



Smithsonian

100 years of science in Panama



Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panamá

STRI news

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September 2, 2011

Gamboa seminar

Monday, September 5 at 12 noon, Gamboa seminar speaker will be Dennis Stuart, University of Sheffield
The endocrine basis of predator-induced phenotypic plasticity

Tupper seminar

Tuesday, September 6, 4pm seminar speaker will be Janina Seeman, Museum of Natural History, Berlin
Coral adaptability, resilience and resistance to anthropogenic impacts in biodiverse Caribbean Reef Ecosystems, case study of Bocas del Toro (CARIBE Project)

Bambi seminar

Thursday, September 8, Bambi seminar speaker will be Victor M. Frankel, McGill STRI NEO Program
Using biological invasions in Panama to evaluate ecological and evolutionary drivers of exotic host-parasite interactions

**Safety number
212-8211**

Georgina de Alba to retire

STRI associate director for Finance and Administration, Georgina de Alba, has retired after a 34-year career at the Smithsonian, effective August 26, 2011.

Holding a bachelor's degree in Languages from Georgetown University and a master's degree from Tulane University in Latin American Studies, de Alba joined STRI in 1976 as an administrative aid working at Naos. In 1979, Georgina started working Educational technician, and in 1983, acting director Michael Robinson (1929-2008) promoted her to Information specialist. From then on, according to Robinson, Georgina demonstrated her vocation as she assisted staff and international students during critical times.

In 1986, de Alba received a Smithsonian Institution Webb Fellowship to pursue graduate studies in London, and in 1988, she returned to STRI with a MS in Politics with emphasis in Public Administration and Public Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science at the University of London. She was promoted to assistant director for Education in 1994, and in 2000 she accepted the position of associate director for Administration and Finance.

During her time supporting and leading STRI's Office of Education, de Alba supported 3548 fellows including current STRI staff scientists Tony Coates, Rachel Collin, Richard Cooke, Stanley Heckadon, Allen Herre, Haris Lessios, Helene Muller-Landau, Aaron O'Dea, Rachel Page, Dolores Piperno, Ross Robertson, Dave Roubik, Noris Salazar, Oris Sanjur, Sunshine van Bael, Bill Weislo, S. Joseph Wright, and director Eldredge Bermingham. STRI now provides more than \$3 million annually in fellowship, internship and assistantship programs Georgina initiated.

In addition to supporting promising researchers, Georgina was committed to disseminating STRI's mission among support staff members, many of them former fellows. She designed programs such as "Lo que estamos haciendo" [What we are doing], conferences for members of the STRI community, the Comunica, the Informa, the Bravo column, seminars, and training. As STRI faced the unique challenges of transitioning from a Canal Zone-based organization to an institution that conformed to the codes of the Republic of Panama, STRI turned to Georgina to oversee the changes.



Under Georgina's leadership, the Office of Education also coordinated conservation efforts at STRI, the Fellows' Dinners, local and itinerant exhibits, the production of brochures, the annual Contributions to Research, annual and biennial reports, internal newsletters and the annual contributions to SI reports, relations with the media, videos, film crews, volunteers and interns. She also contributed with special events, the Director's Office and several departments at the Smithsonian headquarters. In 1995, de Alba received the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Exhibits and Public Programs, from SI secretary I. Michael Heyman.

Arrivals

Sandra Galeano P., Louisiana State University, to study the ecological consequences of genetic diversity in the polymorphic frog *Oophaga pumilio*: implications at the community-level, at Bocas del Toro.

Debbrah Bergeron and Kendra Ritchie, University of California, San Diego, to study the food recruitment communication of stingless bees, on Barro Colorado Island.

Sara Dale, Lancaster University, to study soil nutrient dynamics, on Barro Colorado Island and the Tupper Center/

Ana Bonilla, Universidad Central de Venezuela, to study comparative geometric morphometrics between the genus *Gephyrocharax* from Venezuela, Colombia and Panama, at Naos Island Laboratories.

Ann Lawrence Charles, University of Connecticut, to join the ICBG project "Tropical Disease Drug Discovery from Marine and Plant Sources in Panama."

Joni Saylor, Trevor Ridley, Elizabeth Cash, Michelle Fehler, Amanda Maderic, Arizona State University, to participate in the 2011 STRI-ASU Biomimicry Design Course, at Gamboa.

Adelheid Fischer, Arizona State University, to participate as instructor in the 2011 STRI-ASU Biomimicry Design Course, at Gamboa.

With Georgina, the Education Office evolved from the smallest office at the Ancon Laboratories to a complex operation at Tupper, encompassing several educational and information specialists, an exhibit coordinator, a fellowship specialist, a science interpreter, several assistants and volunteers. Her vision helped to establish key outreach programs at the Punta Culebra Nature Center, formal education at the Gamboa School, public programs at Bocas del Toro, BCI and Gigante, environmental programs in San Blas, and the Fundación Smithsonian, aimed at generating public support for STRI.

Once STRI began the transition to its present organization, Georgina was requested to oversee all administrative and finance staff, to coach new members at the Director's Office, to maintain STRI's morale during times of change, and to serve as STRI liaison with several SI units in Washington. No wonder she was also asked to lead the celebrations of 100 years of Smithsonian Science in Panama, a celebration that will end with the visit of the

Smithsonian National Board to STRI in February, 2012.

STRI director emeritus Ira Rubinoff concludes that "Georgina was one of the few employees with both the corporate history and the skills to appoint as Acting Director on numerous occasions. She knew STRI, its scientists, Panamanians and Washington politics, and could be relied upon to make the right decisions in times of crisis. She opened her home to countless students and gave invaluable advice during periods of career or personal difficulty."

Georgina, you have our greatest admiration and respect, and as one voice we wish you much happiness, fulfillment and success in your future ventures.

La directora asociada de STRI para Finanzas y Administración, se jubiló después de una carrera de 35 años en el Smithsonian, a partir del 26 de agosto de 2011.

De Alba se unió a STRI en 1976 como ayudante administrativa con sede en Naos. Tenía una licenciatura en Idiomas de Georgetown University y una maestría de Tulane University en Estudios Latinoamericanos. En 1979,

Georgina empezó a trabajar como técnica en educación y, en 1983, el director interino Michael Robinson (1929-2008) la promovió a especialista en Información. De acuerdo a Robinson, desde entonces Georgina mostró su vocación de ayudar al personal y a estudiantes internacionales, en momentos críticos.

En 1986, de Alba recibió una Beca Webb del Smithsonian, para continuar sus estudios de posgrado en Londres, y en 1988 regresó a STRI con una maestría en Ciencias Políticas con énfasis en Administración y Políticas Públicas de la Escuela Londinense de Economía y Ciencias Políticas de la Universidad de Londres. En 1995 fue promovida a directora asistente para Educación y en 2000 aceptó la posición de directora asociada para Administración y Finanzas.

Durante el tiempo que dedicó a apoyar y liderar la Oficina de Educación de STRI, de Alba apoyó a 3548 becarios incluyendo a Tony Coates, Rachel Collin, Richard Cooke, Stanley Heckadon, Allen Herre, Haris Lessios, Helene Muller-Landau, Aaron O'Dea, Rachel Page, Dolores Piperno, Ross Robertson, Dave Roubik,



Departures

Owen McMillan to Edinburgh, UK to attend the *Heliconius* Genome Meeting and a workshop on applying next generation sequencing methods to population and evolutionary genetics analysis.

Eldredge Bermingham, on a short vacation.

S. Joseph Wright to Leticia and Parque Nacional Natural Amacayacu, Colombia for research and to participate in a forum on Amazonian forests

New publications

Heckadon Moreno, Stanley. 2011. *A Creole from Bocas del Toro: The story of Carlos Reid*. Panama: Exedra.

Mascaro, Joseph, Detto, Matteo, Asner, Gregory P., and Muller-Landau, Helene C. 2011. "Evaluating uncertainty in mapping forest carbon with airborne LiDAR." *Remote Sensing of Environment* doi:10.1016/j.rse.2011.07.019

Turmel, Marie-Soleil, Turner, Benjamin L., and Whalen, Joann K. 2011. "Soil fertility and the yield response to the System of Rice Intensification." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 26(03): 185-192.

STRI in the news

Vines overwhelming trees in rain forests was launched on August 31st online, for 35 language services. It can be seen at:

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/environment/Vines-Overwhelming-Trees-in-Rain-Forests--128845043.html>

or:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWwpWn5gVcM>

Noris Salazar, Oris Sanjur, Sunshine van Bael, Bill Wcislo, S. Joseph Wright, y al director, Biff Bermingham. STRI ahora ofrece más de \$3 millones anuales en programas de becas y pasantías que Georgina inició.

Además de apoyar investigadores promisorios, Georgina estaba comprometida con diseminar la misión de STRI entre los empleados de apoyo, muchos de ellos ex-becarios. Diseñó programas como "Lo que estamos haciendo," charlas para miembros de la comunidad, el *Comunica*, el *Informa*, la columna *Bravo*, seminarios, entrenamiento. Cuando STRI enfrentó el reto único de la transición de ser una organización con base en la antigua Zona del Canal hacia una institución regida por las leyes de la República de Panamá, STRI necesitó de Georgina para administrar los cambios.

Bajo el liderazgo de Georgina, la Oficina de Educación también coordinaba los esfuerzos de conservación de STRI, la Cena de Becarios, exhibiciones locales e itinerantes, la producción de panfletos, las Contribuciones al Conocimiento anuales, los informes anuales y bienales, los boletines internos y las contribuciones a los informes del Smithsonian, relaciones con los medios, videos, voluntarios y pasantes.

También contribuyó con eventos especiales, la Oficina del Director, y varios departamentos en la sede del Smithsonian. En 1995, el Secretario del Smithsonian, I. Michael Heyman, otorgó a de Alba el Premio por Excelencia en Exhibiciones y Programas Públicos.

Con Georgina, la Oficina de Educación evolucionó de la oficina más pequeña de los Laboratorios de Ancón a una operación compleja en el



Tupper, con varios especialistas en educación e información, un coordinador de exhibiciones, un especialista en becas, intérprete científico, varios asistentes y voluntarios. Su visión ayudó a establecer el Centro Natural de Punta Culebra, la educación formal en la Escuela de Gamboa, programas públicos en Bocas del Toro, BCI, cursos en Gigante, programas ambientales en San Blas, Fundación Smithsonian, todos con el objetivo de generar apoyo público para STRI.

Una vez empezó la transición de STRI a la organización actual, a Georgina le pidieron que supervisara a todo el personal administrativo y las finanzas, liderar a los nuevos miembros de la Oficina del Director, mantener la moral de los empleados en tiempos de cambio, y servir como enlace con varias unidades con SI Washington. ¡No es de extrañar

que le encargaran liderar la celebración de los 100 años de las Ciencias del Smithsonian en Panamá! Ésta se completará con la visita del Smithsonian National Board a STRI, en febrero de 2012.

El director emérito de STRI, Ira Rubinoff, concluye "Georgina era uno de los pocos empleados que tenía la historia corporativa y las habilidades necesarias para fungir como directora interina en muchas ocasiones. Ella conocía a STRI, sus científicos, las políticas panameñas y de Washington, y se podía confiar en que tomara las decisiones correctas en momentos de crisis. ¡A cuántos estudiantes les abrió las puertas de su casa para ofrecerles consejo durante períodos de dificultad profesional o personal! Todos la respetamos y admiramos y le deseamos muchas felicidades y satisfacciones en sus futuras actividades."

Background photo:
MA Guerra
Insets: Galeta staff

Fifty volunteers from Colon and the Galeta Marine Laboratory held a mangrove reforestation day, on Saturday, August 27. This is part of a broader effort to raise public awareness about the importance of the mangroves among the people of Colon.

Groups contributing with the Galeta staff were the ladies of the Colon Garden Club, ANAM and the group "Guardianes de los Manglares del Espave de Chame" a group of enthusiastic teachers and students from the public school of El Espave, Chame, located on the Pacific side of the Isthmus.

The inset photos show STRI's Jorge Morales planting a seedling, and the group of volunteers.

Mangrove Reforestation Day at Galeta

Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, September 2, 2011

Cincuenta voluntarios de Colón y el Laboratorio Marino de Galeta celebraron un Día de Reforestación de Manglares, el sábado, 27 de agosto. Esto es parte de un esfuerzo más amplio para mejorar la conciencia del público sobre la importancia de los manglares, entre los habitantes de Colón.

Los grupos que contribuyeron con el personal de Galeta estuvieron las damas del Club de Jardinería de Colón, ANAM, y el grupo "Guardianes de los Manglares del Espavé de Chame", un grupo de estudiantes y docentes entusiastas de la Escuela Pública de El Espavé, de Chame, que está localizado del lado del Pacífico del Istmo.

Las fotos muestran a Jorge Morales, de STRI y sembrando un plantón, y al grupo de voluntarios.

