

The International Palm Society (IPS) visits Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica

“Palms were known as the ‘Princes of Botany’ for their close relationship with men”, explains IPS Peruvian associate, Fernando Roca, who has organized the Board of Directors reunion at Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica. “*They provide us with food and shelter (with their bark, wood and leaves), and they generously offer their parts so communities in the Amazon can create tools and weapons, prepare medicines, weave bags and clothing, attract birds that are useful to them, and – according to some traditions– communicate people with supernatural beings*”, says Roca about the many uses of palms in the Peruvian Amazon.

There are more than 120 species in the Amazon, and almost all of these can be found in Peru. This country also counts with 16 species of Andean palms, many of which grow in the mountain chain, while the humid forest of Tumbes has registered two species. These were important reasons to organize the IPS reunion in Peru, which started at Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica.

What are the IPS’s core objectives?

The International Palm Society (IPS) is a non-profit institution that promotes knowledge, research and conservation of palms around the world. To discuss these subjects, every two years it organizes an international reunion (on 2012 it was held in Thailand and the next year it will be in Miami). In-between years, IPS’s board of directors meets to organize the congress. On 2011 we met in Canarias, and this time we decided to encounter in Peru.

IPS also has a foundation that finances research and development projects related to palms. The investment comes from donations given to IPS for these purposes, from membership subscriptions and eventually from publications trade.

How is the Board of Directors formed?

It is very eclectic, as scientists, nurserymen, landscape gardeners and *aficionados* belong to the IPS. We also have agreements with influential botanical institutions (London Kew Garden, Miami Fairchild Tropical Garden and Montgomery Botanical Center, the Museum of Natural History of Lima).

United States is the country with the largest number of associates, but Europe (Spain in particular) is catching up. We are three representatives from Brazil, Uruguay and Peru. Also, there will be members from USA, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Spain, Germany, Australia, UK, India and South Africa meeting at Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica.

What will be the schedule for its reunion in Peru?

After the meeting at Inkaterra to discuss the 2014 congress, a group of 13 members will travel to another location of the Peruvian Amazon: the city of

Tarapoto. From there we will go to Rodriguez de Mendoza, which has a private conservation area. It is administered by local communities and has a spectacular Andean palm forest (*Ceroxylon sp.*) These are beautiful palms, not very known in the cities of Peru, despite these are ideal for green areas in coastal cities which tend to have humid climate and average temperature. With Amazonas Regional Government, PUCP and ONG we are designing a project that helps local communities to work with palms, focusing on a sustainable development that will improve their quality of life.



*A view from Lake Sandoval, surrounded by a wide range of local palms.
(Photo: Pablo Negri)*