



## GLOBAL CANOPY PROGRAMME UPDATE

### “Pro-Dosel” 2003, Cuba’s first canopy workshop

Other than Jorge Ferro’s studies of epiphytes over the past 20 years, very little is known about the ecology of species in the canopy of Cuba’s forests. Tropical wet forests exist on the steep mountains in the east. The extraordinary and inaccessible limestone mountains of Viñales National Park in the west support numerous endemic species yet to be documented. Cuba support the richest diversity of palms anywhere in the world; some 50% of its plant species are found nowhere else.

Cuba held its first canopy workshop, “Pro-Dosel 2003”, at World Heritage Site at Viñales in October, 2003. The workshop was organised by ICAN representative Dr Jorge Ferro Diaz, an ecologist with ECOVIDA. Andrew Mitchell, Director of the GCP, and Peter Horchler, Research Manager of the Leipzig canopy crane in Germany, each presented papers to approximately 25 Cuban researchers from Havana and the province of Pinar del Rio. There was considerable interest in modern methods of gaining access to the canopy.

Francisco Cejas Rodriguez, Director of CENBIO, the Center for Biodiversity in Havana, discussed the comprehensive biodiversity information on Cuba’s research community and its activities. A website to communicate this, including detailed species databases, will be online in the near future. This website is part of Cuba’s commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Clearing House Mechanism and the Global Biological Information Facility of the OECD. Cejas also presented Cuba’s National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan to the GCP. Topics of other papers included birds, bats, epiphytes, and other groups in Cuban forests, as well as on EU mechanisms for supporting forest research in Cuba.

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 create a specific canopy-focused project for Cuba;
4. Hold a canopy-focused session as part of the Caribbean regional biological conference to be held in Havana in November 2003.

ICAN members who wish to participate or who can offer support to Cuba’s efforts to explore its canopies should contact Jorge Ferro ([jferro@ecovida.pinar.cu](mailto:jferro@ecovida.pinar.cu)) or Andrew Mitchell ([a.Mitchell@globalcanopy.org](mailto:a.Mitchell@globalcanopy.org)).

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#### PROJECT IBISCA , PANAMA

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Over 35 entomologists from 15 countries participated in Project IBISCA’s “International Biodiversity and Systematics” symposium. Conducted in San Lorenzo National Park on Panama’s Caribbean coast between September and November 2003, the Symposium investigated the Biodiversity of Soil and Canopy Arthropods. The project was designed by Bruno Corbara (Université Blaise, Pascal, France) and Yves Basset (Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI)), and was supported by the French pharmaceutical and chemicals group company SOLVAY with additional support from STRI and the GCP. This project marked the first attempt to use both mobile and static systems (cranes, balloons, the canopy raft, and climbers) to comprehensively investigate vertical stratification and beta diversity of arthropods in a rainforest, along with spatial and temporal replication of sampling sites. Results will be critical to better understand the distribution of diversity on earth. A second survey is planned for May 2004. Look for a report in a future edition of “What’s Up?”