New data from the habitats of *Corynopuntia marenae* and *Corynopuntia reflexispina*

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A lack of comprehensive field data prompted the author to conduct further research into the genus *Corynopuntia* in Sonora, Mexico. All photography by the author.

Established by F M Knuth in 1936, *Corynopuntia* is a genus comprising of the so called 'club chollas'. The name comes from the Greek *koryne*, meaning 'club' and refers to the club-shaped branch segments. These opuntioid plants grow in dense, low cushions consisting of rather ovoid or slightly clavate segments.

The genus *Corynopuntia* was first set up as a segregate of the genus *Opuntia* (L.) Mill., but was reduced to sectional rank by Benson in 1969 and slightly elevated again to a subgenus by Bravo in 1972. In 1999, Anderson included *Corynopuntia* in his enlarged concept of *Grusonia* Reich. ex K.Schum., but only in the last ten years or so, thanks to pioneering DNA work by Dickie in 1997, subsequent molecular data from Wallace and Dickie (2002) and Griffith (2003), and seed micromorphology studies by Stuppy (2002), has *Corynopuntia* been reinstated as a distinct genus

by Hunt et al. (2006, International Cactaceae Systematics Group).

Some plants of similar morphology can be distinguished as groups within the genus *Corynopuntia*, but there is one species which has a particularly unique morphology, namely *Corynopuntia marenae* (S.H.Parsons) M.P.Griff.

Corynopuntia marenae was first described by Sidney H. Parsons in 1936 as *Opuntia marenae*, basing his description on a specimen found at the rear of his cooking tent by Maren B. Parsons, in Kino Bay (Sonora, Mexico) at the mouth of Bacuachic river, for whom it was named. It was reported as close to the South American genus *Pterocactus* K.Schum. The first description was very lengthy but ably summarised by Hunt (2006). The following description is slightly modified from that source:

Fig. 1 *Corynopuntia reflexispina* in habitat at Sahuaral, Sonora with *Lophocereus (Pachycereus) schottii* on the right