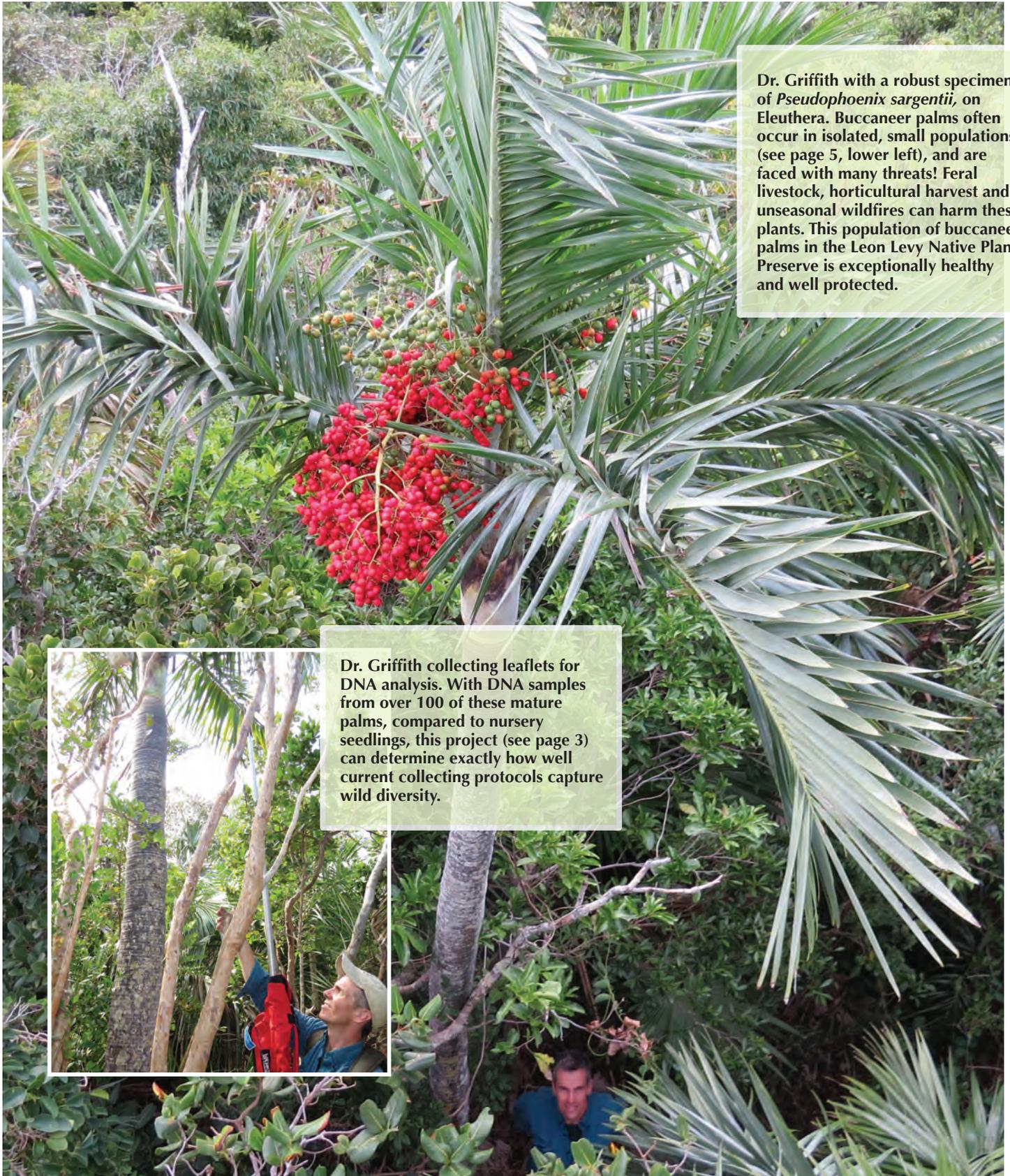


# Bahamian Buccaneers

Provide a model for plants worldwide



Dr. Griffith with a robust specimen of *Pseudophoenix sargentii*, on Eleuthera. Buccaneer palms often occur in isolated, small populations (see page 5, lower left), and are faced with many threats! Feral livestock, horticultural harvest and unseasonal wildfires can harm these plants. This population of buccaneer palms in the Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve is exceptionally healthy and well protected.

Dr. Griffith collecting leaflets for DNA analysis. With DNA samples from over 100 of these mature palms, compared to nursery seedlings, this project (see page 3) can determine exactly how well current collecting protocols capture wild diversity.

The buccaneer palm, *Pseudophoenix sargentii*, known from the Lesser Antilles to the Yucatan – and even here in Florida – is among the most prized of ornamental palms. Its beauty, ease of transplant, and slow-growing habit have prompted many to remove these palms from their native soil. But on Eleuthera, large numbers of buccaneers thrive on a prominent hill, in a dense forest preserved for its unique biological diversity.

There, at The Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve, *Pseudophoenix sargentii* populations are dense and healthy. Montgomery's recent work in Belize,

Cuba, Dominica, Mona Island, and Florida saw far fewer plants than in the preserve, often imperiled. Thus, the Eleuthera plants provide an ideal model for the genetics of these palms (see page 3). How many garden plants do we need to maintain and represent the wild diversity of such a robust forest?

With this research goal in mind, I was delighted to work with experts at the Leon Levy Preserve this winter. The preserve's botanists and experts provided deep knowledge of the plants in their care, gracious hospitality, and access to the invaluable scientific treasure they steward. I am grateful.

Potential comparisons from this work will be informative: How many palms do we need to grow at Montgomery? Do groups of seeds collected in different years capture different genetic diversity? How do these palms compare with palms in Florida and elsewhere?

In pondering these questions, I am most glad to work with these Bahamian botanists; bringing these palms and these colleagues into our large project raises the scope and scale from NATIONAL TO INTERNATIONAL.

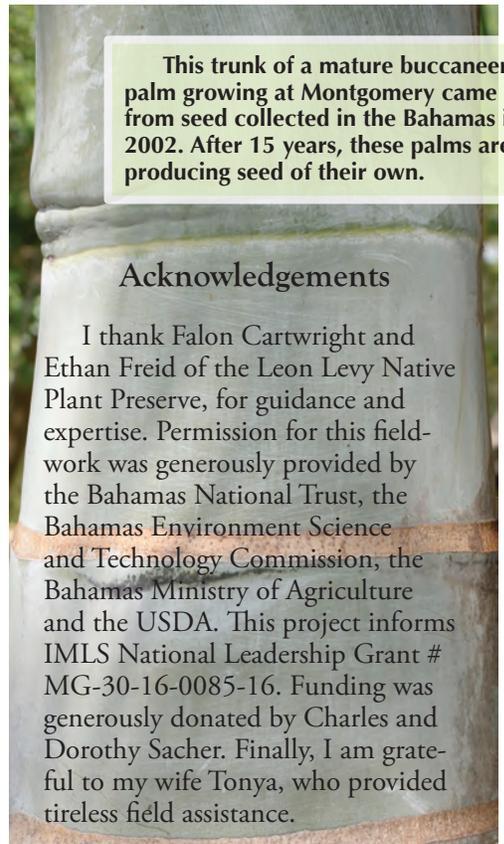
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Our collections at the Loyd G. Kelly Conservation Nursery include buccaneer palm seedlings from Eleuthera, collected in 2012 by Dr. Brett Jestrow. These five-year-old plants show how slowly this species can grow. Comparing this group to the more recent seedlings can help develop good conservation protocols.



Seeds from this 2017 fieldwork are now germinating at Montgomery.



This trunk of a mature buccaneer palm growing at Montgomery came from seed collected in the Bahamas in 2002. After 15 years, these palms are producing seed of their own.

### Acknowledgements

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### An Update on Florida's Buccaneer Palms

Tracy Magellan's study of this species in Florida was highlighted in our Spring 2015 newsletter. Tracy has just published her findings in the latest issue of PALMS (Vol. 61, pages 41-44). Only 3 adult buccaneer palms survive in Florida – demonstrating how vital these genetic studies are for conserving this species.

