

NEPENTHES—COLOR THEM UNIQUE

by Ray Triplitt
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Approaching the island of Luzon, you could see the water changing colors from blue, to green, to aqua—we were beginning our long-planned trip to the Philippines and Sabah. Our main objective was Mt. Legaspi on Mindanao and Mt. Kinabalu National Park to observe some of the more remarkable species of *Nepenthes*. But this was a vacation too, and would include other points of interest. The plane began its descent and minutes later we found ourselves on the tarmac struggling in the 110° F temp. We were met by Dr. Manas and a customs officer who helped expedite our entry which was a blessing because we were wilting rapidly from the heat.

Once settled in San Pedro, we headed east to Mt. Banahaw over rough dirt roads, plunging into piles of dust that left us gagging and choking. At the base of the mountain we located an unusual and striking form of *N. ventricosa* with crimson pitchers that were mottled in deep red. The majority of the plants grew in an open area while others dotted the fringe of the forest climbing small trees. An offer was made to take us to an *N. alata* site 20 miles south, but we declined because the horrors of the 18 hour flight had begun to bring us to our knees.

Back on our feet 2 days later, we proceeded to Camarines Prov. Highway 1 brought us a few miles short of Naga City where *N. ventricosa* was again observed growing on a dry hillside. Although exposed to full sun, their pitchers were a pale yellow/green which was a contrast compared to the plants seen on Mt. Banahaw. Some plants were in bloom but most of the flower stalks were spent and seed could be gathered easily at the slightest touch.

After a short return to San Pedro we departed for the Ifugao Prov. in the northern portion of the island. Ten hours later the road climbed to 7,500 ft. near

Sagada then abruptly descended a serpentine route where the paved road ended, literally with a bang: dips, pot-holes, washes. You don't drive this stretch of rugged road; you endure it. At 4,500 ft. dust laden *N. alata* could be seen along the roadside amidst the dry grasses. As one ventured off the road more impressive specimens could be appreciated. Passing Bontoc we headed south on Highway 4 towards Banawe where we observed the more classical form of *N. ventricosa* perched on a cliff face at 5,500 ft. It was indeed an odd habitat with a number of plants attaching themselves to the thin soil between rocks and boulders without apparent ill effect on their growth.

The famous rice terraces at Banawe are breathtaking. Pages could be written about these terraces and the indomitable people who nurture them. We continued to see *N. alata* on this panorama during our entire stay in the area. Six days passed rather quickly, and reluctantly leaving the amenities of the hotel we headed for the long road back to San Pedro.

Next on our itinerary was Mt. Legaspi situated on the N.E. coast of the island of Mindanao. Though this island periodically captures the world's attention with its political and religious conflicts, encounters for the most part exist in the southern and western part of the island. The military check points that line the road to Mt. Legaspi serve to remind one of the volatile situation. After five hours on the infamous road, *Nepenthes* began to appear along the roadside. *N. mirabilis* and *N. alata* with pitchers profusely hanging from each plant were seen climbing trees as tall as 50 ft. Arriving at Mt. Legaspi, we came upon the conspicuous pitchers of *N. merilliana* covering the ground and sending offshoots in all directions. Nothing we might have read or heard, nor any photograph, could have prepared us for the

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Dr. Manas with pitchers of *N. globamphora* and *N. merrilliana*.

Photo by Ray Triplitt.

thrill of that first sight of this superbly adapted species. Plants having a diameter of 4 feet were not uncommon in this mild coastal climate where annual rainfall exceeds 60 inches. It's not surprising that these plants flourish in this region. The following day we explored the slopes more thoroughly and felt the full impact of Mt. Legaspi. We observed the beautiful *N. truncata*, the delicate *N. globamphora* and countless numbers of hybrids.

During our stay and quite by chance, we happened upon John Turnbull and his wife Anne Middleton on the northern slope. *Nepenthes* had also brought them to this part of the world. But, unlike ours, their interest in these plants overlapped into the scientific end of the spectrum.

Leaving Mindanao was a bittersweet departure. Born on this island, I found myself reminded of my childhood days. From here we flew to the island of Palawan to take in some scuba diving and managed to find time to visit an *N. alata* site near the barrio of Bacungan. The area

held a sparse population of *N. alata* along a dry embankment overlooking a small stream. They were interesting nonetheless because of the absence of the glandular crest so prevalent in the *N. alata* we had observed to this point.

Making a brief stop at San Pedro we set off to Sabah for the last part of our journey. Our landing approach to Kota Kinabalu gave us an incredible view of Mt. Kinabalu. All the passengers were in awe of this 13,455 ft. giant dominating the surrounding landscape. After receiving our collection permit in Kota Kinabalu we began the 3 hour drive to Mt. Kinabalu National Park.

We first explored the trails that encircled the park headquarters. *N. fusca* were found well camouflaged among the ferns and dense groundcover. Here, in the next five days we would push our bodies to their limits by climbing the summit trail twice to a height of 10,500 ft. The climbs began at 4:00 a.m. with flash-

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Rice terraces of Banawe
N. alata habitat



N. alata (Blanco)
Ifugao Prov., Luzon



N. truncata hybrids
Mt. Legaspi, Mindanao



N. merrilliana
Mt. Legaspi, Mindanao



N. tentaculata
Mt. Kinabalu



N. fusca (Danser)
Mt. Kinabalu

Photos by Ray Triplitt

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as a *D. capensis* form to watch and note any unusual growth patterns. Then one of the original propagated plants that I had began a most abnormal development in 1977. A single leaf emerged that was not only broad, but it assumed a spiral form of growth that simply bewildered me and others that saw it. Eventually the plant produced a flower that resembled the original flowering plant from 1975. No seed was produced, but the single leaf was photographed and then the leaf was amputated and photographed for historical records (Photos #4 & #5). The leaf was extensively propagated and the resultant

progeny consistently produced the crestate growth habit. The plants were then distributed via WIP in 1979 as *D. capensis* "Crestate."

The many moves that were made from California to the East Coast and back and forth a couple of times eliminated many plants, including the "Crestated or Multifida" *capensis*. I would once again like to work with this particular clone and would be interested in hearing from anyone who still has an original clonal type in their collection. Perhaps we can re-establish and develop a *capensis* var. *multifida* into a fully established variant of this most popular species.

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lights required until it was light enough to see. *N. tentaculata* first appeared at 6,500 ft. and would be a common sight throughout the moss forest. At 7,400 ft. we left the main trail and observed *N. lowii* emerging from a steep cliff entwining the leptospermum trees growing on the ledge. The eccentric green pitchers and the bright red inner surface combined with a deeply vaulted lid made *N. lowii* the most unusual shaped pitcher we would come upon.

We continued through the dimly lit moss forest gaining altitude with each step. Beneath this closed canopy, trees were festooned with lichens while their trunks and lower branches played host to epiphytic orchids, mosses, and ferns. Scattered beams of light penetrating the passing cool mist and the strange forest acoustics only added to the eerie, but beautiful ambience.

Four hours later and our legs beyond pain, we left the moss forest and entered the ultra basic zone at approximately 9,000 ft. Here, *N. villosa* grew in abundance proudly displaying its red/orange pitchers among the dwarfed trees and scrubs. In dense areas, climbing plants sent their long tendrils cascading to the ground. When one views this plant for the first time, little doubt remains why *N. villosa* possesses such an illustrious repu-



Ray Triplitt with *N. ventricosa*
Ifugao Prov.

tation. The imposing teeth-like projections attached to the mouth of the pitchers and continuing up both sides of the prominent neck represent the ultimate development in a peristome.

Pressing on to the upper margin of the zone, *N. villosa* became sparse at about 10,500 ft. The weather remained clear and the view was spectacular from the lofty eminence.

On our second climb we left the summit trail numerous times and on one occasion, observed the hybrid *N. × kina-balauensis* (*N. rajah* × *N. villosa*) growing on



N. ventricosa, Luzon
Laguna Prov.

Ifugao Prov.

Camarines Prov.
Photos by Ray Triplitt.

a small mound. Although there were only 6 plants in the entire area, their presence was indeed a sight to behold. The large peltate leaves attached to robust stems sent thick tendrils into nearby branches and scrubs. The giant pitchers of this hybrid took on the best features of both parent plants making an extraordinary combination. The end result being *N. rajah* . . . with TEETH!

It rained profusely and continuously on our final descent which turned the steep trail into a muddy torrent. Soaked to the bone, it was well into the evening before we reached the cabin.

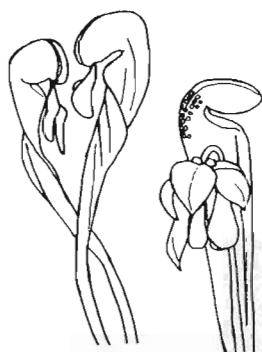
The next afternoon we left the park area and drove to Bundu Tuhan where we observed *N. reinwardtiana* and *N. gracilis* on a ravine a mile S.W. of the town. The rest of the day was spent at the Mamut Copper Mine looking over a *N. fusca* site.

On our last day at the park we made a point to visit Poring Springs located on the eastern part of Mt. Kinabalu where we indulged our weary bodies in the 125° F water. Here our seven week journey

ended; a journey that was as marvelous to us as those of the early explorers who first encountered these unique plants. I doubt if our memories of the Philippines and Sabah could ever be misted over by other sights, other days.



N. villosa, Mt. Kinabalu
Photo by Ray Triplitt.



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COVER PHOTO

Nepenthes × *kinabaluensis* Kurata (*N. rajah* × *N. villosa*) in habitat on
Mt. Kinabalu, Borneo. Note size of pitcher with ruler on right.

Photo by R. Triplitt.

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Nepenthes truncata MacFarland in habitat on Mt. Legaspi, Mindanao, Philippine Islands.

Photo by R. Triplett.