

# BROMELIANA

PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK BROMELIAD SOCIETY

(visit our website [www.nybromeliadsociety.org](http://www.nybromeliadsociety.org))

February, 2011

Volume 48, No. 2

## ANIMALS AROUND US

by Herb Plever

My article in the December issue of Bromeliana about the squirrel family on my terrace brought a response from Dr. Gregory Brown in Laramie, Wyoming. Greg is a botanist at the University of Wyoming and does part time research in bromeliads at Selby Gardens.

He lives on the outskirts of town and says that many large animals visit his back yard including deer and moose. They munch on the leaves of plants such as his snapdragons. He doesn't grow bromeliads in his yard; Laramie is at an elevation of 7,200 ft. and even in July and August the temperatures average no more than 60° F. The rest of the year it is much colder.

The ongoing expansion of communities and homes to outlying areas encroaches on the habitats of many animals. This contact usually isn't dangerous, except for areas that border the forest habitats of bears. In the case of the squirrel family, it was they who tried to encroach on my terrace. They were not around before the 20 large buildings in my Coop were built on a 170 acre tract of what was Jamaica race track. We've lived there for 46 years without a problem. The buildings are spread out, surrounded with hundreds of trees, grass, and walks and

there are no internal streets. It is a great environment for squirrels who feast on acorns and have learned to dine on more exotic garbage by invading our trash cans.

A more proficient and notorious invader of trash cans is the racoon. At campsites and the backs of private homes adjacent to wooded areas, racoons are known to boldly knock down trash cans, remove the covers and eat the garbage. It brings to mind a witty commercial on TV by Sears Optical Department in which a woman is seen opening the sliding glass door to her garden and calling: "Here kitty, kitty, come in kitty, kitty. Then in slinks a racoon with striped tail high and she says: "Nice kitty, kitty, nice kitty, kitty".

Shortly after writing the squirrel article, I came across a report (with the photo reproduced here) from the Queensland Bromeliad Society Newsletter:

*"What a beautiful Queensland day we had on the 17<sup>th</sup> October for the Bromeliad Society's Field day at Pam and Robb Butler's home, sun shining, bromeliads, orchids, hippies and various cuttings for sale. If you were there you would already know*



Koala visitor to Tillandsia talk in Queensland, Australia

### **FEBRUARY MEETING CANCELLED**

At our well attended January meeting, it was decided that we cancel our coming February meeting because the uncertain winter weather makes travel difficult and discourages attendance. It was further decided that we would not meet in January and February in 2012.

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 pm at Ripley Greer Studios, 520 Eighth Avenue between 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> Streets on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor. The room no. will be given in the March issue.

**PUP CULTURE** - Removing and establishing pups and potting media. Please bring in a plant with pups that can be removed or a recently removed pup and be prepared to talk about it.

*about the special appearance of a koala who apparently was very interested in the talk John Olsen was giving on Tillandsias. Pam and Robb have lived there for 22 years and had never before seen a koala...*" The society's Secretary reported that: "This Koala came down the tree and ambled over to where we were all sitting, sat up and looked at us for a little then off he went."

Koalas are often incorrectly called "koala bears". A koala is not a bear but a marsupial with an underside pouch in which it raises its young "joeys". The closest relative of koala is a wombat, which also has a cute and cuddly appearance. Koala is one of the few mammals that can survive on a diet of eucalyptus leaves, therefore it is not likely that they would eat bromeliad leaves, and the article did not report any damage from the unexpected visit.

The field day talk was held in Brisbane in the southeast tip of the province of Queensland. Koalas are native to Australia, mainly in the southwestern coastal province of Victoria, east-coastal Queensland and get their nutrients and water primarily from the eucalyptus

in New South Wales in the southern interior. They eat leaves and bark. There are hundreds of species of Eucalyptus, mostly native to Australia, and they dominate the tree flora of that large continent. Eucalyptus leaves and bark provide the main diet for Koalas, though they also eat mistletoe and box leaves. It is claimed that each koala eats approximately 200 to 500 grams of leaves per day.

The species of eucalyptus trees in the somewhat drier Victoria are different from those in sub-tropical, east coast Queensland; Koalas in Victoria are larger than those native to Queensland. A typical Victorian koala has thicker, dark fur, often with chocolate-brown highlights and more prominently fluffy white ear tufts. Queensland koalas are smaller and have lighter, shorter and thinner grey fur. Koalas have a slow metabolic rate due to their high-fiber, low nutrient diet. Because they store little or no fat, koalas must adopt strategies that conserve energy. They sleep for up to 16 hours per day. (On a more serious note, Queensland has been beset by terrible floods these past few months, and we hope that our bromel friends there have not suffered much harm.)

## CORK

(Excerpted from the Sep-Oct 2010 issue of Bromelcairns, newsletter of the Cairns B.S.)

Cork is produced only in the Mediterranean region spread over about 1,000 miles: the south of France, Spain, Portugal, Algeria, Corsica and Sardinia. 52% of the annual production is from Portugal, 32% from Spain and 6% from Italy.

It takes almost 25 years to grow a productive Cork Oak tree (*Quercus suber*), to a point where it can yield its first commercially useful bark. The first two harvests produce poorer quality bark. The tree then requires a nine year period to regenerate before it can be stripped again. Cork is stripped in hot summer months when the tree dehydrates and skin becomes loose, then left in piles for three months to dry out. To improve elasticity and increase flexibility, it is boiled in water to which fungicide has been added. To complete the process it is left to mature in dark cellars for a month. Finally it is trimmed and cut into planks ready for commercial use.

Cork consists of a myriad of 14 sided cells, each of which encapsulates a minuscule amount of air. In one cubic inch of cork there are 200 million of those cells, 50% of which are air. This particular cellular construction makes cork lightweight, buoyant and

resistant to moisture and impervious to such things as alcohol, sugar, acids and salts. It is compressible, resilient and chemically inert. ...The people of the Roman Empire used cork stoppers to seal barrels of wine. Until the mid-17th century, French wine exporters used oil soaked rags stuffed into bottle necks. ...then they discovered wine improved in quality when kept (corked) in bottles...so began an industry. Most of the cork industry is in Portugal, in the north of the country near Oporto, the area of the famous Port wine cellars, and the manufacture of stoppers remains the basis of the cork industry in Portugal. Plastic and screw top stoppers are being used more and more, but it (is) cork that is best suited for bold red wines purchased with the intent to age (them in a bottle).

Cork is used in woodwind instruments to fasten together seams, making them airtight; cork is the core of a baseball, used in spacecraft heat shields, inside footwear to improve climate control, floor tiles, fishing (rod) floats and buoys, handles for fishing rods... Cork is an excellent mounting medium for bromeliads, but in our tropics it is also a popular home for grubs that eat the roots of the plants. □

## IT TOOK THEM A LONG TIME BUT NOW MY ADOPTED BILLBERGIAS HAVE BLOOMED

by Mimi Gussow

Last November 2009, at the meeting we had at Sara Savitt's apartment, I adopted 2 pots of Billbergias from David McReynolds. David was giving them up although they pupped very nicely, because they never bloomed. The pots had no labels and the identity of the Billbergias was not known. The plants were extremely pot bound and so leggy I had trouble keeping them upright. Herb surmised at the time that these plants didn't flower for David because of insufficient light, and my experience indicates he was correct.

That winter I placed the 2 pots in my second floor south (and slightly east) facing window. They were set down about a foot below the window ledge because they were so big and leggy.

They did well during the winter, and by spring I had a lot of plants in each pot. I gave them fertilizer mostly on a monthly basis to give them a little push, although Roy (my Dad) doesn't fertilize his *Billbergia* 'Hallelujah' and *B.* 'Windii' and they consistently flower every winter.

I divided up one pot completely and took 3 pups off of the second pot, and in late Spring I put the plants outside on the roof over Roy's studio. It is almost completely shaded by a very large Copper Beech tree so I located them all the way to one side where they got some direct morning sun, plus some reflected light from nearby 8 story factory and direct evening sun.

The Billbergias flourished outside on the roof during the summer, and I didn't bring them in until we had a cold spell in October with temperatures predicted to drop even more. The second pot I put downstairs in the southern slightly eastern window where it gets pretty strong direct light until about noon, and room light from a strong spot light we keep on until around 11pm

because we have a Scarlet Macaw. The incandescent spot light is focused on some artwork on the wall, but the Billbergias certainly receive its reflected light up to 11 pm.

On December 20, 2010 I saw the beginning of an inflorescence bud and the flowers were fully open on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011. I also have noticed that the pups appear to have broader, shorter leaves than the original plant. No doubt this is due to the increased light the plants have received and are receiving. From the first pot of plants I have at least 6 pots of pups in various stages of health. I'm hoping to see some of them bloom next winter.

(Editor's note: Billbergias are photo-sensitive plants that usually bloom

when there are long periods of darkness during the short days of winter in November, December and January. The short light period acts as a trigger to certain enzymes and hormones to initiate the blooming

process. Yet, Mimi's experience of blooming Billbergias that received light from early morning to 11 pm goes counter to that understanding.

Despite the continuance of long light periods, the plant flowered at what is its normal time at the end of December. Blooming triggers are complex, and not all Billbergias are alike. Some Billbergias appear to be less light sensitive than others. I think the most important factors that influenced the blooming of these plants is 5 months of heightened light outdoors and the effect of constant moving air. I have a *Billbergia* 'Fantasia' that I did not put out on my terrace this summer, but it is flowering now (January 8<sup>th</sup>). Last year it was out on my terrace and it flowered a month earlier.) □



My adopted Billbergia in spike



The inflorescence

# WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE SEEN A FEW DAYS LATER

by Herb Plever

Thanks to the many members who trekked out to Queens to my apartment to see my now modest collection, we had a productive and enjoyable January meeting. Despite the freezing weather and snow piles on the streets we had good attendance, and although it was winter I had a number of broms in bloom.

When members visited, the bloom on *Billbergia* 'Fantasia' was up but the flowers were not open. Two days later they would have seen the beautiful flowers. And they may have missed seeing the open flowers on my multi-flowered clone of *Tillandsia argentina*, which usually produces a single flower. They also would have seen my *Tillandsia*

*ionantha* var. *vanhynigii* that put out yet another few flowers a few days later.

The temperature was 36°F. when members arrived, so they might not have been alert to the fact that most of the window sill plants had their leaves pressing against the cold window panes. But we've had many days and most nights with below freezing temperatures since November; the plants don't seem to be affected because they have really become cold-hardened. Last night (January 13<sup>th</sup>) the temperature dipped to 17°F. and the temperature at the window sills was 55°F. Still the broms are in excellent shape; our tropical plants are remarkably adaptable. □



*Billbergia* 'Fantasia'



*Tillandsia ionantha* v. *vanhynigii*

## NEWS and NOTES

**2011 DUES** - If you have not yet paid your dues, this is your last chance to do so. Single and joint memberships are now \$25.00; the out-of-town subscription rate for BROMELIANA is \$8.00 and an overseas subscription is \$12.00. Mail your check payable to N.Y. Bromeliad Society to Barbara Lagow, 54 West 74th Street N.Y.C. 10023 or pay your dues at the next meeting.

**CORRECTION** - The article about enlisting the joint efforts of taxonomy experts in the January issue of BROMELIANA erroneously listed the late Dr. Elvira Gross of Germany. Regrettably Dr. Gross passed away in 2005.



*Tillandsia argentina*, multi-flowered form

OFFICERS		DIRECTORS	
President.....	Les Graifman	Victoria Ehrlich	
Vice-Pres..	David McReynolds	Cynthia Percarpio	
Treasurer.....	Barbara Lagow	Veronica Saddler	
Editor.....	Herb Plever	Betsy Sherwin	

**BROMELIANA** is published 9 times a year by the New York Bromeliad Society, c/o Herb Plever, 172-34 133<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, # 8A, Jamaica, NY 11434. email address [hplever@nyc.rr.com](mailto:hplever@nyc.rr.com)