

Matucanas from the Marañón

Graham Charles

Briars Bank, Foster Bridge, Ketton, Stamford, PE9 3UU, UK

graham.charles@btinternet.com

The Marañón river valley has the highest concentration of taxa belonging to the cactus genus *Matucana*, some 15 in total. In Peru, the river runs from south to north and, over the region of *Matucana* distribution, drops from over 3000 m to about 500 m. The various taxa occur either at or near river level, or high on the mountains above. Some taxa are widespread whilst others are localized, occasionally with a specific habitat preference. Our knowledge of the distributions is limited by the nature of the terrain, which is frequently very steep mountainsides making exploration away from the roads very difficult. It is clear that the type localities of the various names are near to the crossing points of the river. In recent years, new crossings have been constructed to give access to the eastern side of the river whilst others have been improved. One new crossing, the road from Sihuas to Huacrachuco, now provides good access the River Rupac, a tributary of the Marañón flowing from the west. A new taxon of *Matucana* discovered in this river valley will be described in quepo (2010). Like all the matucanas from this region, this new plant has good potential for cultivation even though, like others from lower altitudes, it is cold sensitive and requires a minimum of 10°C.