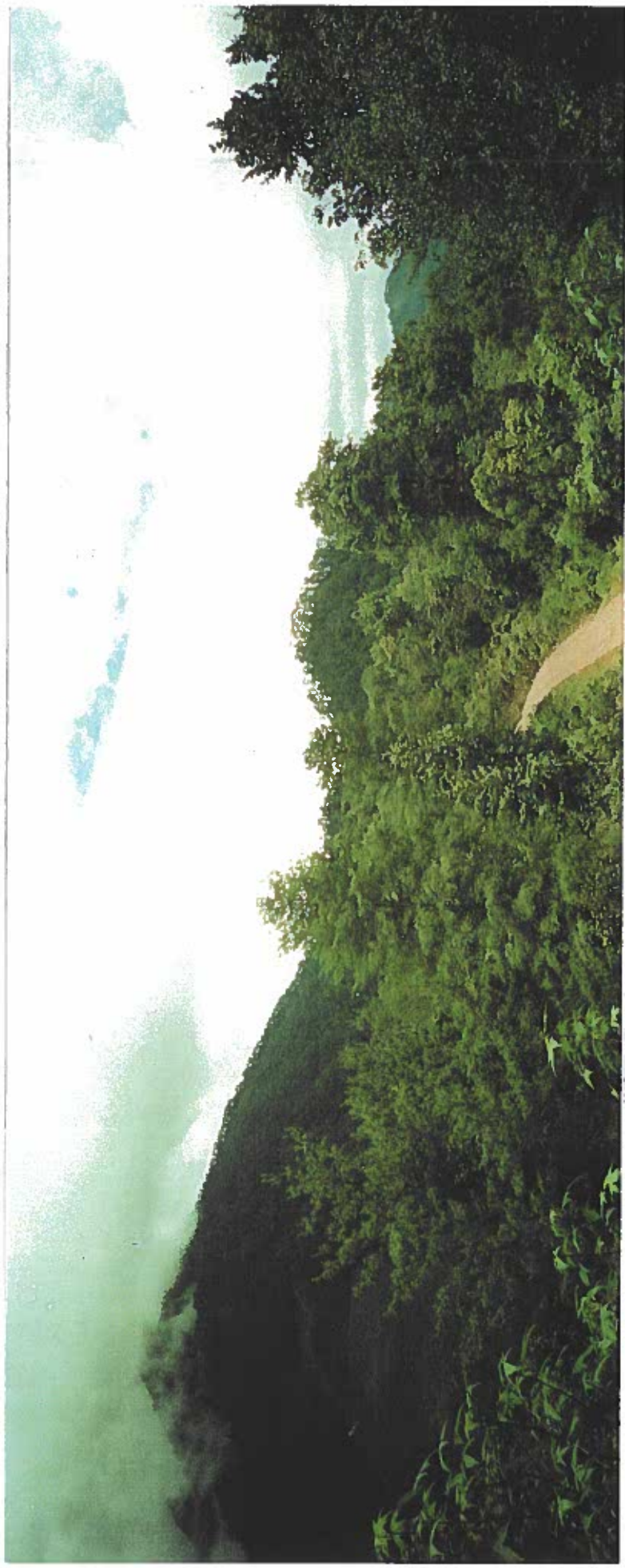


# **Report on expedition to the Cloud Forest of Oaxaca, Mexico 2000**

**Miriam Turner**



## **Report on expedition to the cloud forest of Oaxaca, Mexico**

### **Introduction**

During the summer of 2000, with support from the James Rennie Bequest, I was able to spend 6 weeks working as a field assistant to Simoneta Negrete, a PhD student at Edinburgh University. Her project is mainly concerned with the biodiversity of insects in different aged cloud forests stands in Oaxaca, Mexico. The objective of the study is to investigate how the species assemblage responded to disturbance. The section of forest we were working in is called Las Tarantulas and was an excellent study site as forest of age 15, 45, 75 and 100 years were within a few walking distance of each other.

I was there during her preliminary studies so the work I carried was extremely diverse. I was involved in buying materials for use in the field, sewing traps assisting with data collection in the field and analysis in the lab. Due to adverse weather condition it turned out that my time was split pretty evenly between work in the field (study site Las Tarantulas) and in the lab (at El Ciidir).

### **Field work**

Las Tarantulas is approximately 5 hours drive from the city of Oaxaca. Our field trips were only a week long each due to the fact that each trip generated so much material. 15 x 15m study areas had previously been set up in each of the different aged stands. Most of my work was collection of quadrats of leaf litter and top soil from each of the points in each of the study sites. The samples taken were returned to our base in the field and all insects were removed and stored in flasks of alcohol. The photo below shows me cutting out a top soil from one of the study sites with another field worker.

Work also included the setting up and collection of pitfall traps and leaf traps in each of the study sites.



### **Lab work**

- Making traps
- Oven dried and reweighing of samples
- Insect identification
- Data inputing

### **Conclusion**

My time working on this project gave me a great insight into what a PhD in Ecology entails and gave me some excellent field experience. Due to the limited amount of time I was involved I couldn't do that much data analysis but I have remained in touch with Simoneta and results from the preliminary studies have shown a greater macrofauna diversity in the older stands. It will be interesting to see whether biodiversity is recovered over time to a similar assemblage as it was before disturbance or whether the more recently disturbed areas seem to be moving towards a different community.