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INDIGENOUS CYCAD, ZAMIAD AND PALM STUDY GROUP NO. 40

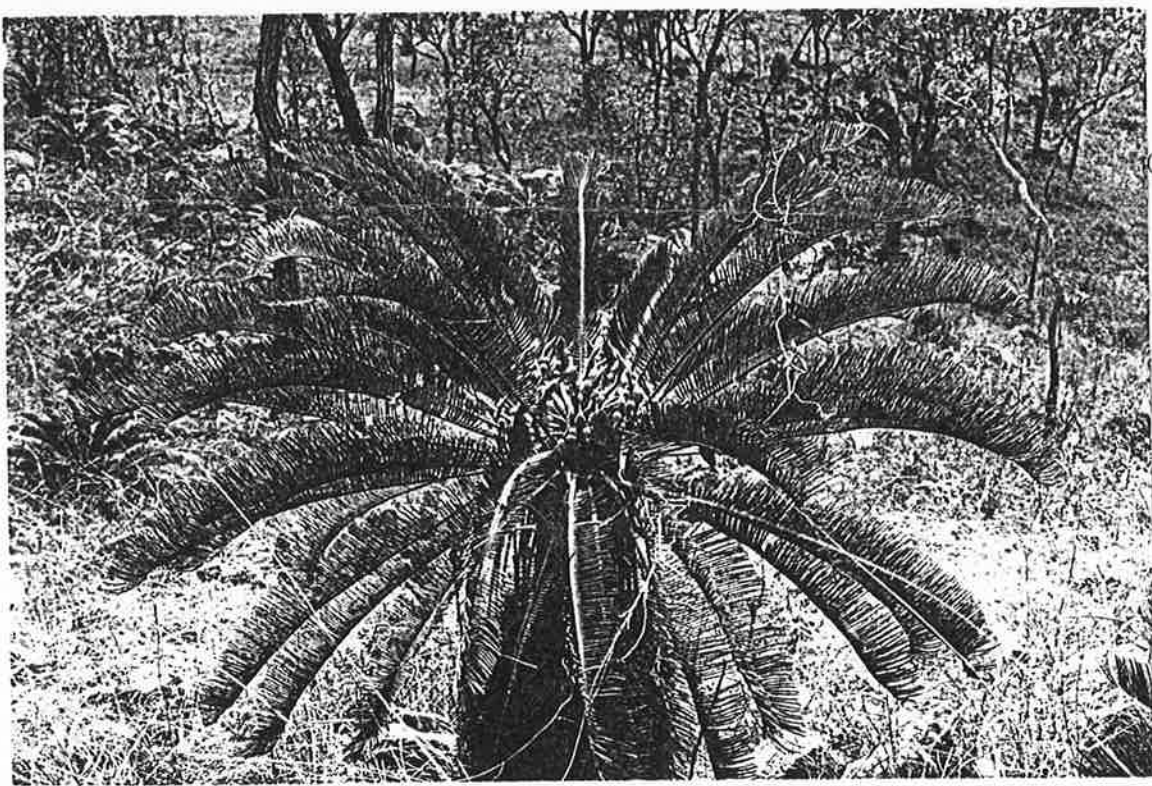
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My thanks for the response I got re subscriptions and like I said last newsletter I have regretfully had to stop sending newsletters to all not now on my financial list. If you know someone who does not get it now please tell them why.

Correspondence from the N.T. has been coming in erratically, but my best researchers are as busy as beavers. Now know however that cycas on the Mitchell Plateau in that top W.A. corner is *C. Lane-polei* and *C. basaltica*. Also some evidence they stray into each other's territory which of course means crossings.

Seems also that the Wingate Range spp. probably is the same one known as Bynoe/Cox Peninsular. Also the Pine Creek spp. is about to be named by a N.T. lady botanist. It is a new species.

- Len Butt



Cycas cairnsiana
female

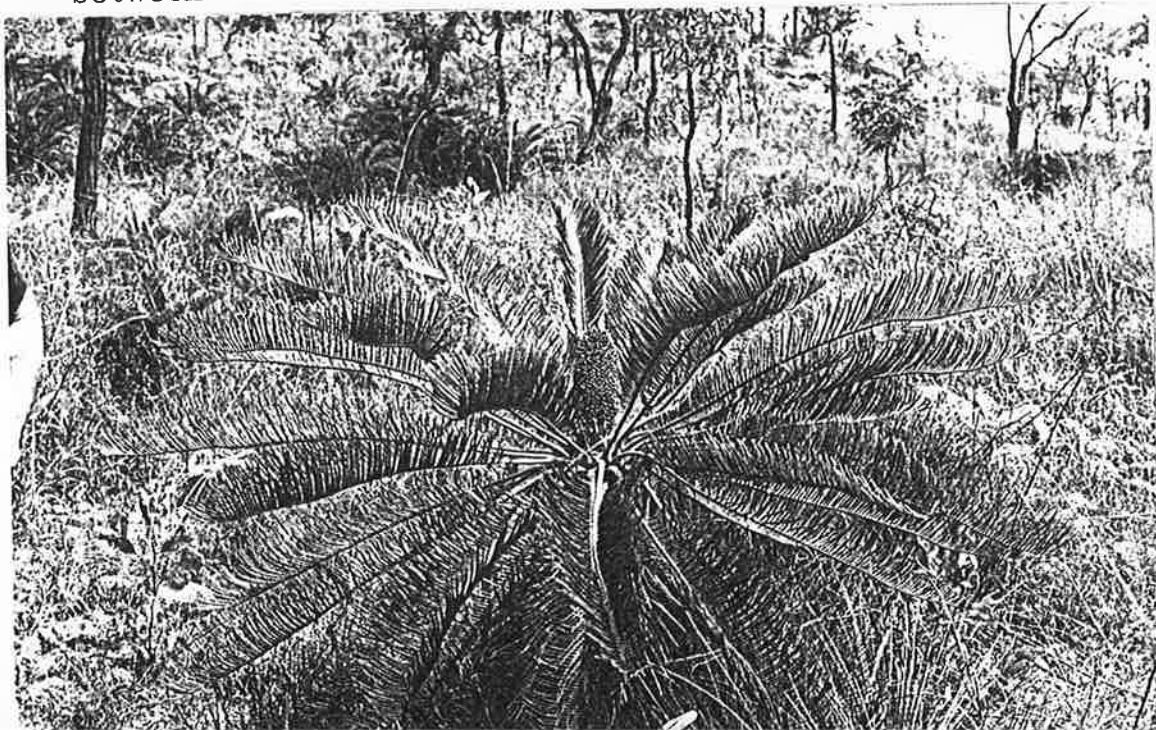
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Cycas cairnsiana (F. Muell)

Several years ago I was told by a north Qld. botanist that there was no guarantee that Cycas Cairnsiana really existed as material presented for study was not clear cut. However, it is not hard to figure where such reasoning comes into being. Until only recently, no real research on our cycadaceae has been carried out, except of course for their eradication by primary industry authorities because of the M.A.M. poisons, and the subsequent loss of scrubber cattle because of it.

Research now being instigated however, in Darwin and before that in Alice Springs is and was for the true identification and assessment of very valuable species from our past natural history. All discoveries to date may be subject to revision in future, but for now, it appears that Cycas cairnsiana exists in a crescent shaped habitat on shallow stony country, basically starting at Chillagoe, inland and slightly south of Cairns.

Sightings reported in the habitat are Petford and Dimbulah. Chillagoe being on the western edge, Almaden, Kooraboora and Petford central and Dimbulah on the eastern rise toward Mareeba. Conjecture is a dangerous thing in research but still the thought persists, that directly South, South-west of Almaden about 100 kms. lies Mt. Surprise. As stated, the unidentified Champion's "Blue Surprise" grows here. Although this is very similar to that other "blue" from Chudleigh Station there could be a connection botanically between the three.



CYCAS
CAIRNSIANA
MALE

.../3

Cycas basaltica - C. Gardner

Here once again a species not very well known but for all of that quite prominent in its habitat. Like *C. furfuracea* also of the West Australian Kimberleys it grows in typical basalt rocky country. Large colony seen were in open eucalypt country around the base of series of small hills in Drysdale River National Park. This particular colony had been burned off, either by aboriginal ritual or grazier supervision. Ron Smith found no old fronds left but plenty of emerging new fronds. These were a very silvery colour and with rusty gold brown emerging rhachis. The caudices were stout, mostly to about 2 metres high and swollen as they entered the ground, similar to the east coast "Marlborough blue". This species obtains its name for its basalt country origins. Described also as being on the open forest country in the Kimberley range system, the caudices measured at 30 cm. to 60 cm's. through. Leaves from 0.5 m. to 1.5 metres in length covered in short white hairs which give it a grey appearance. The male cone is narrow and the female cone circular of spikes that form the simple cycas cone, being covered with thick fine rusty hairs. There are four ovules to each megasporophyll. The blade of the spikes being narrow and entire. Pinnae also narrow and rigid with recurving along the margins of each. Pinnae also hairy beneath. Seed apparently mature in August.

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Common pests and diseases harassing our cycadaceae

1. *Homo sapiens*, aboriginal man learned long ago to live with and benefit from the cycadales.
However colonising man will always destroy what affects his livelihood. India is not the only place where the cow is sacred.
Solution - Fencing off affected areas from station stock. However as most losses are scrubber wild cattle this is difficult. As explained elsewhere, export benefits from our cycadales are many and varied.

2. Scale insects, especially with cycas in cultivation. A dark brown female scale covers the underside and rhachis of even small seedlings. White oil applied after scale.

Solution removed with warm water and a rag.