

DAVIS EXPEDITION FUND

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT

Expedition/Project Title: Balsas dry forest expedition

Location: Marañon Valley, northern Peru

Group Members: Reynaldo Linares-Palomino

Aims:

- To conduct floristic field inventories to gather preliminary quantitative data for the Balsas area in the Marañon dry valley, northern Peru.
- To train local students in plant identification and floristic inventory techniques.
- To contact local environmental and conservation oriented organisations which will use the collected data, and to discuss possibilities of future projects.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):

A three-week expedition was made to the Marañon inter-Andean valley in northern Peru. The chosen area, the Balsas-Chacanto area, is a well-known biogeographic region of high endemism for several organisms.

During my stay in the Marañon valley, I was able to obtain valuable quantitative field data for four vegetational transects, located over an altitude between 900 and 1500 masl. Short trips to adjacent locations allowed the recording of other typical vegetation of the area, such as the characteristic riparian vegetation of the Marañon and vegetation on rock outcrops composed mainly of bromeliads and cactaceae.

The four transects followed the methodology described by Phillips & Miller (2002) but differed in two aspects: (1) the transects were shorter and (2) plants from 1cm DBH or more were recorded. Three 5(2mx50m) transects and one 4(2mx50m) were installed. Phytosociological data such as height and diameter at breast height were recorded for 213 individuals. Plants were identified directly in the field and when in doubt collected and pressed for later identification. 49 vouchers (four to five duplicates of each species), all in flower and fruit, were collected and are deposited at the MOL Forestry Herbarium of the Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina, Lima, Peru. A duplicate of the collection has been deposited at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The collection includes several narrow and rare endemic plants, such as, *Mimosa incarum* and *M. pectinatipinna* (Leguminosae), *Eriotheca peruviana* (Malvaceae-Bombacoideae). I was also able to collect additional material of a new species of *Caesalpinia* (Leguminosae), currently being described by botanists at Kew, Oxford and Edinburgh.

Unfortunately, I was unable, to find local students to accompany me during the expedition, possibly because my visit coincided with medium term examinations at several of the universities to which I sent letters and e-mail messages.

This trip to northern Peru allowed me to visit and collect also in a tributary of the Marañon River: the Huancabamba River valley all the way to its confluence with the Chamaya River, around the small village of Pucará, in northern Cajamarca.

On the way back to Lima, towards the end of the expedition, I was able to visit the HAO Herbarium at the Universidad Privada Antenor Orrego in Trujillo. Since their collections are mainly of northern Peruvian areas, I was able to do preliminary determinations of my collections. In addition, I saw several specimens and recorded their distribution for a checklist I am preparing for woody species of the seasonally dry tropical forests in Peru. I met Dr. Abundio Sagastegui, curator of the herbarium, and exchanged publications and information.

I managed to contact and meet the director of Nature and Culture Internacional (NCI), and NGO based in Sullana, Piura. This NGO is heavily working on conservation projects in northern Peru. I also met staff of a UK Darwin Initiative funded project carried out by NCI. As a result of shared interests in the Marañón valley we are developing ideas which hopefully will lead to future medium-scale conservation projects in the area. An informal meeting of interested parties is being planned for the next international dry forest congress, to be held in November this year in Loja, Ecuador.

Finally, the information gathered during this expedition, is allowing me to draft two manuscripts which will be sent for consideration for publication to a Peruvian (a note on the vegetation of the Chacanto-Balsas area to be submitted to the Zonas Áridas Journal) and an international journal (a paper on the distribution and levels of endemism of woody species in seasonally dry tropical forests in Peru, still to be decided where it is going to be submitted). I will make sure that the Davis Expedition Fund receives offprints of the papers once they are published.