

An encounter with *Mammillaria deherdtiana* subsp. *dodsonii*

Ian Woolnough

This *Mammillaria* prefers to grow in moss on top of rocks, and is one of the more attractive flowering species. All photographs by the author.

M*mammillaria deherdtiana* subsp. *dodsonii* is one of the mammillarias with what I consider to have a 'decent' flower. In mid-March 2016, after we had left Oaxaca city and were heading south-east on the Mex 190 on our way to Tehuantepec, I decided it was worth making a slight detour and heading off north into the hills to see if we could find some. The road was not too bad, but was slow-going as we climbed quite steeply, and rapidly gained altitude so that when we reached the co-ordinates I had and parked up, I saw that we were just over 3,000m high. The view was quite impressive (Fig. 1) with oaks, pines and agaves lining the road. Scattered in amongst the trees were large rocky outcrops, the known habitat for the mammillarias. We split up and began to explore, but the biggest problem was trying to see or gain access to the flattish tops of the rocky areas.

Working my way down the hillside amongst small cultivated areas I was initially only able to get on to



Fig. 2 A massive *Agave atrovirens* amongst the pine and oak trees

small boulders and although I did find a massive *Agave atrovirens* (Fig. 2), I was beginning to give up hope when I saw some colour on one of the outcrops along with some well-camouflaged globular cacti. The pink-purple was *Mammillaria deherdtiana* subsp. *dodsonii* in flower. There were not that many plants down



Fig. 1 View looking north showing the moss-covered rocky outcrops where *Mammillaria deherdtiana* subsp. *dodsonii* grows



Fig. 3 The top of one of the outcrops with numerous plants of *Mammillaria deherdtiana* subsp. *dodsonii*

Fig. 4 Most plants, although single-headed, were at various stages of flowering. Inset: a flower in close up





Fig. 5 Presumably a nice multi-headed clump and not a number of individual plants?



Fig. 6 Another more obvious clumping plant

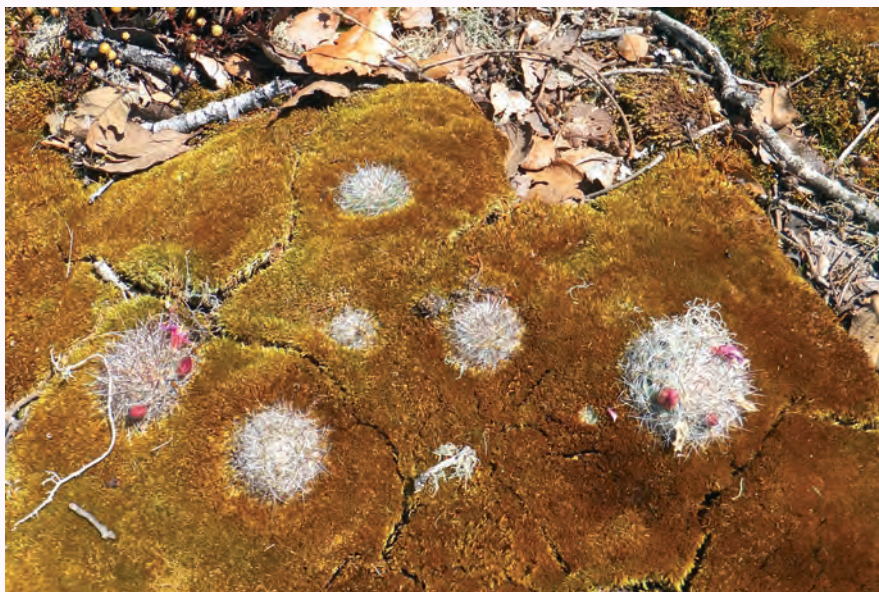


Fig. 7 (left) Six single-headed plants growing immersed in moss and dusted with lichens, twigs and leaves



Fig. 8 Some heads were even managing three open flowers during our visit

below and getting to them was difficult as they were on steep faces. However, on climbing back up to the road to see if the others had managed to see any plants I discovered that they had managed to find a route up on to the top of some of the outcrops where there were more plants and the flatter tops made photography easier (Fig. 3). Most plants were single-headed (Fig. 4) although there were some larger, presumably multi-headed clumps (Figs. 5 & 6). The plants were growing in moss amongst leaf litter with some almost totally immersed in the moss (Fig. 7). Not all plants were in flower but we were lucky with our timing as many were and occasional plants even had multiple flowers open (Fig. 8).

I hope you will agree it was well worth the detour to see these beautiful plants and how lucky we were that they happened to be in flower when we visited.

Ian Woolnough
 Email:
 ianneilwoolnough@gmail.com
 Layout by Alice Vanden Bon