

Tupper 4pm seminar

Tuesday, April 8, 4pm seminar speaker will be Bob Stallard, STRI
TBA

Paleo-Talk

Wednesday, April 8, CTPA Paleo-talk speaker will be Ariel Arjona, STRI

Relational databases and web technologies applied to Paleontology

Monthly talks

Wednesday, April 9 we will have two monthly talks:

La geología del Canal de Panamá

Agustín Cardona, CTPA, Auditorio Bernardo Lombardo, Universidad de Panamá, 11am

Los anfibios de Panamá

6pm, Tupper Center by Cesar Jaramillo, STRI/University of Panama

Bambi seminar

Thursday, April 10, Bambi seminar speaker will be Christian Voigt, Leibniz-Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, Berlin

Stable isotope ecology of Neotropical phytophagous bats

Arrivals

Lena Berg, to study plant sanctions and wasp pollination behaviour in the fig tree-fig wasp mutualism, on BCI.

Maya de Vries, University of California at Berkeley, to carry out the project "Does morphological and functional specialization always go hand-in-hand? at Naos, Bocas and Galeta.

Tabitha Innocent, Edinburgh University, UK, to study sensory systems of nocturnal and diurnal bees, on BCI.



Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panamá

www.stri.org

April 4, 2008

From Harvard to Hollywood

Marine biologist Randy Olson a graduate from Harvard University nowadays a Hollywood filmmaker visited STRI last week. Olson was writer and director of *Rediagnosing the Oceans*, a short film featuring STRI staff scientist Jeremy B.C. Jackson. At STRI he presented two of his most recent movies: *Flock of Dodos: The Evolution-Intelligent Design Circus* and *Sizzle: A Global Warming Comedy*. Olson also presented the seminar "Don't be such a scientist" on Tuesday, March 25, at the Tupper Center. Olson and Jackson met with the STRI community on several occasions to discuss the concepts behind their work and to suggest ways that scientists can better communicate with diverse audiences.

During recent years, STRI and the Smithsonian have discussed the need to convey scientific concepts and results in a direct, clear and humorous manner. *Titanic* discoverer Bob Ballard, founder of the Jason Project, visited STRI in 2004 to launch *Jason XIV: Rainforests at the Crossroads*, a distance learning program based on Barro Colorado Island, that reached more than two million students. He met with the STRI community and the local media to promote

engaging a fun curriculum and computer games to teach science and math to young students.

Craig Venter, the master of the human genome visited Panama and STRI during his voyage onboard the *Soucerer* in 2004. STRI invited Venter to be the keynote speaker at a seminar followed by a press conference with members of the local media. Venter was accompanied by his scientific crew, a writer and a cameraman, "to help spread the word."

Paul Elrich, the author of *The Population Bomb* presented a seminar at Tupper in promotion of his book *One with Nineveth: Politics, consumption and the human future* in 2007. Elrich pointed out how, in the past, scientists were not considered successful until they published their findings, but today, "scientists can be considered a success only after publishing their findings and translate them to the general public." In 2005, former undersecretary for Science Dave Evans concluded a town meeting at STRI expressing that "The excellent scientific information is there, but we have the responsibility of inspiring people to use it."

As an initiative of staff scientist Jeremy B.C. Jackson in 2005 STRI organized a communication workshop for scientists and communicators



Randy Olson

with science journalists from *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Los Angeles Times* and US national TV. The message to STRI scientists at the time is the same Randy Olson promotes in 2008. Honest, funny, sexy approaches to scientific facts are far more effective than the academic language. "We live in a new era where audiences are inundated with information, and actually respect and appreciate not being hit too hard" concluded Olson.

Randy Olson, biólogo marino graduado de la Universidad de Harvard actualmente cineasta en Hollywood visitó STRI la semana pasada. Olson escribió y dirigió *Re-diagnosticando los Océanos* donde aparece Jeremy B.C. Jackson de STRI. En STRI, Olson presentó dos de sus películas más recientes: *Banda de Dodos: El Circo Evolución-Diseño Inteligente* y *Chirrido: Comedia sobre*

Departures

Carlos Jaramillo to Colombia, to give training on stratigraphy at Ares Corporation. This trip is sponsored by Ares Corporation of Colombia, a non-profit organization.

New publications

Dominy, Nathaniel J., Grubb, Peter J., Jackson, Robyn V., Lucas, Peter W., Metcalfe, Daniel J., Svennning, Jens Christian, & Turner, Ian M. 2008a. "In tropical lowland rain forests monocots have tougher leaves than dicots, and include a new kind of tough leaf." *Annals of Botany* Online.

Dominy, Nathaniel J., Grubb, Peter J., Jackson, Robyn V., Lucas, Peter W., Metcalfe, Daniel J., Svennning, Jens Christian, & Turner, Ian M. 2008b. "In tropical lowland rain forests monocots have tougher leaves than dicots, and include a new kind of tough leaf." *Annals of Botany* Online.

Grubb, Peter J., Jackson, Robyn V., Barberis, Ignacio M., Bee, Jennie N., Coomes, David A., Dominy, Nathaniel J., De La Fuente, Marie Ann S., Lucas, Peter W., Metcalfe, Daniel J., Svennning, Jens Christian, Turner, Ian M., & Vargas, Orlando. 2008. "Monocot leaves are eaten less than dicot leaves in tropical lowland rain forests: Correlations with toughness and leaf presentation." *Annals of Botany* Online.

Kalka, Margareta, Smith, Adam R., & Kalko, Elisabeth K. V. 2008. "Bats limit arthropods and herbivory in a tropical forest." *Science* 320(5872): 71.

el Calentamiento Global. Olson también presentó el seminario "No sea tan Científico" el martes 25 de marzo en el Centro Tupper. Olson y Jackson se reunieron con la comunidad de STRI en varias ocasiones, para discutir el concepto detrás de su trabajo y para sugerir maneras en que los científicos se pueden comunicar mejor con las diferentes audiencias.

En años recientes se ha estado discutido en el Smithsonian y en STRI la necesidad de transmitir la ciencia de una manera más directa, clara y con sentido del humor. En 2004, el oceanógrafo Bob Ballard, fundador del Proyecto Jasón quien encontró el *Titanic*, visitó STRI para inaugurar *Jasón XIV: Bosques Tropicales en la Encrucijada*, un programa educativo a distancia con base en la Isla de Barro Colorado, que llegó a cerca de dos millones de estudiantes. Se reunió con la comunidad de STRI y los

medios locales para promover un currículo divertido y juegos por computadora para enseñar ciencias y matemáticas.

Craig Venter, el maestro del genoma humano visitó STRI durante su viaje a bordo del *Soucerer* en 2004. STRI invitó a Venter a presentar un seminario especial en la noche seguido de una conferencia de prensa con miembros de los medios locales. Venter llegó acompañado de su equipo científico, una escritora y un camarógrafo, para 'difundir la palabra.'

Paul Elrich, el autor de *La bomba poblacional*, presentó un seminario en Tupper en promoción de su libro *Uno con Nineveh: Política, consumo y el futuro de la humanidad* en 2007. Elrich enfatizó que, en el pasado, los científicos no eran considerados exitosos mientras no publicaran sus hallazgos, mientras que hoy, no pueden ser considerados exitosos mientras no publiquen sus hallazgos y los traduzcan al público en general."

En 2005, el entonces subsecretario para Ciencias del Smithsonian, Dave Evans concluyó una reunión general en STRI expresando que la "Información científica de excelente está allí, pero tenemos la responsabilidad de inspirar a la gente para que la use."

Como una iniciativa del científico de STRI Jeremy B.C. Jackson en 2005, STRI organizó un taller de comunicación para científicos y comunicadores con periodistas de ciencias de *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Los Angeles Times*, y TV nacional de EU. El mensaje para los científicos de STRI en ese entonces es el mismo que promueve Randy Olson en 2008. Una manera honesta, con sentido del humor y 'sexy' para comunicar la ciencia es mucho mas efectiva que el lenguaje académico. "Vivimos una nueva era donde las audiencias están inundadas con información, y realmente respetan y aprecian que no se les golpee demasiado duro" concluyó Olson.

STRI denies news published by Panama's *La Prensa*

In a "letter from the reader" published by Panama's *La Prensa* newspaper on Monday, March 31, STRI's Public Information officer Mónica Alvarado denied the contents of the caption of a cover-piece published on Friday, March 27 in this local newspaper. According to the original news (reproduced in Spanish in page 3), STRI had endorsed an agreement signed between the Government and Manzanillo International Terminal (MIT) "that allowed for the destruction of Colon mangroves of areas partly intervened."

In her letter, Alvarado denies STRI ever signing any

agreement with Manzanillo International Terminal. STRI did sign an agreement with Colon Container Terminal (CCT) in 2007, to establish a permanent buffer zone of 2.1 hectares next to Galeta Point to canalize rainfall run-off to the Bay of Colon, to avoid a change in salinity in the Bay of Margarita (see *STRI news*, July 6, 2007). In 2005, Panama approved the expansion of CCT operations.

Expansion work did not respect this buffer zone.



Medio ambiente frente a desarrollo

El rechazo de la ambientalista de Colón a la expansión del puerto de Colón es muy importante. Durante un período de seis días, se sometió el tema en la Asamblea de 10.250 delegados de todo el mundo. La idea de que la política de manejo de la tierra, la protección de los recursos naturales de Panamá y la expansión marítima están en conflicto entre sí es algo que el Instituto Smithsonian — que pretende tratar de manejar el desarrollo que tiene que hacerse dentro de la reserva ecológica.

New publications

Laurance, William F. 2008. "Expect the unexpected." *New Scientist* 12(April 12): 17.

Ryan, Michael H., Bernal, Ximena E., & Rand, A. Stanley. 2007. "Patterns of mating call preferences in túngara frogs, *Physalaemus pustulosus*." *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, 20(6): 2235-2247.

Saltonstall, K. 2007. "Comparison of morphological variation indicative of ploidy level in *Phragmites australis* (Poaceae) from eastern North America." *Rhodora*, 109(940): 415-429.

Seid, M.A., & Wehner, R. 2008. "Ultrastructure and synaptic differences of the boutons of the projection neurons between the lip and collar regions of the mushroom bodies in the ant, *Cataglyphis albicans*." *Journal of Comparative Neurology*, 507(1): 1102-1108.

Snyder, Brian F., & Gowaty, Patricia Adair. 2007. "A reappraisal of Bateman's classic study of intrasexual selection." *Evolution*, 61(11): 2457-2468.

Svenning, Jens Christian, Fabbro, T., & Wright, S. Joseph. 2008. "Seedling interactions in a tropical forest in Panama." *Oecologia*, 155(1): 143-150.

STRI in the news

"La expansión portuaria en Coco Solo: Medio ambiente frente a desarrollo". 2008. *La Prensa*: March 28, p.1.

"El Smithsonian no avala la destrucción de manglares en Colón" by Mónica Alvarado. 2008. *La Prensa*: March 31: Página del lector.



LA PRENSA/Carlos Lemos

Medio ambiente frente a desarrollo

El rechazo de los ambientalistas de Colón a la expansión del puerto de Manzanillo cayó en saco roto. Durante un recorrido de este diario, se constató el avance en la devastación de 18.3 hectáreas de mangle en ese sector. La acción fue legalizada cuando el Gobierno, la Autoridad de los Recursos Acuáticos de Panamá y la empresa Manzanillo International Terminal firmaron un acuerdo –con el aval del Instituto Smithsonian– que permitió tumbar mangle de áreas que fueron medianamente intervenidas.

En una "carta del lector" publicada en el periódico *La Prensa* de Panamá el lunes, 31 de marzo, Mónica Alvarado, directora de la Oficina de Divulgación y Relaciones con los Medios de STRI, negó el contenido de la leyenda de una noticia en la primera plana publicada el viernes 28 de marzo en este periódico local. De acuerdo a la noticia original (que se reproduce en página 3), STRI hubiera avalado la firma de un

convenio entre el Gobierno de Panamá y Manzanillo International Terminal, para permitir la destrucción de los manglares de Colón en áreas medianamente intervenidas.

En su carta, Alvarado niega que STRI haya firmado alguna vez un convenio con Manzanillo International Terminal. STRI firmó un convenio con Colon Container Terminal (CCT) en 2007, para establecer una zona de amortiguamiento

permanente de 2.1 hectáreas colindando con Punta Galeta, para canalizar los aguages hacia la Bahía de Colón, y así prevenir un cambio en la salinidad de la Bahía de Margarita (ver el *STRI news* del 6 de julio de 2007). En 2005, Panamá aprobó la expansión de las operaciones de CCT. Los trabajos de expansión no respetaron esta zona de amortiguamiento.

Bats eat as many insects as birds do

"Bats eat as many insects at night as birds do during the day, according to research published in the journal *Science* (April 4) by a group of researchers at STRI Margaret Kalka, Adam Smith and Elisabeth K.V. Kalko.

Using nets to control the presence of bats and birds at certain times of the day in the Panamanian rainforest, Kalka and colleagues found that bats have a significant impact on the number of insects in a given area. A second study, by Kimberly Williams-Guillén and colleagues at the University of Michigan, came to a similar conclusion using nets in a coffee plantation in Mexico. The results confirm that bats play a key ecological role in tropical forests and suggest that disappearance of insect-eating bats in agricultural landscapes could have negative effects on crop

cultivation. Williams-Guillén and colleagues note that bat populations are declining worldwide.

The group of researchers say that given their importance in controlling insects, bats should be seen as a form of natural pest control. "Given their ecological importance, bats should be included in future conservation plans aimed at preserving the integrity of tropical forests and also considered in agricultural management strategies based on natural pest control," they write."

Taken from Mongabay.com



Christian Ziegler

You can obtain the article from calderom@si.edu.

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Bioactive compounds from the sea

II: Vampires of the ocean

Story: Mandé Holford
Edited by: M Alvarado and ML Calderón
Photo: MA Guerra

All snails are not created equal. Some are born with a heightened hunting instinct and a toxic venom to match.

Roaming beneath the ocean's surface, venomous marine snails use an assortment of toxins to hunt fish, worms, and even other snails!

In a collaborative effort, Maria Vittoria Modica, of the University of Rome (in the photo) and Mandé Holford of the University of Utah are trying to characterize the largely unidentified molecules found in neogastropod snails colubrariids and coraliophilids.

Colubrarias are referred to as "vampire snails" because they suck the blood of sleeping fish. It can be speculated that the bioactive molecules