

THE DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT GRANITE PLATE

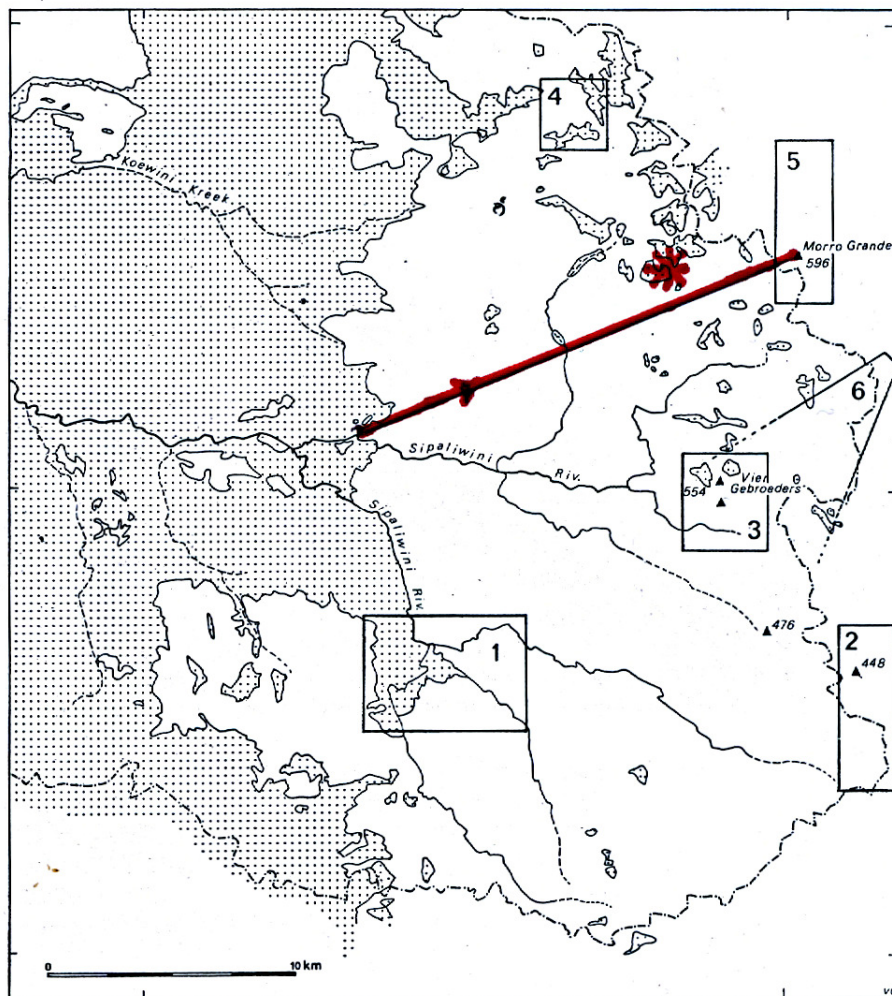
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During a short botanical reconnaissance trip (August 1966) across the Sipaliwini Savanna the Great Granite Plate was discovered by Dr. J. van Donselaar. The dome of the Morro Grande, looming at the horizon in the East, had lured him away from his main study area near the Western forest border. While walking in a North-easterly direction he found a large plate of exposed granite.

Accompanied by his botanical assistant John Tawjoeran, staff member of the Suriname Forest Service, and L.Biswane, support staff member, he had decided to cross the savanna in order to extend his survey area.



Van Donselaar's journey to the Morro Grande. * Location Of Great Granite Plate

This crossing on foot proved to be a lot more difficult than they had imagined. The roughness of the terrain, rightly called 'Diapokoimape' = Land Full of Stones by the local Trio Indians, the deep Maurisie swamps and the hordes of biting insects made it an arduous journey.

In search of drinking water and a place to camp overnight, they left the straight line towards the Morro Grande and were heading for one of the forest islands when they stumbled upon the Great Granite Plate (3ha).

Next Morning they reached the peak of the Morro Grande. On the way back they decided to make a provisional study of the distinct flora and vegetation cover of the large granitic outcrop they had found the day before.



John Tawjoeram in a pensive mood on the Great Granite Plate *Photo Van Donselaar*

Without any special equipment for making a plant collection, Van Donselaar used his note book to press-dry a few small species. Based upon his extensive knowledge of the savanna flora of Northern Surinam and his visits to similar rock outcrops in central parts of the country, he was able to give a detailed description of the rock pavement vegetation and to compile a plant species list.

This list, also including some species of smaller plates he discovered later on the 'Little Sipaliwini Savanna', is given below.



Melocactus neryi, flowering

LIST OF PLANT SPECIES IN ROCK PAVEMENT VEGETATION ON THE
SIPALIWINI SAVANNA (VAN DONSELAAR, 1968)

(Update scientific names in section 'Plant Lists', elsewhere on this site)

Amaryll.	<i>Furcraea foetida</i>
Ar.	<i>Philodendron acutatum</i>
Brom.	<i>Pitcairnia geyskesii</i>
Cact.	<i>Cereus</i> spec. (vs Schulz/v.D. 10654)
	<i>Melocactus neryi</i> (vs Schulz/v.D. 10599)
Comp.	<i>Melampodium camphoratum</i>
Conv.	<i>Evolvulus filipes</i>
Cyp.	<i>Bulbostylis capillaris</i> var. <i>maior</i>
	<i>Bulbostylis capillaris</i> var. <i>tenuifolia</i>
	<i>Rhynchospora barbata</i> var. <i>barbata</i>
Erioc.	<i>Paepalanthus fasciculatus</i>
	<i>Paepalanthus subtilis</i>
Euph.	<i>Jatropha urens</i>
Gent.	<i>Lisianthus coerulescens</i>
	<i>Neurotheca loeselioides</i>
Gram.	<i>Aristida capillacea</i>
	<i>Axonopus ramosus</i>
	<i>Panicum pyrularium</i>
	<i>Paspalum parviflorum</i>
	<i>Thrasya petrosa</i>
Gutt.	<i>Clusia panapanari</i>
Hydroph.	<i>Hydrolea spinosa</i>

Lent.	<i>Utricularia hispida</i>
	<i>Utricularia</i> div. spec.
Melast.	<i>Acisanthera bivalvis</i>
	<i>Ernestia blackii</i> (v.D. 3705)
	<i>Miconia albicans</i>
Mim.	<i>Calliandra surinamensis</i>
Myrt.	<i>Eugenia puniceifolia</i> var. <i>puniceifolia</i>
Ochn.	<i>Sauvagesia pulchella</i>
Papil.	<i>Aeschynomene paniculata</i>
	<i>Cassia cultrifolia</i>
	<i>Desmodium barbatum</i>
	<i>Phaseolus longipedunculatus</i>
	<i>Phaseolus peduncularis</i> var. <i>clitorioides</i>
	<i>Stylosanthes guianensis</i> var. <i>gracilis</i>
	<i>Zornia diphylla</i>
Port.	<i>Portulaca sedifolia</i>
Rub.	<i>Richardia scabra</i>
	<i>Sabicea romboutsii</i>
	<i>Sipanea pratensis</i>
	vs Schulz/v.D. 10568
Schiz.	<i>Anemia tripinnata</i>
Scl.	<i>Schwenckia americana</i>
Turn.	<i>Piriqueta cistoides</i>
	<i>Turners ulmifolia</i> var. <i>surinamensis</i>
Xyr.	<i>Xyris</i> div. spec.



Melocactus neryi and *Philodendron acutatum*



Ernestia blackii on granite

The granitic outcrops plant species list of the 1968-69 expedition is published elsewhere on this site. Please see “Ecological Investigations....Sipaliwini Savanna Area”, Formation VI, 1973 and online publ. 2009.

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