

It's official: World's largest giant waterlily recognized by Guinness World Records

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Carlos Magdalena, scientific and botanical research horticulturist, and Lucy Smith, botanical illustrator, holding the Guinness World Records title for *Victoria boliviana*, the world's largest species of giant waterlily, in the Princess of Wales Conservatory at Kew Gardens in West London. Credit: Adam Millward, Guinness World Records

At an event hosted at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in West London, an official from Guinness World Records has presented Mr. Juan Carlos Crespo Montalvo, the Bolivian Charge d'Affaires to the UK, with an official Guinness World Records title for the world's largest giant waterlily, the recently-named *Victoria boliviana*.

The species, which was named new to science in July 2022, has been described as one of the 'botanical wonders' of the world following [years of investigation that culminated in the publication of a paper](#) in the journal *Frontiers in Plant Science*.

The incredible effort was headed by RBG Kew's scientific and botanical research horticulturist Carlos Magdalena, freelance botanical artist Lucy Smith, and biodiversity genomics researcher Natalia Przelomska, in close collaboration with partners at the National Herbarium of Bolivia, Santa Cruz de La Sierra Botanic Garden and La Rinconada Gardens.

V. boliviana, which is native to the Llanos de Moxos wetlands of Bolivia, has been named in honor of Kew's Bolivian partners and its South American home country.

Mr. Crespo Montalvo said, "I want to thank Richard Deverell, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and thank through him and all the researchers and team that are part of Kew for this invitation. The recent scientific discovery of the new species of giant waterlily in Bolivian territory and baptized as Bolivian Victoria is a finding of great joy and hope for all peoples. Nature continues to surprise us with new discoveries. We agree with Director Deverell that we must work together to strengthen cooperative ties to face the great challenges of our time, such as climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Bolivia is a state that respects Mother Earth and we are attentive to continue strengthening ties of friendship, research and cooperation."

In total, three Guinness World Records titles have been awarded to the *V. boliviana*, respectively:

- Largest species of waterlily
- Largest waterlily leaf
- Largest undivided leaf

Carlos Magdalena, who suspected the waterlily was a new species as far back as 2006 and grew it at Kew Gardens from seeds donated from Bolivia, said, "Kew Gardens was the very first [garden](#) to grow a giant waterlily species from seed. After suspecting for years that there was a third species in the *Victoria* genus, it is fantastic to see *Victoria boliviana* recognized by Guinness World Record titles. I'm delighted to have played a part in its discovery and celebrate not only a new species, but the global collaboration between Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and its partners, the National Herbarium of Bolivia, Santa Cruz de La Sierra Botanic Garden and La Rinconada Gardens."



Gaston Ribero of La Rinconada Gardens in Bolivia holding the two Guinness World Record titles for the record-breaking 3.2 m *V. boliviana* leaf grown in

2012. Credit: La Rinconada Gardens

Lucy Smith, joint co-author whose botanical illustrations played an integral role in the species' description, said, "The new Guinness World Record titles shine a light on what global collaboration can do for science. The discovery of *Victoria boliviana* brought together many elements of RBG Kew's expertise, from horticulture, botanical artistry, and [scientific research](#). I'm honored to have been a part of this recognition and hope that botanical illustration is used to further continue the description of new species to Science."

The announcement, jointly made with La Rinconada Gardens, serves to strengthen a long-standing scientific partnership between RBG Kew and key partners in Bolivia, which to date has resulted in the designation of Tropical Important Plant Areas for conservation and the publication of an extensive Catalog of the Vascular Plants of Bolivia.

Gaston Ribero, La Rinconada Gardens, said, "*Victoria boliviana* is a completely spectacular plant, beautifully colored and with an admirable size. And on top it has such a meaningful name that it should be considered one of our national symbols. We will work on it."

More information: Lucy T. Smith et al, Revised Species Delimitation in the Giant Water Lily Genus *Victoria* (Nymphaeaceae) Confirms a New Species and Has Implications for Its Conservation, *Frontiers in Plant Science* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fpls.2022.883151](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpls.2022.883151)

Provided by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

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