



“PRO-DOSEL” 2003 CUBA’S FIRST CANOPY WORKSHOP 2003

Cuba is a nation with few financial resources but a literacy rate higher than the United States and excellent Universities. It also enjoys the richest diversity of palms anywhere in the world and some 50% of its plant species are found nowhere else. Tropical wet forests still exist on the steep mountains in the east of the country from where the revolution led by Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara was launched. Atop the extraordinary and inaccessible limestone mounts of Viñales National Park in the west are believed to be numerous endemic species waiting to be documented.

It was in the magnificent World Heritage Site at Viñales in October this year that Cuba held its first canopy workshop “Pro-Dosel 2003” organised by ICAN country representative, Dr Jorge Ferro Diaz an ecologist with ECOVIDA. Andrew Mitchell, Director of the GCP, and Peter Horchler, research manager of the Leipzig crane in Germany, both delivered papers to the meeting which was attended by some 25 Cuban researchers from Havana and Pinar del Rio province.



Viñales Mountains World Heritage Site

Papers were delivered on birds, bats, epiphytes and other groups in Cuban forests as well as on EU mechanisms for supporting forest research in Cuba. Francisco Cejas Rodriguez, Director of CENBIO, the Centre for Biodiversity in Havana, demonstrated the comprehensive biodiversity information soon about to be available via the web Cuba’s research community and its activities. This includes detailed species data bases available on-line, as part of Cuba’s commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Clearing House Mechanism and also to the Global Biological Information Facility of the OECD. Cejas presented a copy of Cuba’s National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan to the GCP.



Left to right - Peter Horchler, Jorge Ferro and Andrew Mitchell

Very little is known about the ecology of species in the canopy of Cuba’s forests, other than for epiphytes which Jorge Ferro has studied for some 20 years. There was considerable interest in modern methods of accessing the canopy such as

cranes and balloons, which were unknown to Cuban researchers.

Outcomes of the meeting included commitments to:

1. Exchange information with the GCP and the Botanical Institute in Leipzig to help foster canopy science in Cuba.
2. Seek funding to enable Cuban participation in the GCP Canopy Training Course in Brazil managed by the University of Ouro Preto with funds from the Environment Fund of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
3. Collaborate to devise a specific canopy focussed project for Cuba
4. Hold a canopy focussed session as part of the Caribbean regional biological conference to be held in Havana in November 2003. ICAN members who would like to participate or who can offer support to Cuba's efforts to explore its canopies should contact Jorge Ferro jferro@ecovida.pinar.cu or Andrew Mitchell: a.Mitchell@globalcanopy.org

PROJECT IBISCA – PANAMA

Over 35 entomologists from 15 national participated in the International Biodiversity and Systematics the IBISCA project investigating the Biodiversity of Soil and Canopy Arthropods, conducted in San Lorenzo National Park on Panama's Caribbean coast, between September and November this year. The project, designed by Bruno Corbara, (University of Université Blaise Pascal France, and Yves Bassett, (Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute) and supported by the French pharmaceutical and chemicals group company SOLVAY, with additional support from STRI and the GCP, was a first attempt to use mobile and static systems (cranes, balloons, the canopy raft and climbers) to comprehensively investigate vertical stratification and beta diversity of arthropods in a rainforest, also with spatial and temporal replication of sampling sites. Results should prove fundamental to a better understanding of the distribution of life on earth. A second survey is planned for May '04 A report will appear at a later date".



Moths collected by Professor Roger Kitching on Project Ibisca.