

## ICPS CONFERENCE 2018, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA



The lecture hall, filled with rapt carnivorees. Photo by John Brittnacher.

The 12th International Carnivorous Plant Society conference was held 3-5 August, 2018, at the Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country located in downtown Santa Rosa, California, USA. The location was chosen because the hotel could simultaneously hold the conference lecture space, plant show, sales area, and have rooms for attendees all in one central location within easy walking distance of restaurants and other amenities.

The conference was sponsored by the Bay Area Carnivorous Plant Society (BACPS), the oldest carnivorous plant society in the United States, and the world-renowned carnivorous plant nursery California Carnivores with additional support from the Los Angeles Carnivorous Plant Society and the San Diego Carnivorous Plant Society. It is with much gratitude and great appreciation that we applaud Damon Collingsworth, Daniela Ribbecke, Lauren Paulson, Gina Morimoto, Arthur Yin, Brian Lipinski, Allyson Long, Rebecca Robinson, Pablo Ramudo, Doris Quick, Daryt Jov Frank, Stephen Davis, and their team who worked tirelessly to plan and coordinate this event.

There were 193 people in attendance at the conference and many more people visited the BACPS plant show and sale on site. At times the conference area was totally packed. The attendance for the 2016 ICPS conference in Kew Gardens in London, England was 160. Everyone at the 2018 conference seemed to be in awe and expressed excitement that the conferences continue to grow in attendance.

Peter D'Amato delivered the opening address, which briefly but informatively covered the history of human interaction with CPs, from the discovery to the cultivation and hybridization of carnivorous plants, tying in Peter's history and work with the plants as he joined the scene. He mournfully recalled the experiences of the older folks in the audience of buying carnivorous plants as teenagers and having no clue how to grow them. He said because of the advancement of tissue culture and the rise of the Internet we have arrived at this tenable Golden Age of Carnivorous Plants where anyone can get plants and find out how to grow them.



Part of the crowded sales room. Photo by Noah Yawn.

The amazing presentations given ranged from big-picture topics like conservation in Drew Martinez's "Does Cultivation Undermine Conservation", challenging us to read plant descriptions and think about location-data and seed-grown vs. tissue-cultured plants, and Naoki Tanabe's update on the "*Nepenthes clipeata* Project" to the microscopic in Ulrike Bauer's "Convergent & Divergent Evolution of Pitcher Traps" and Ulrike Muller's "Bladderwort Traps: The Fastest Predators". The latter-mentioned presentations revealed some of the incredibly specific and often seemingly physics-defying functions that these plants have evolved to capture prey. There was a theme of flower-related talks this year, including *Drosera* flower ecology and guilds where unrelated plants have similar flowers to attract the same pollinators (Robert Gibson) and have similar flower behavior (Andreas Fleischmann). Fleischmann also covered other genera beyond *Drosera* and how they all will eat their pollinators if it is possible and there are the opportunities. Larry Mellichamp discussed how pollinators specifically interact with *Sarracenia* and their flowers. Fernando Rivadavia gave us a crash-course on carnivorous plant phylogeny and John Brittnacher's presentation, "*Drosera filiformis* and Friends: Do Plants Care About "Species"?" questioned what makes a species. Rivadavia predicted increasingly inexpensive genetic testing of plants – like how 23andMe is now available for us – that will help to solve the problem of "mystery" or "unknown hybrid" plants as well as to more accurately and, arguably, logically determine a species by looking at genes. To close the conference, Jeremiah Harris showed us his incredible photos of his trip to Papua to hunt for *Nepenthes*. All talks were recorded and will be made available by the ICPS.

At the end of the conference's second day, Damon stood before the conference attendees and delivered a heartfelt and emotionally-charged speech on those seemingly insignificant moments that completely change your life, like when as a little boy, a friend took Peter D'Amato to a local bog with *Drosera rotundifolia*, or when Damon bought a Cape Sundew from Peter in 1989. "I'm incredibly grateful for that sundew I bought almost 30 years ago," he said. These moments led to California Carnivores being opened, to "The Savage Garden" being written, influencing, encouraging, and educating who knows how many of us to learn about and to grow these beautiful, alien plants. Larry [Mellichamp] said, "It's amazing how many people are in this room. It used to be

just 3 people sitting around.” All of this led to Damon’s surprise announcement, “We’re giving a lifetime achievement award to Peter D’Amato,” which was met with a standing ovation from the entire conference. This was followed by an impressive line of representatives of carnivorous plant societies and communities who took turns at the mic to tell stories about Peter or how he, California Carnivores, and “The Savage Garden” impacted their lives. Teary-eyed, blown away, and nearly speechless, Peter humbly and graciously accepted the beautiful silver-plated *Nepenthes* pitcher award. “Oh!” Peter exclaimed as he turned on the spot and returned to the microphone: “I almost forgot to tell everyone about my new book, which is a work of fiction, called “From a Crevice in Hell” which I’m hoping to finish this winter.” Peter described it to me as a “science-fiction tale, dark comedy, parody of other monster plant stories, thriller, horror nightmare, and an apocalyptic novel all in one,” and, having read everything he’s written so far, I enthusiastically agree; it has been so much fun to read and I can’t wait for everyone else to experience it themselves.

For me, the ICPS 2018 conference was an experience more memorable and impactful than I could’ve hoped for. It was wonderful to visit California Carnivores and talk with Peter, Damon, Daniela & co. again. To retread those incredible jungle aisles, this time with so many more respected growers, cultivators, and experts right next to me, ogling the same plants or nearby, collected in groups laughing as they shared stories or, I’m assuming, discussed plants, was pure delight.

The talks given were educational, inspiring, and entertaining, and I could have happily sat and listened for days if not weeks longer. I came away having learned so much across a wide variety of topics, further fueling but also helping to direct my pre-existing question of what I want to strive to do for these plants that we’re all so passionate about. I was ecstatic to get to meet and talk to so many of you, and am still surprised at how approachable and open everyone was. The enthusiasm to not only share knowledge but to also ask questions and be eager to learn was tangible in each conversation. If I could take a full year off, I still wouldn’t have enough time to take all of you up on your offers to visit and/or explore plant sites with you.

It’s difficult to express my excitement for and anticipation of what’s to come for the society and community. I’ve only been involved in the OCPC and ICPS, as well as meeting other growers, for a couple years now (though I’ve been growing off and on since I was a kid) but I’m inclined to agree with the sentiment expressed during the conference: it is the Golden Age of Carnivorous Plants, and I’m humbled and overjoyed to be a part of it.

—PATRICK QUINN • OCPC • Vancouver • Washington • [patrickjamesquinn@gmail.com](mailto:patrickjamesquinn@gmail.com)



Patrick Quinn enjoying, or being enjoyed by a flytrap. Photo by Christina Toole.

The 2018 ICPS Conference was a total success in my experience. I had hoped to hear cutting-edge information about CP's, meet people that I have been seeing online for a long time and generally be immersed in all that is our hobby of growing carnivorous plants. And this is what I got! The field trip to California Carnivores demonstrated how they have one of the most amazing collections of CP's in the world and that so much of what they have is set up almost like a botanical garden for the purpose of simply viewing. Beyond amazing. The talks were informative and often very entertaining and to have it all dovetailed with the BACPS plant show and sale added a lot to what else was going on. I am indebted to Damon Collingsworth, Peter D'Amato, and all the gang at California Carnivores and the Bay Area Carnivorous Plant Society for a wonderful time.

—MARK S. ANDERSON • OCPC

---

I wanted to be sure to post a huge thank you for those who worked on the conference and the Trip to *Darlingtonia* country. The show/sale/conference was so well organized that I really didn't think it could be topped. But I soon found out what a fabulous trip was ahead! I heard people saying months before that the trip was very costly. I thought \$1k was a lot for me as well but I had a feeling I would regret not going. Am I ever glad I went!! I have never taken any excursions/trips to the great outdoors where I literally had no worries of any kind. The itinerary was perfect, the amount of wildlife in addition to the plants we saw was just outstanding! To have so many experts amongst us was so educational and enriching!! Just as I was finished listening to one professor's explanation on midge fly larvae of *Darlingtonia*, another was starting up talk of why that frog was totally still, yet another was explaining why *Darlingtonia* seeds are the way they are, and yet another expert was talking photography techniques for the field! I literally could not take it all in and journaled furiously to get as much as possible! Many may not see all the behind the scenes hard work of Damon, Daniella, Luke (CA CARN), Gina and Arthur (BACPS), and Barry and Beth (more experts) and our local expert Harry. But it was so clear that I had this once in a lifetime chance because these folks sacrificed sleep, free time, and energy to make the trip perfect. Of course, there's no way to really thank them but just to say I promise to keep my inspiration alive and to help others understand how precious these plants are! It was worth every penny and more...I'm already saving for two years from now!

—MAGGIE CHEN (SEE FRONT COVER)

---

The ICPS 2018 conference was the first carnivorous plant event I have attended, having only joined the hobby about 5 years ago. Luckily for me, it was pretty close (as I live in Oregon) and also being hosted by California Carnivores, which I have wanted to visit for years. The conference itself exceeded my expectations, being not only a conference and hobby gathering, but ending up as a major social event. Being able to meet so many people I'd only spoken to online previously, and many new faces as well, was a true delight. It really stands out how friendly everyone in the hobby is, and even our "celebrities" like Jeremiah Harris and Peter D'Amato are easy to approach and willing to talk to anyone.

I particularly enjoyed Ulrike Bauer's presentation about pitcher plant trapping mechanisms and Ulrike Muller's presentation on *Utricularia* fluid physics. These presentations contained interesting, detailed, and brand-new research into how carnivorous plants work, as well as a healthy portion of humor.

Next door at the sale, it was incredibly crowded but there were a lot of impressive plants on display and a lot being sold. Several tables full of *Sarracenia* from Jerry Addington's Courting Frogs

Nursery really stood out from the rest. I personally was a bit disappointed that there was very little in the way of unusual/rare plants (i.e. tuberous sundews, *Genlisea*, epiphytic *Utricularia*, etc.). Just down the hall, the CP show was very impressive, including many immaculate displays of all varieties of carnivorous plants.

—JOHN CHRISTMANN • OCPC

---

Attending the ICPS conference in Santa Rosa was the best conference experience I have had. The pace of the conference was great with talks throughout the day and enough time around the talks to meet new people. Everyone I met at the conference was extremely friendly and I had a fantastic time talking with everyone about the plants they grow and how they grow them. I also really enjoyed attending the talks and was impressed at the variety and quality of the presentations. I especially enjoyed Ulrike Muller's talk focusing on why bladderwort traps are so fast when their prey move slower. She presented detailed photos and videos of a capture event which were very interesting to see. The conference was a great opportunity to learn about carnivorous plants both in the wild and in cultivation and I hope to attend the next one!

—REBECCA ROBINSON • BACPS • Santa Cruz • California

---

The 2018 ICPS conference is a confluence of many minds coming together to help solve our CP questions – from the scientific to the practical. Every ICPS conference, however, is unique, differing in attendance, location, and of course, the time in which it happens. This one, held in the hazy dog days of the first week of August, claimed a special sort of significance for our community, a significance comprised of change and development, of learnings, successes, retirement, and the inevitable promise of rebirth.

The context of ICPS 2018 is worth considering. As we all know, Adrian Slack passed away earlier this year, and when I read through comments on social media, the odes to his life and practice seemed to emanate with a very particular sort of social introspection. Because one of the iconic greats of our beloved infatuation is gone, so an era of sorts has come to an end. Slack passed not before this “Golden Age of Carnivorous Plants” (as Damon Collingsworth puts it), but during it, and before its completion. I am honored that at least my career in CPs overlapped with his lifetime.

I observed the 2018 conference in this spirit of transition. Old friends, former ICPS founders, and early CP growers, saw each other once again, sometimes for the first time in decades. Many have retired. A few did not live long enough to attend, and their absence was poignant. While our own Peter D'Amato was celebrated, as he ought to be, as the symbolic center for the event, I heard some of the older scientists and horticulturalists muse together as to what the ambitious future may bring. Tellingly, Peter was awarded an ICPS Lifetime Achievement Award by none other than his successors. I have nothing but praise.

The ICPS and its membership still grows. New ideas, goals, and theories are waiting dormant and undeveloped in the minds of future enthusiasts. New identities too, for those who will bring the passion of carnivorous plants and their societies into a new decade.

—CARSON TREXLER • OCPC • Portland • Oregon • trexler@pdx.edu

---

Having the privilege of being able to attend the ICPS conference was a complete and utter dream come true. However, having the privilege of meeting countless individuals, scientists, cultivators,

and everyone in between, from childhood heroes to university professors was paramount to my ICPS experience; every single person at the conference was there because they are passionate and share a common passion for these miraculous plants. Sure, there were beautiful plants everywhere you turned at the conference, but meeting people was the truly amazing part about this event.

The ICPS conference event has had a profound and deep impact on me, unlike any other plant-related activity I've been to. It showed to me that first of all, there are (at least 200) others that are crazy enough to love these plants wholeheartedly, and that through carnivorous plants, people get excited about the natural world. It grows interest in children, like the one that went to a hardware store with his grandmother when he was 11 (me), or even adults, who all collectively group together to form a community unique unto itself. Learning about the cutting-edge science happening all across the globe with carnivorous plants, be it *Utricularia* hydrodynamics, *Drosera* phylogeny, or *Nepenthes* peristome microstructures was priceless. Attending the ICPS conference was not only a privilege, but allowed me personally to steady, even if just a little bit, my own personal passions for all genera of carnivorous plants, and plants overall. My utmost gratitude goes to every amazing individual and organization that helped throw this fantastic event together. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for carnivorous plants!

—NOAH YAWN • Birmingham • Alabama

## THE ICPS SEED BANK

*an exclusive member benefit*

The International Carnivorous Plant Society offers its members exclusive access to a variety of carnivorous plant seeds. Seeds are ordered online at the ICPS Store:

<http://icps.clubexpress.com>

The Seed Bank cannot exist without seed donations. Information about growing carnivorous plants from seed and donating seeds to the Seed Bank are at the ICPS public web site:

<http://www.carnivorousplants.org>

If you do not have access to the Internet, please send seed order form requests to:

International Carnivorous Plant Society, Inc.  
2121 N. California Blvd., Suite 290  
Walnut Creek, CA 94596-7351, USA

JOE GRIFFIN, Seed Bank Manager, [joe@carnivorousplants.org](mailto:joe@carnivorousplants.org)