

From: Maria Luz Calderon
To: STRI
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Subject: News

STRI NEWS

On Tuesday, May 28, Tupper Center Seminar speaker will be **Gregory Gilbert:** Understanding and Using Fungal Diversity in Panama. Abstract: The ecological roles of fungi as pathogens, decomposers, and mutualists in tropical ecosystems are increasingly recognized, but understanding the patterns and processes underlying tropical fungus diversity is still in its infancy. The diversity of plant-associated fungi in a tropical forest depends on host-specificity, host abundance, plant community diversity, fungal dispersal abilities, climate, and microenvironmental conditions. Common host tree species on BCI supports a greater richness macroscopic wood-decay fungi than do rare trees. Polypore fungi are much more diverse than their macroscopic counterparts, with up to dozens of species inhabiting a single healthy leaf. Fungi isolated from *Psychotria* leaves are highly diverse, usually rare, and preliminary analyses indicate no speciation among hosts within the genus. Understanding and using the fungal diversity of Panamanian forests are the goals of a new tripartite bioprospecting agreement among STRI, Sandoz Pharma Inc., and INRENARE. This three-year project includes training of graduate and undergraduate students, offers courses in fungal biology at the University of Panama, supports basic research in microbial ecology, provides alternative uses of natural resources encouraging their protection, and explores the uses of fungi for pharmaceutical uses.

On Thursday, May 30, Bambi seminar speaker will be Catherine Lovelock: Influence of VA-mycorrhizae and elevated CO₂ on growth of *Bielschmeidia pendula*. Transportation and dinner reservations are essential.

ARRIVALS:

Howard Lasker and **Scott Santos**, University of Buffalo, May 27-5 Aug, to work on the fertilization success among broadcast spawning benthic invertebrates.

Courtney Murren, University of Connecticut, May 29-10 Aug, to work on the gene flow between disjunct populations of a neo tropical orchid.

DEPARTURES:

Hector Guzman, May 28-4 Jun, to Honduras, on official business at the Cayos Cochinos Station.