**

P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033  
*Membership Application*

I/We wish to join/renew membership in the  
**Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society**  
**\$20.00 Single Membership**  
**\$25.00 Dual Membership** (same address)  
(1/2 price after June)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
“Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society”  
P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033



***2008 MEETING SCHEDULE***

<b>15 March</b>	<b>Joslyn Center</b> <b><u>NOTE!!! 3rd Saturday !!</u></b>
26 April	Joslyn Center
17 May	Joslyn Center <b><u>NOTE!!! 3rd Saturday !!</u></b>
28 June	Joslyn Center
26 July	<u>Quail Garden</u>
23 August	<u>Palomar Garden</u>
27 September	Joslyn Center
25 October	Joslyn Center
22 November	Joslyn Center
20 December	Joslyn Center <b><u>NOTE!!! 3rd Saturday !!</u></b>

**It's Time to Get Ready !!**



**April 2008**  
**Members' Plant Show**

The **April Plant Show** is **NEXT MONTH!** Start by picking out your best plants, check pot size versus plant size, quality of the pot, position of the plant, remove dead leaves and other appropriate grooming. A little work now will pay big dividends and make you proud the day of the show.