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Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panamá

STRI news

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July 22, 2011

Gamboa seminar

No Gamboa seminar scheduled for Monday, July 25. If you wish to give a seminar, please contact Justin Touchon at jtouchon@bu.edu

Tupper seminar

Tuesday, July 26, 4pm seminar speaker will be Karen Warkentin, Boston University
Environmentally cued hatching across taxa

Bambi seminar

Thursday, July 28, Bambi seminar speaker will be Jesse Czekanski-Moir, University of Oklahoma

Coexistence and the geometry of organisms, resources, and habitat

Centennial talk

Wednesday, July 27, 5:30pm at the Tupper Center Auditorium, Centennial talk speaker will be Juan L. Maté, STRI

Panamá y sus océanos de contraste: de la investigación marina a la conservación

Safety number: 212-8211

An eye gene colors butterfly wings red

Red may mean **Stop!** or **I love you!**, but on a toxic butterfly's wing, red screams **Don't eat me!** In a new article published by *ScienceXpress* (July 21), a group of researchers that includes STRI's Owen McMillan (see citation under "New Publications") explain that in nature, when one toxic butterfly species may mimic the wing pattern of another toxic species in the area, together, they send a stronger message. The group discovered that *Heliconius* butterflies across the Americas use exactly the same gene for a huge variety of red wing patterns.

Since butterflies in isolated locations evolved red wing patterns independently, resulting in a variety of patterns, researchers thought that different genes were responsible in each case. "The variety of red wing patterns in *Heliconius* butterflies has always fascinated collectors," said McMillan. "People have been trying to sort out the genetics of mimicry rings since the 1970's but now we put together old and newer genomics techniques and came up with the surprising result that only



one gene codes for all of these red wing patterns, and the differences seems to be due to the way the gene is regulated."

First the team used genetic screens to look for genes that are turned on differently in butterflies with red wing patterns and lacking in other butterflies without this pattern. When they discovered a good gene for this, they looked to see where this gene was expressed on butterfly wings, and found the gene to be expressed where red occurs in the wings.

At the same time, they combed genetic libraries -gene banks- to see if the gene they found matched genes characterized in other studies. "We were surprised to find that the same gene that codes for the red in *Heliconius* wings was already identified as a gene called *optix* that is involved in eye

development of other organisms," said co-author Heather Hines, "It is intriguing that the ommochrome pigments turned on in the wings are also expressed in the eye. Why the *optix* gene codes for wing color raises a host of new questions."

"Tropical biologists have been striving for centuries to explain what it is that makes life in the tropics so biologically diverse," said STRI director Eldredge Bermingham. "Now this group has discovered that a single gene underlies one of the most spectacular evolutionary radiations in nature! Perhaps the underlying plan of life will turn out to be far more simple than we expected."
Adapted from Beth King

The article was distributed by Neal Smith. You may also obtain it from calderom@si.edu

Arrivals

Cindy Fernandez, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur, to serve as instructor at the Roger Williams University Introduction to Panamanian Phytology Field Course, at Galeta.

Brian Wysor, Roger Williams University, to serve as instructor at the Introduction to Panamanian Phytology Field Course, at Galeta.

Suzanne Fredericq, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, to serve as instructor at the Roger Williams University Introduction to Panamanian Phytology Field Course, at Galeta.

Juan Lopez-Bautista, University of Alabama, to serve as instructor at the Roger Williams University Introduction to Panamanian phytology Field Course, at Galeta.

Israel Cañizales, Universidad Nacional Experimental Francisco de Miranda, to study the helminth parasite community of Bocas del Toro anurans, at Bocas.

Wayne Sousa, Jake Sousa, Colin James, Ekaphan Kraichak, University of California at Berkeley, to continue studies of the patterns and mechanisms of canopy tree regeneration in a Caribbean mangrove forest, at Galeta.

Heather Newson, University of Sheffield, to contribute to the identification of genes underlying a color polymorphism in *Anolis* lizards using next generation transcriptome sequencing and SNP genotyping, in Gamboa.

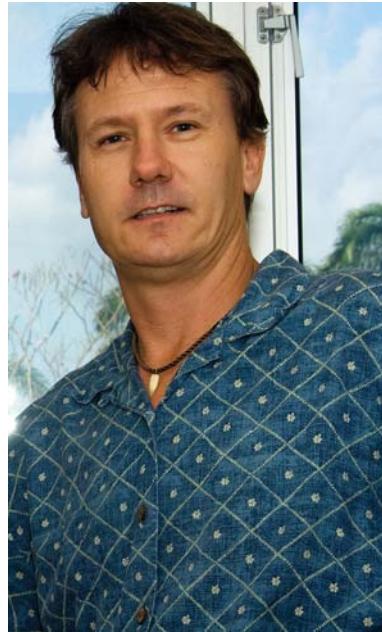
El rojo puede decir ¡Alto! o ¡Te amo! pero en el ala de una mariposa tóxica está gritando ¡No me comas! En un nuevo artículo publicado por *ScienceXpress* el 21 de julio, un grupo de investigadores que incluye a Owen McMillan de STRI (ver cita completa bajo "New publications"), explican que en la naturaleza, una mariposa tóxica puede imitar el patrón del ala de otra especie tóxica en el área, y juntas, envían un mensaje más contundente. El grupo ha descubierto que a través de las Américas, las mariposas *Heliconius* usan exactamente el mismo gen para codificar una gran variedad de patrones de alas.

Debido a que las mariposas de lugares aislados han evolucionado con patrones rojos en las alas independientemente, lo que resulta en una gran variedad de patrones, los investigadores pensaron que diferentes genes eran responsables en cada caso.

"La variedad de patrones en rojo en las alas de las mariposas *Heliconius* siempre ha fascinado a los coleccionistas" dice Owen McMillan, genetista en STRI. "La gente ha tratado de entender la genética de los anillos miméticos desde la década de 1970, pero ahora podemos juntar técnicas genéticas viejas con técnicas nuevas y darnos cuenta de que, sorprendentemente, un solo gen codifica todos estos patrones rojos, y que las diferencias que vemos en ellos parecen deberse a cómo se regula ese gen."

Para averiguarlo, el equipo usó buscadores genéticos para encontrar genes que se encienden de manera diferente en mariposas con patrones rojos en las alas y que no están presentes en las mariposas que no los tienen. Cuando descubrieron un gen que era buen candidato, buscaron dónde se expresaba en las alas de las mariposas, y descubrieron que se expresaba donde el rojo aparece en las alas.

También buscaron en de bibliotecas genéticas o bancos de



McMillan, 2010

de genes para ver si este gen era el mismo descrito en otros estudios. "Tuvimos la sorpresa de que el mismo gen que codifica el rojo en las alas de *Heliconius* era el gen llamado optix, responsable por el desarrollo del ojo en otros organismos," dice el co-autor Heather Hines. "Es interesante que los pigmentos omocromáticos que se encienden en las alas también aparezcan en el ojo. Por qué el gen optix codifica el color de las alas hace surgir toda una nueva cantidad de preguntas."

"Durante siglos, los biólogos tropicales se han esforzado por explicar qué es lo que hace la vida tan biológicamente diversa en los trópicos" dice el director de STRI, Eldredge Bermingham. "Ahora, este grupo ha descubierto que un solo gen es la base de una de las radiaciones evolutivas más espectaculares de la naturaleza!" Quizás el plan básico de la vida va a resultar ser mucho más simple de lo que esperábamos."

El artículo (ver cita bajo "New publications") fue distribuido por Neal G. Smith a través de Science Sendings. También puede obtenerlo de calderom@si.edu

Arrivals

Ame Brauer and Susan Flieth, Universitat Postdam, to join the Agua Salud Project, Hydrological studies.

Ethan Grossman and John Robbins, Texas A&M, to join the Marine Time Series Research Group, at Bocas del Toro and Galeta.

Darryl Felder and Jenny Felder, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, to serve as instructor at the 2011 Decapod Taxonomy Field Course, at Bocas del Toro.

Ariadne Aizprua and Madeleine Rodríguez, University of Panama, to join the Panama Canal salvage Paleontology/ Geology Project, at the CTPA.

Departures

Nelida Gomez to Burnaby, British Columbia (Canada), to meet with a colleague and to participate in the 27th Annual Meeting of the International Society of Chemical Ecology at Simon Fraser University.

Antonio Reina and P.J. Fuentes, to Orlando, FL, to attend the General Service Administration Federal Fleet Conference.

STRI in the news

"Inquiring minds want to know: why don't spiders get stuck to their webs?" by Blandon Blakeley. 2011. OregonLive.com (July 15): http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2011/07/inquiring_minds_want_to_know_w.html

New publications

Cleveland, Cory C., Townsend, Alan R., Taylor, Philip, Alvarez-Clare, Silvia, Bustamante, Mercedes M.C., Chuyong, George, Dobrowski, Solomon Z., Grierson, Pauline, Harms, Kyle E., Houlton, Benjamin Z., Marklein, Alison, Parton, William, Porder, Stephen, Reed, Sasha C., Sierra, Carlos A., Silver, Whendee L., Tanner, Edmund V.J., and Wieder, William R. 2011. "Relationships among net primary productivity, nutrients and climate in tropical rain forest: A pan-tropical analysis." *Ecology Letters* doi:10.1111/j.1461-0248.2011.01658.x.

Horan, III, Robert Vincent, Ibanez D., Roberto, and Hernadez, Andres. 2011. "*Micruurus nigrocinctus nigrininctus* (Central American coral snake). Diet." *Herpetological Review* 42(2): 294-295.

Kays, Roland, Jansen, Patrick A., Knecht, Elise M.H., Vohwinkel, Reinhard, and Wikelski, Martin. 2011. "The effect of feeding time on dispersal of *Virola* seeds by toucans determined from GPS tracking and accelerometers." *Acta Oecologica Online*. doi: 10.1016/j.actao.2011.06.007.

McCoy, Michael W., Bolker, Benjamin M., Warkentin, Karen M., and Vonesh, James R. 2011. "Predicting predation through prey ontogeny using size-dependent functional response models." *The American Naturalist* 177(6): 752-766.

Meskens, Christophe, McKenna, Duane, Hance, Thierry, and Windsor, Donald. 2011. "Host plant taxonomy and phenotype influence the structure of a Neotropical host plant-hispine beetle food web." *Ecological Entomology* 36(4): 480-489.

Plan de Manejo del Parque Nacional Coiba Sitio de Patrimonio Natural de la Humanidad



ANAM, SINAP, UNESCO, CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL, CMAR, INSTITUTO TROPICAL DE INVESTIGACIONES

Authorities overfly Coiba to assess cattle eradication from Park

Juan Maté (second from the left in photo below), Coastal and Marine Science advisor at STRI, visited Parque Nacional Coiba with Panamá's minister for Agricultural Development, Emilio J. Kieswetter (first from the right), Animal Health personnel from MIDA, Edgar Chacón, director of Protected Areas from the Environmental Authority of Panama (ANAM), and members of the National Association for Ranchers (ANAGAN), in July. The visit aimed at assessing the condition of wild cattle on the Island and UNESCO requirements to eradicate the herd.

According to the Management Plan of this World Heritage Site, there is an ongoing presence of a herd of wild cattle (buffalos, cows and horses) that remained on areas of difficult access on the Island after a the prison closed in 2004. Their population, estimated at 2,500 is growing and is the cause of increasing trampling of native vegetation, deforestation and significant soil erosion. With the heavy rains typical of the area, soil is washed into the sea, resulting in important nutrient loading and siltation, both highly detrimental to the coral reef ecosystems in surrounding waters. For Coiba Management plan, visit: <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/23099501/Plan%20de%20Manejo%20del%20Parque%20Nacional%20Coiba.pdf>

Juan L. Maté (segundo desde la izquierda en foto de abajo), asesor científico para Asuntos Costero-Marinos de STRI, visitó el Parque Nacional Coiba con el Ministro de Desarrollo Agropecuario, Emilio José Kieswetter, personal de Salud Animal, Edgar Chacón, Director de Áreas Protegidas de la ANAM y miembros de ANAGAN en julio. La visita tuvo como objetivo evaluar las condiciones de ganado salvaje en la Isla y los requisitos de UNESCO para erradicar el rebaño.



De acuerdo al Plan de Manejo de este Sitio de Patrimonio Mundial, se mantiene la presencia de ganado salvaje (bufalos, vacas y caballos) en la isla luego de que una prisión estatal cerrara en 2004. Su población, que se estima en 2,500 cabezas, crece y es causa de destrucción de vegetación, deforestación y erosión del suelo. Bajo las fuertes lluvias típicas del área, se pierden nutrientes y tierra que termina en el agua, en detrimento de los ecosistemas coralinos de las aguas aledañas.

New publications

O'Connell, L.A., Matthews, B.J., Ryan, Michael J., and Hofmann, H.A. 2010. "Characterization of the dopamine system in the brain of the túngara frog, *Physalaemus pustulosus*." *Brain, Behavior and Evolution* 76(3-4): 211-225.

Reed, Robert D., Papa, Riccardo, Martin, Arnaud, Hines, Heather M., Counterman, Brian A., Pardo-Díaz, Carolina, Jiggins, Chris D., Chamberlain, Nicola L., Kronforst, Marcus R., Chen, Rui, Halder, Georg, Nijhout, H. Frederik, and McMillan, W. Owen. 2011. "Optix drives the repeated convergent evolution of butterfly wing pattern mimicry." *Science*. doi:10.1126/science.1208227

Ryan, Michael J. 2011. "Sexual selection." In: *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia*: 179-185.

Ryan, Michael J. 2011. "The brain as a source of selection on the social niche: Examples from the psychophysics of mate choice in tungara frogs." *Integrative and Comparative Biology* doi:10.1093/icb/icr065

Santos-Granero, Fernando. 2011. "The virtuous manioc and the horny barbasco: sublime and grotesque modes of transformation in the origin of Yanesha plant life." *Journal of Ethnobiology* 31(1): 44-71.

Santos-Granero, Fernando, and Barclay, Frederica. 2011. "Bultos, selladores y gringos alados: percepciones indígenas de la violencia capitalista en la Amazonía peruana." *Anthropologica* 28(1): 21-52. (Peru)

Story: José R. Loaiza
Edited by M Alvarado
and ML Calderon
Photo: MA Guerra

Changes in diversity related to land-use modification can affect the transmission of infectious disease to humans, particularly vector-borne diseases such as malaria and West Nile virus.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-STRI research collaboration aims at using tropical plots at STRI to assess the status and trends of insect vector populations. Specifically, the project "Mosquito Species Diversity and Landscape Change" attempts to understand how changes in landscape affect vector species diversity and abundance, and evaluate whether disease transmission risk is being altered in response to changes in climate and surrounding land use.

The results from this research will increase our understanding of disease epidemiology through improved knowledge of the effects of landscape change on the distribution of insect vectors and the ecological mechanisms that drive these changes.

The project has completed a one-year baseline survey of vector community structure at Barro Colorado Island, and additional sites have been chosen for further fieldwork. So far, the collection includes roughly 285,000 specimens of mosquitoes, vectors of human malaria, yellow fever and arboviruses; sandflies vectors of Leishmaniasis; and biting midges, vectors of Avian malaria.

vector-pathogen species diversity between STRI plots and nearby human-disturbed sites;
– Addition of new diversity data into the MosquitoMap project; and
– Information about the feasibility of applying DNA barcodes for host-vector blood type analysis and species identifications.

Samples are collected using CDC light traps, like the one installed in Gamboa by STRI visiting scientist José Loaiza (in the photo), and prepared for pooling of catches by species and arboviral testing for locally important pathogens.

The results from this research will increase our understanding of disease epidemiology through improved knowledge of the effects of landscape change on the distribution of insect vectors and the ecological mechanisms that drive these changes.

Other outcomes include:
– Comparison of

How changes in landscape alter disease transmission risk

Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, July 22, 2011



Especificamente, el proyecto "Cambio del Paisaje y Diversidad de las Especies de Mosquitos" intenta entender cómo los cambios en el paisaje afectan la diversidad

de las especies vectores y su abundancia, y evaluar si el riesgo de transmisión de enfermedades cambia en respuesta a los cambios en el clima y el uso de las tierras aledañas.

El proyecto lleva ya un año de estudios sobre la estructura de la comunidad de insectos vectores en la Isla de Barro Colorado, y se han escogido sitios para hacer más trabajo de campo. Hasta el momento, se han colectado cerca de 285,000 mosquitos, vectores de malaria humana, fiebre amarilla, arboviruses; chitras de bosque, vectores de Leishmaniasis, y jejénes, vectores de la malaria aviar.

Otros resultados incluyen:
- comparar la diversidad de especies de patógenos y vectores entre las parcelas de STRI y sitios que han sido alterados por los humanos;
- añadir información sobre nuevas especies en el proyecto MosquitoMap, e - información sobre la factibilidad de aplicar la técnica de códigos de barras de ADN para análisis del tipo de sangre del huésped en el vector e identificación molecular de especies.

Los cambios en la diversidad relacionados con cambios del uso de la tierra, pueden afectar la transmisión de enfermedades infecciosas en seres humanos, en particular enfermedades transmitidas por insectos vectores como la malaria y el virus del Nilo Occidental.

Las investigaciones de STRI con la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos (EPA) están teniendo como propósito utilizar las parcelas de STRI para conocer el status y las tendencias de las poblaciones de insectos vectores.

Las muestras se colectan con trampas de luz tipo CDC, como la instalada por el investigador visitante en STRI, José Loaiza (en la foto) y se preparan para dividirlos por