

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE GENUS *PINGUICULA* AND THE MANUSCRIPTS OF JOST CASPER

HANS LUHRS • Kraijenhoffstraat 51 • 1018 RJ Amsterdam • The Netherlands • hanlu050@gmail.com

It must have been the early eighties of the last century when I started with carnivorous plants. In those days plants like *Pinguicula* were hard to get and I had to drive to Hameln, in Germany, where a small nursery owned by Harald Weiner could provide me with several *Drosera*, *Utricularia*, and Mexican *Pinguicula* species. He had an enormous list of plants he grew and more than once I argued about the fact that when my *Pinguicula*'s flowered, many of them turned out to be *P. moranensis* or very similar to that. Later I ordered plants from him by mail (post), but the books I had then (Slack and Kondo) only showed a few good photos of *Pinguicula* flowers being well named. It took me several years before I really got into *Pinguicula*... it turned out to be a fever!

In 1987 I was given the opportunity to buy a copy of Casper's 'Monograph of *Pinguicula*' (1966), that in the following years had become a kind of bible to me. I'd studied the pile of paper almost day and night, first of all to get behind the mis-labelling of my plants, and in order to study the taxonomy of the whole genus with the Mexican species in particular. Through reverential notes and sources I started to collect Casper's older publications as well as those of other authors (DeCandolle, Humboldt, Bonpland, Kunth, Ernst), and after that the more modern authors. I'd spend many hours copying from books and journals in university libraries in order to collect as many articles and publications as possible. Madness(?)... no(!)... pure interest. Next to *Drosera*, *Utricularia*, and others, I found *Pinguicula* more my study subject.

Although Casper's intensive monograph was based on herbarium specimens, it provided me with more than enough information about every subject of a single plant. After a speed-course in Latin, I was able to understand the technical writing which was valuable in getting the whole picture. When I understood the structure of several keystones within the genus (subgenus, section, subsection, etc.), I was waiting for a possibility to describe a new species myself.

In 1989 I organized a 4-week fieldtrip to Mexico in order to study and photograph the plants in their natural habitat. I brought notes on habitat places from Casper's monograph with me, but many of them were very old, some of them up to 150 years. I remember our first finding when struggling and wandering around Real del Monte in the state of Hidalgo. We were looking for *P. macrophylla* and the description said 'El Chico', in the shade of the mountain. To cut a long story, we crossed a running stream and while walking along a narrow trail on a northern slope one of us found a flower on a short stem, but there was no plant just a little hole. *Utricularia*? No, the flower was too large for that so we dug and found a winter-rosette, something I had never seen before. *P. macrophylla*? It was only until the next day that we knew we had found *P. acuminata*. Rediscovered after 150 years, although from a non-Mexican perspective. Still... that first trip we found 6 species thanks to Casper's monograph, but even more so the knowledge of how and where *Pinguicula* is growing and why. It's all there.

A few days ago, I got the sad news from Jan Schlauer that Casper had died in June this year. We shall miss him as a person whose affection and interest on the subject was more than just being an author... he was my teacher.