



## A new yellow-flowered ornithophilous *Vriesea* and an illustrated collection of the bromeliads from Pico Alto, Serra do Baturité, Ceará State, Northeastern Brazil

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### Abstract

*Vriesea baturitensis* is described and illustrated as a new species. It is compared with *V. friburgensis* and *V. rodigasiana*, which we consider to be morphologically the most related species. The new taxon occurs in isolated Atlantic forest patches along the Baturité mountain range, in central-north Ceará state, Northeastern Brazil. It is characterized by the compact and regular rosette, a rounded leaf apex, stiff and erect peduncle, peduncle and primary bracts bright yellow, and the particular colors and sizes of the floral bracts and sepals. The humid habitat where the new species was found, known in Brazil as *brejo de altitude*, is surrounded by the *Caatinga* (Brazilian dry woodland) and due to its climatic conditions supports a rich flora of epiphytes. In Pico Alto we collected and photographed six different species of bromeliads, two of each being *Guzmania* and *Vriesea*, one of each being *Aechmea* and *Racinaea*. We conclude that the area of Pico Alto is an important remnant of humid forest and conservation measures to protect its epiphytes are urgently needed.

**Key words:** Baturité range, *brejo de altitude*, epiphytes, Poales, Tillandsioideae, *Vrieseae*

### Introduction

The Atlantic rainforest may be popularly known in Northeastern Brazil as *brejos de altitude*. Such a name is used when the humid forest is isolated within the semi-arid climate zone and is surrounded by an array of dry woodland *Caatinga* (Andrade-Lima 1982). According to Lins (1989), the *brejos* are “areas of exception” within the semi-arid climate and the establishment of this vegetation type occurred due to high annual rainfall, favored by high (> 1,000 m a.s.l.) elevations.

These forest patches are still understudied regarding their biodiversity, despite the critical conservation status of most of these fragments which have been exploited for timber or for pastures for cattle raising activities. An entire book (Siqueira-Filho & Leme 2006) has been devoted to the Bromeliaceae from the Atlantic Forest in Northeastern Brazil, focusing on areas within Pernambuco and Alagoas states. However, almost no information is available in the literature regarding the bromeliads from Ceará and Rio Grande do Norte states, considered by different authors as the northern limit of the Atlantic forest. Although still controversial, the inland *brejos* from Ceará could be considered floristically similar and therefore included in the official classifications of the Atlantic forest domain that typically follows the eastern Brazilian coast (Oliveira & Araújo 2007). Several works highlight the great biodiversity harbored by these small fragments (e.g., Oliveira & Araújo 2007). As a whole, the Brazilian Atlantic forest has been considered one of the most important diversification centers for bromeliads, hosting recently evolved lineages and several endemic genera (Smith 1955; Givnish *et al.* 2011), thus being a priority area in need to be carefully inventoried.