

***Copernicia hospita* and *C. yarey* (Arecaceae): Updated Distribution for these Cuban Endemics**

***Copernicia hospita* y *C. yarey* (Arecaceae): Distribución Actualizada de estos Endémicos Cubanos**

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Abstract

In new genus and species records, *Copernicia hospita* is documented in the Alturas de Sancti Spíritus and Massif of Guamuhaya and *C. yarey* is documented at La Mensura in the Mensura-Pilotos National Park in the Sierra de Nipe, Cuba. The maximum elevation where *Copernicia* occurs in Cuba is reported. The distribution of both species in Cuba, including municipalities for the provinces of Sancti Spíritus and Holguín, is discussed.

Resumen

En nuevos registros de género y especie se documenta *Copernicia hospita* en las Alturas de Sancti Spíritus y Macizo de Guamuhaya y *C. yarey* se documenta en La Mensura en el Parque Nacional Mensura-Pilotos en la Sierra de Nipe, Cuba. Se reporta la elevación máxima donde ocurre *Copernicia* en Cuba. Se discute la distribución de ambas especies en Cuba, incluyendo municipios de las provincias de Sancti Spíritus y Holguín.

Introduction

Copernicia is placed in the tribe Trachycarpeae of the subfamily Coryphoideae and includes 20 species: three in South America, two in Hispaniola, and 15 in Cuba, where several natural hybrids occur (Dransfield et al. 2008). In addition to the 15 species in Cuba, two varieties and nine natural hybrids occur, which total 26 taxa, all endemic (Moya 2022).

In 1823, Poeppig was the first to collect *Copernicia* in Cuba when he found what would become *C. hospita* in the "Lomas de Santa Ana," in Jovellanos municipality of Matanzas province. Later, Martius (1838) named and described *C. hospita* based on Poeppig's collection. Yasiel Hernández Rivero relocated the type locality on June 12, 2021 (Moya 2021).



1. Map and distribution of *Copernicia hospita* (silver green dots in and along margins of bare, dark grayish brown area) in Loma del Obispo, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2023 C. E. Moya López. Drawn over Cuban map from *hicuba.com*, Google map and Google Earth.



2. *Copernicia hospita*, Moya s.n., Loma del Obispo, southwest of the city of Sancti Spíritus.
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Dahlgren and Glassman (1963) reported *Copernicia hospita* for the current provinces of Camagüey, Ciego de Ávila, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Sancti Spíritus, and Villa Clara. In Sancti Spíritus, *C. hospita* is known from the municipalities of Cabaiguán, Jatibonico, La Sierpe, Trinidad, and Sancti Spíritus municipalities (Moya et al. 1989, Moya 1997). Generally, *C. hospita* is distributed in Central Eastern and Central Western Cuba (Moya 1999a) where it occurs as widely scattered individuals and small groups, often on disturbed or cultivated land (Moya and Mayotte 1996). This highly ornamental species was not threatened (Moya 1999b).

Ekman first collected *Copernicia yarey* in 1917 and later Burret (1929) named and described it based on Ekman's collection. Moya and Berazaín (2023) showed that the true type locality of *C. yarey* is really the location called Cabo Cruz in the Bay of Santiago de Cuba, in the municipality and province of the same name.

Dahlgren and Glassman (1963) reported *Copernicia yarey* for the current provinces of Camagüey, Granma, Guantánamo, Holguín, Las Tunas, and Santiago de Cuba. Shafer made the first collection of *C. yarey* in Holguín province in 1909, from barren savannas southeast of the city of Holguín. León (1936) noted two new localities for *C. yarey* in Holguín, Fraile and Yuraguinal de Pesquero, and a third in Cacocum municipality. Seifriz (1943) also reported *C. yarey* for savannas in Holguín, as did Marie-Victorin and León (1944), when they said the first stop after departing Holguín is a group of *bohios* in a savanna with *C. yarey*. They described *C. yarey* as the primary palm in coastal scrub vegetation or *maniguas*. González (2015) reported *C. yarey* in Gibara municipality.

In the first report of *Copernicia yarey* for Mayarí municipality, Carabia (1945) reported that it occurred in the savannas or *charrascales* (stubble or scrub) of the Sierra de Nipe near La Mensura, where it occurred with two other palms, *Bactris cubensis* and *Coccothrinax orientalis*. This area now includes the Mensura-Pilotos National Park and is in the physical-geographical region Montañas de Nipe-Cristal of the Nipe-Sagua-Baracoa Mountain Massif, which occurs in the municipalities of Mayarí and Holguín. The primary access is the Mayarí-La Mensura road (Ruiz-Plasencia et al. 2019).

To understand and appreciate better the distribution of *Copernicia hospita* and *C. yarey* in this discussion, note that Borhidi and Muñiz (1986, 1996) divided the phytogeographic province of Cuba into three sectors: Western Cuba, Central Cuba and Eastern Cuba. They considered three sectors to Central Cuba: Camagüeyicum, Havanicum, and Trinidadicum, the latter divided into the districts Spirituense and Trinidadense.

The main objective of this paper is to provide an update to the presence of two *Copernicia* species in mountainous regions: *C. hospita* in Central Cuba and *C. yarey* in Eastern Cuba.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Guamuhaya massif in Sancti Spíritus municipality and province, which is in the Spirituense phytogeographic district of the Trinidicum sector of Central Cuba Work was also performed in Mensura-Pilotos National Park, Holguín province. Its highest elevation is on La Mensura mountain at 995 meters elevation (Ruiz-Plasencia et al. 2019) in the Nipense phytogeographic district of the Moanicum sector of Eastern Cuba.

For taxa distributions, I mainly consulted the herbarium specimens of *Copernicia hospita* and *C. yarey*, as well as Martius (1838), Burret (1929), León (1936), Seifriz (1943), Marie-Victorin and León (1944), Carabia (1945), Dahlgren and Glassman (1963), Moya (1997; 1999a, b; 2021, 2022); Moya and Mayotte (1996), Moya and Berazaín (2023), Moya et al. (1989), Gómez and Cuellar (2012), González (2015, 2016), González et al. (2003; 2004–2005a, b; 2006; 2015; 2018), and personal communications (pers. comm.) of Eldis Bécquer Granados, José Luis Gómez Hechavarría, Angel E. Motito Marín, and Ramona Oviedo Prieto.

I found a total of 298 specimens associated with *Copernicia hospita* and *C. yarey* in 18 herbaria: A, B, BH, C, F, FLAS, G, GH, HAC, HAJB, K, MA, MT, NY, P, S, US, and USF (acronyms from Thiers 2023). I examined and obtained location data from 133 wild-collected specimens of the 22 primary collectors of *C. hospita* and *C. yarey*.

I also reviewed all pertinent material in the National Herbarium of Cuba "Onaney Muñiz" of the Institute of Ecology and Systematics (HAC) and herbarium of the Sancti Spíritus Botanical Garden, which is listed as JBSS herbarium.

I have maintained field observation records for the last 25 years. My field observation number system is in this format: *Serie Moya XXXX*.

All specimens cited were examined from high-resolution photographs except for those at HAC, which I examined in person. Specimens seen by the author are marked with "!", those not seen with "[n.v.]" and those without marks were seen as digital images.

For the biogeography of Cuba, I follow Borhidi and Muñiz (1986, 1996). The geographical distribution information includes the country in uppercase letters, followed in alphabetical order by the province with the municipalities in parentheses. The biogeographical information includes the province in uppercase letters, followed by the subprovince and the corresponding sector, with the districts in parentheses. The origin of the information used for each municipality or



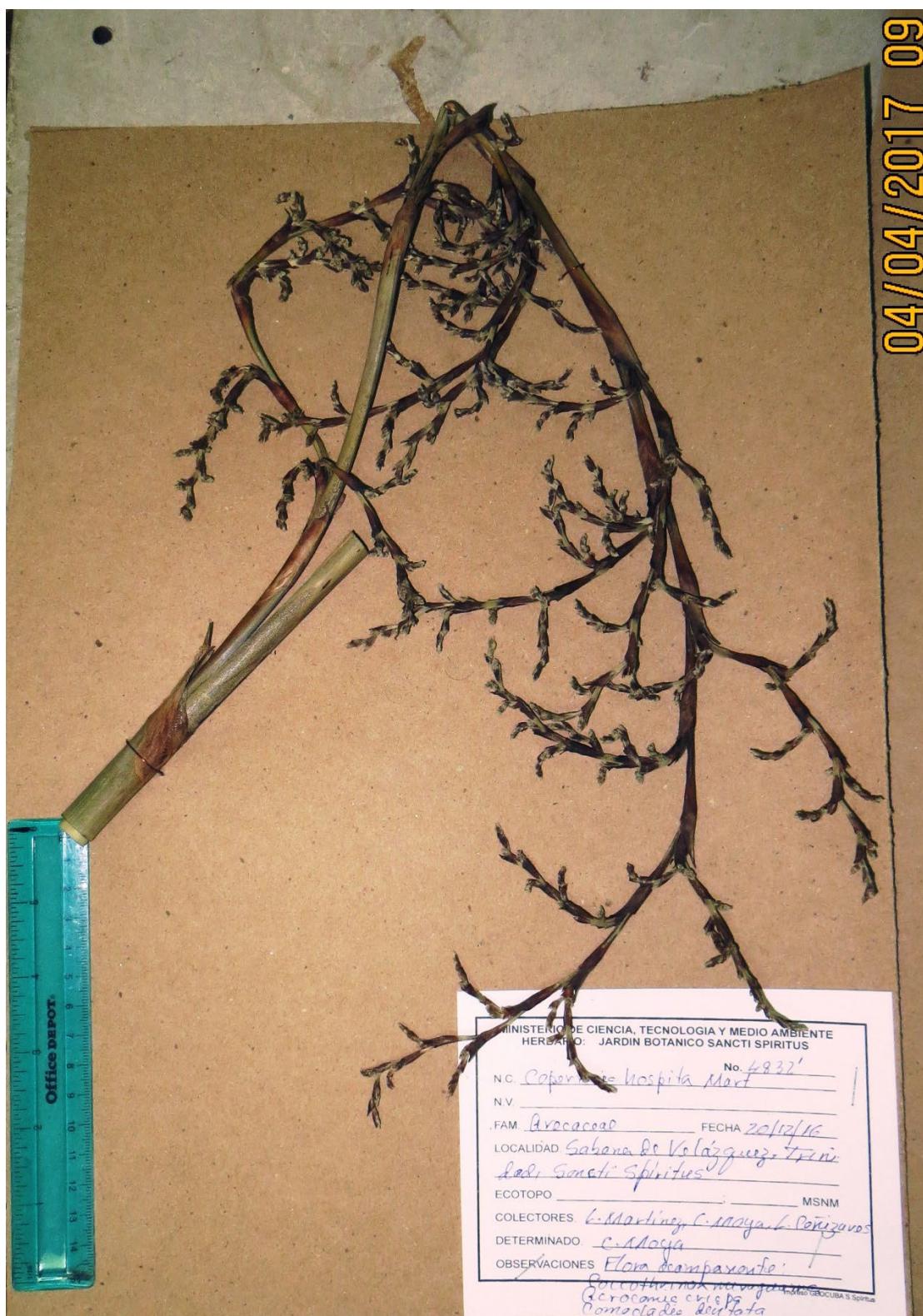
3. Lester Martínez prepares to make a collection of *Copernicia hospita*, Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus, Cuba. © 2016 C. E. Moya López.

district is denoted by adding the superscripts “^H” for herbarium specimen, “^R” for bibliographic reference, “^A” for author field observations, and “^P” for personal communications.

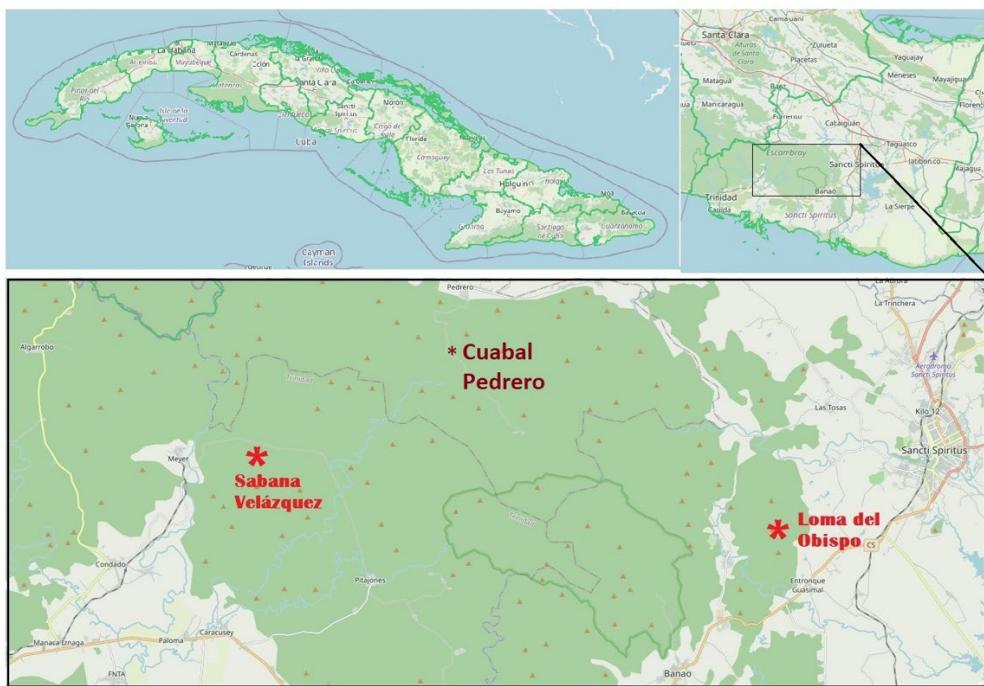
Results and Discussion

Copernicia hospita Mart., Hist. Nat. Palm. 3: 243. 1838.

Until the present, *Copernicia hospita* was only reported from the Camagüeyicum and Havanicum sectors of Central Cuba. Its presence is reported for the first time in the Spirituense and the Trinidadiense biogeographic districts of the Trinidadicum sector of Central Cuba in Sancti Spíritus and Trinidad municipalities.



4. *Copernicia hospita*, Moya s.n., Sabana de Velázquez, Trinidad municipality, Sancti Spíritus province. © Herbarium of Sancti Spíritus Botanical Garden.



5. Distribution of *Copernicia hospita*, Loma del Obispo and Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2023 C. E. Moya López. Drawn over map from *hicuba.com*



6. *Copernicia hospita* in cuabal south of Las Minas de Jarahueca, Cabaiguán municipality, Sancti Spíritus province. © R. M. Verdecia Pérez.



7a. *Copernicia hospita*, road from El Pedrero to Fomento, Fomento municipality, Sancti Spíritus province. © L. R. González-Torres.



7b. *Copernicia hospita*, leaf and inflorescence, road from El Pedrero to Fomento, Fomento municipality, Sancti Spíritus province. © L. R. González-Torres.

Staff of the Sancti Spíritus Botanical Garden collected *Copernicia hospita* in Loma del Obispo at the western limit of the Spirituëñse district in Sancti Spíritus municipality 26 years ago (**Figs. 1–2**). In the eastern limit of the Spirituëñse district in the Trinidad municipality, three former members of Sancti Spíritus Botanical Garden collected *C. hospita* in Sabana de Velázquez (**Figs. 3–4**). Both collections were deposited in the herbarium of the Sancti Spíritus Botanical Garden. Both localities are located in the Sancti Spíritus province at the ends of Alturas de Sancti Spíritus (**Fig. 5**). Also, the presence of *C. hospita* is reported for the first time for the municipalities of Cabaiguán, Fomento, and Jatibonico in the province of Sancti Spíritus.

The Distribution of *Copernicia hospita* by Municipality for Sancti Spíritus Province

CUBA. Sancti Spíritus province. **Cabaiguán** municipality. Herbarium evidence: S of Las Minas de Jarahueca, 11 Mar. 1999, Barboza and Moya 771 (NYx2), 772 (NYx2); 22 May 2016, L. Martínez, García-Lahera, and Pérez, silver form, Serie Moya 1610 (JBSS4833x4!), green form, Serie Moya 1611 (JBSS4834x2!), Series Moya 1613 (JBSS4836x2!). Field observation: 31 Jul. 2016 (**Fig. 6**), Moya, L. Martínez, Verdecia, and García-Lahera, green form, Serie Moya 1625, silver form, Serie Moya 1626. **Fomento** municipality. Field observation: Cuabal road El Pedrero to Gavilanes (**Figs. 7a–b**), 8 Feb. 2004, E. Bécquer (pers. comm. 3 Jul. 2022). **Jatibonico** municipality. Field observation: San Felipe, 3 Aug. 1995, Moya and P. Mayotte; 3 Sep. 1995, Moya and L. Martínez. **La Sierpe** municipality. Herbarium evidence: N. of finca Galleguitas, 1950, Glassman 5033 (F [n.v.]), Glassman 5035 (F [n.v.]); Romero, 23 Sep. 1995, Moya and L. Martínez s.n. (JBSS2030!). Field observation: Coto de Caza, 1 Mar. 2000, Moya and L. Martínez; S. of Peralejo, 21°38'15"N 79°18'37"W, 17 Dec. 2016, Moya, L. Martínez, Suárez, and M. Rodríguez, Serie Moya 1668; N. of Ferrolana (**Fig. 8**), 18 Dec. 2016, Moya, L. Martínez, M. Rodríguez y Suárez, Serie Moya 1683. **Sancti Spíritus** municipality. Herbarium evidence: río Tayabacoa, Jun. 1931, León 14915 (Px2); Loma del Obispo, 21 Jan. 1996, Moya et al. s.n. (JBSSx6!); 10 Mar. 1999, Barboza and Moya s.n. (NYx4). Field observation: NE. ejunction Guasimal, 1 Aug. 2000, Craft and Moya. **Trinidad** municipality. Field observation: Sabana de Casilda, 23 Aug. 1995, Moya and L. Martínez; Herbarium evidence: Sabana de Velázquez, submontane valley, 21°55'22"N 79°46'13"W, 66.2 m, 20 Dec. 2016, Moya, L. Martínez, and Cañizares, Serie Moya 1684, (JBSS4832! x4). Field observation: hills to the SW. of Hermita, 3 May 2015, Moya and L. Martínez; cattle pasture on road to San Pedro, 3 Mar. 2016, Moya and García-Lahera, Serie Moya 1601a. Evidence of use of leaves: near San Pedro, 3 Mar. 2016, Moya and García-Lahera, Serie Moya 1601b. **Yaguajay** municipality. Herbarium evidence: Venegas sabana arenosa, 31 Dic. 1934, León 16207 (HAC, GH). A report to document its occurrence in Taguasco municipality is lacking.



8. *Copernicia hospita*, north of Ferrolana, La Sierpe municipality, Sancti Spíritus province.
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9. Leonardo Cañizares provides scale for *Copernicia hospita*, Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2016 C. E. Moya López.



10. Distal portion of inflorescence of *Copernicia hospita*, Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2016 C. E. Moya López.



11. Regeneration of *Copernicia hospita*, Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2016 C. E. Moya López.



12. Moss (*Octoblepharum albidum* Hedw. [ID by Motitos], on trunk, *Copernicia hospita*, Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2016 C. E. Moya López.



13. *Copernicia hospita* growing with *Acrocomia crispa* and *Coccothrinax miraguama*, Sabana de Velázquez, Alturas de Sancti Spíritus. © 2016 C. E. Moya López.

Copernicia hospita is abundant in the new locality of Sabana de Velázquez in Trinidad municipality (**Figs. 9–13**) where it occurs with *Acrocomia crispa* and *Coccothrinax miraguama* (**Fig. 13**).

Updated Distribution of *Copernicia hospita*

Geographical Distribution. CUBA. Provinces Camagüey (Camagüey^H, Florida^H, Minas^H, Nuevitas^H, Sierra de Cubitas^H, Esmeralda^R, Jimaguayú^R), Ciego de Ávila (Baraguá^H, Florencia^A), Cienfuegos (Abreus^H, Cienfuegos^H, Rodas^A), Matanzas (Jovellanos^H), Sancti Spíritus (Cabaiguán^H, Fomento^P, Jatibonico^A, La Sierpe^H, Sancti Spíritus^H, Trinidad^H, Yaguajay^H), and Villa Clara (Corralillo^H, Placetas^H, Santo Domingo^H).

Biogeographical Distribution. CUBA province, Central Cuba subprovince: sectors Havanicum (Casildense^H, Jarucoense^H, Güinense^H), Camagüeyacamum (Camagüeyense^H, Claraense^H, Guaimarense^H, Sagüense^H), and Trinidadicum (Spirituense^H, Trinidadicum^H).

***Copernicia yarey* Burret, Kongl. Svenska Vetensk. Acad. Handl., ser. 3, 6(7): 7. 1929.**

The Distribution of *Copernicia yarey* var. *yarey* by Municipality for Holguín Province

CUBA. Holguín province. **Antilla** municipality. Bibliographic report: El Ramón peninsula, González and Carmenate (2018). **Banes** municipality. Herbarium evidence: Ad portum, 10 Nov. 1915, *Ekman* 6557 (NY, Sx2). Bibliographic report: cabo Lucrecia-punta de Mulas, González et al. (2015); Embarcadero de Río Seco y Punta Caleta Honda, González (2016). **Calixto García** municipality. Herbarium evidence: Rio Rioja, 3 Mar. 1915, *Ekman* 4837 (S). **Cacocum** municipality. Herbarium evidence: E. of Cacocum, 25 Apr. 1909, *Shafer* 1542 (NYx3, US [n.v.]); hacienda Pesquero, 2 Mar. 1932, *León* 15547 (HAC!); Yuraguanal de Pesquero, 3 Jul. 1932, *León* 15683 (NY). **Frank País** municipality. Bibliographic report: Bahía de Cananova-Bahía de Cebollas, González et al. (2003); costa Corinthia-Barrederas, González et al. (2006). **Gibara** municipality. Bibliographic report: coast line, González (2015). **Holguín** municipality. Herbarium evidence: Barren Savannas SE. of Holguín, 20 Apr. 1909, *Shafer* 1471 (NYx3, US [n.v.]); Cerro del Fraile, 28 Oct. 1914, *Ekman* 3245 (Sx2); sabanas cerca de Holguín, May 1931, *León* 14879 (type *Copernicia holguinensis* León), collected by J. Garcia and G. Aguayo (A, BH, F [n.v.], HAC x3!, MT, NYx2, P, US); rio Purnio, cerca Fraile, 3 Jan. 1934, *León* 15894 (HACx2!); borde rio Purnio, El Fraile, 3 Jan. 1934, *León* 15896 (HAC!); al pie del Fraile, 27 Jul. 1935, *León* 12693 (HAC!); serpentine Holguín, 20 May 1956, López Figuera and Dahlgren 2727 (HACx2!). Holguín, Dahlgren and Cutler 49/062 (F [n.v.]); Nocturno, 1 km E. Holguín, 1 Apr. 1999, Barboza 819 (NYx2). Bibliographic report: serpentines of San Andrés, Gómez and Cuellar (2011–2012). **Mayarí** municipality. Herbarium evidence: Arroyo to Piedra Gorda, 8 Jan. 1910, *Shafer* 3495 (NYx2, US [n.v.]); Loma Bandera, Jul. 1941, *León* 20468 (HAC!);



14. *Copernicia yarey*, base of La Mensura, Sierra de Nipe, Holguín. © 2013 J. L. Gómez-Hechavarría.



15. *Copernicia yarey*, climb to the Summit of La Mensura, Sierra de Nipe, Holguín. © 2011 J. L. Gómez-Hechavarría.

Ioma de Winch, 22 Abr. 1960, *Alain and Acuña 8059* (HACx3!); cerca Loma Mensura, 25 Aug. 1993, *Salzman 472* (FLASx5). Bibliographic report: “charrascales” Sierra de Nipe, Carabia (1945). Field observation: La Mensura-Piloto National Park (**Figs. 14–15**): climb to the “Loma La Mensura,” subspinous xeromorphic scrub on serpentine, 850–900 m, 20° 30' 0" N, 75° 49' 0" W; base of “Loma La Mensura,” sclerophyll rain forest fragment, 770 m; “Loma La Bandera,” subspinous xeromorphic scrub on serpentinite, 20° 34' 60" N, 75° 43' 60" W; “Charrascal La Caridad,” 510 m, all by José Luis Gómez Hechavarría (pers. comm., 18 Mar. 2017). **Moa** municipality. Herbarium evidence: Centeno, Aug. 1945, *León et al.* 22691 (HAC!, GH, USF). **Rafael Freyre** municipality. Bibliographic report: costa Bahía de Vita-Pesquero, González et al. (2004–2005a); Caletica, González et al. (2004–2005b). Reports to document its occurrence in Cueto, Sagua de Tánamo, and Urbano Noris municipalities are lacking.

Updated Distribution of *Copernicia yarey*

Geographical Distribution. CUBA. Provinces Camagüey (Esmeralda^H, Florida^H, Nuevitas^H, Sierra de Cubitas^H), Ciego de Ávila (Moron^H), Granma (Bayamo^H, Niquero^H, Pilón^H), Holguín (Báguanos^H, Banes^H, Cacocum^H, Calixto García^H, Frank País^R, Gibara^H, Holguín^H, Mayarí^H, Moa^H, Rafael Freyre^R), Las Tunas (Jobabo^H, Las Tunas^H, Manatí^H), Matanzas (Martí^P), Santiago de Cuba (Guama^H, Mella^H, Santiago de Cuba^H), and Villa Clara (Caibarién^H).

Biogeographical Distribution. CUBA province, Central Cuba subprovince: sector Camagüeyacum (Gibarense^H, Holguinense^H, Sagüense^H). Eastern Cuba subprovince: sectors Moanicum (Nipense, MoaëNSE), Santiagicum (Pilonnense, UveroëNSE).

Verdecia (2014) reported *Copernicia yarey* in Jobabo municipality. Ramona Oviedo (pers. comm.), 2 Feb. 2019), reported *C. yarey* at “Ciénaga de Majaguillar” and Cayos de Cinco Leguas,” both in Martí municipality, Matanzas province.

Report of *Copernicia yarey* on La Mensura is the Highest Elevation for *Copernicia* in Cuba

At the base of La Mensura, at an elevation of approximately 770 m (**Fig. 14**), *Copernicia yarey* occurs in a shady and humid fragment of sclerophyll rain forest. However, it also occurs even higher, at 850–900 m elevation and there in subspiny xeromorphic scrub on serpentine, which is the highest elevation for the genus in Cuba (Gómez, pers. comm., 18 Mar. 2017) (**Fig. 15**).

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