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Phoenix acaulis

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Early this year I accompanied Inge Hoffmann on a search for the little known palm *Phoenix acaulis* in its natural habitat near Dehra Dun, north of Delhi, India. We were joined in our search by Dr. Som Dev Sharma, from Dehra Dun, who knows the whole area intimately. Dr. Sharma arranged permits for us to enter the forest. Near Dehra Dun *P. acaulis* is restricted to a small area not much more than 4 km long. The palm occurs

as clumps scattered in forest clearings. The clumps consist of both male and female plants. On excavating one clump we found that the stems grew vertically down, and so the fruits on the female plant are held at ground level. Roots penetrate the sandy ground to great depths in search of water. I have transplanted a few plants to my garden in Calcutta where at present a male and a female have survived.



1. Excavated male plant of *Phoenix acaulis* with old inflorescences. 2. Excavated female plant of *Phoenix acaulis* with almost mature fruit.



3. Natural habitat of *Phoenix acaulis* near Dehra Dun. 4. Group of *Phoenix acaulis* including a female in almost ripe fruit.