

## 2012-2013 TCD Practitioner Grant Reports

### ***Workshop for Extension Officers in Timor Leste***

Austen Moore, PhD student, Agricultural Education and Communication

Prior to arriving at UF for my PhD in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, I served in the Peace Corps in Timor Leste, working with a variety of international development and conservation non-profits, and completed my Master's degree in Agricultural and Extension Education at New Mexico State University. My research focus is on small-scale sustainable farming systems and international agricultural Extension. As a recipient of the TCD Practitioner Experience Grant, I had the opportunity to spend May-June 2012 working closely with the government of Timor Leste to improve its agricultural Extension system. I conducted this project in three parts:

First, research results from my master's thesis (*An Analysis of the Agricultural Sustainability of Small-Scale Farms in Lacluta Sub-District of Timor Leste*) were presented to stakeholders in the Ministry of Agriculture, local leaders in Lacluta, and the farmers that had participated in the original study. Recommendations for improved agronomic, agribusiness, and agroecological practices were well-received and hopefully will help stimulate policy and behavior changes that can develop the agricultural sector and improve rural livelihoods.

Second, I conducted a training workshop with Extension officers in the rural district of Viqueque. Officers were taught participatory methods for working with Extension clientele and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods for conducting local needs assessments. The training was taught in the national language of Tetum and utilized a combination of teaching methods to convey the material. Officers were very positive about the training and requested continued linkages with UF and the TCD program.

Third, I collected data through in-person interviews with Extension personnel at the national and field level to determine the challenges/constraints facing Extension and the opportunities for strengthening the system. Preliminary data were presented to the Ministry of Agriculture and USAID-Timor Leste's agricultural development team, and future publications are planned. Hopefully this research will lead to improvements to Timorese Extension and/or additional development interventions that improve agriculture in Timor Leste.



### ***Field Course for Latin American Students in Colombia***

Judit Ungvari-Martin, PhD student, Biology

As conservation issues such as climate change and deforestation continue to span political borders, there is an ever-increasing need for international scientific collaborations. Much research takes place in developing countries, and in many cases research projects in Latin

American countries provide opportunities for local students to improve their field-techniques, by training students in specific data collection methods. Much less frequent is the involvement of these students in the development of the questions, analysis and data interpretation of each project. Thus, our objective has been to close the loop by instructing local students who have leadership potential and the motivation necessary to conduct their own research.

We first developed the *Field Course for Latin American Students* in 2009 to train and recruit student assistants who were not yet qualified to fill positions on our field crews in Peru. After working with the students for a few days, it became apparent that these promising students had no training in the process of scientific investigation. We therefore decided to have the students develop a hypothesis-driven independent thesis project. The following year the scope of the field course was broadened, and eight students from Peru and three from Colombia spent 10 days in a peer learning environment about scientific inquiry that included research design and critical reading of journal articles as well as training in basic tools and techniques of ecological research. The students subsequently used these tools and techniques to design and execute small pilot projects with structured peer group feedback on all components of their project including their hypotheses, methods, and interpretation of their results. In 2011, we broadened the recruitment process yielding a massive response with more than 100 applicants from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.



In 2012, Judit Ungvari-Martin (PhD student, Biology) received a TCD Practitioner Grant to help support the 4th version of this field course. This time around, 21 students from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia attended the course that took place at the *Centro Forestal Tropical Pedro Pineda* in Colombia. The students received hands-on research training in a variety of fauna groups and also learned about research design. They also participated in a workshop about preparation of curriculum vitae and letters of intent for future prospective jobs. At the end of the course, the students presented results from their independent studies in a mini-symposium.

Ultimately, we expect this educational program to have a long-lasting positive impact by enhancing capacity building for future conservation leaders and by helping them to prepare for their studies and research. For more information about the course and pictures please go to:

[http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/ordwaylab/judit/Curso\\_de\\_campo/Curso\\_de\\_campo.html](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/ordwaylab/judit/Curso_de_campo/Curso_de_campo.html)

### **Returning results to Porto Dias Agroextractive Reserve in Acre, Brazil**

Cara Rockwell, PhD SFRC & TCD

As a Masters student at UF in 2004, I first visited Acre, Brazil, and I was intrigued by the region's focus on sustainable forest management. The region is notable for historical ties to the forest within the rubber tapper community as well as state-supported forest certification efforts. I ended up continuing my field work as a PhD student in the Porto Dias Agroextractive Project, assessing the influences of logging on forest structure and species composition in bamboo (*Guadua* spp.)-dominated forest sites. Additionally, I evaluated the potential of enrichment plantings for an important timber species (*Dipteryx odorata*) in bamboo forests. I presented the research design to community members in September and October 2007, allowing them an opportunity to evaluate the methods and provide feedback on experimental design. To complement the ecological field data, I documented local perceptions of bamboo ecology and existing/potential local uses through a series of interviews. I discovered that the local bamboo-dominated forest is characterized by low commercial timber volume, suggesting that this forest type is susceptible to overexploitation. Enrichment plantings of *D. odorata* seedlings were successful, and their growth was enhanced in response to the bamboo removal treatment.



In the summer of 2012, thanks to a TCD Practitioner Grant, I was able to return research results to local community partners as well as my collaborators from local research institutions, NGOs, and companies. These institutions included the *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária* (EMBRAPA), the *Centro dos Trabalhadores da Amazônia* (CTA), the *Cooperativa dos Produtores Florestais Comunitários* (COOPERFLORESTA), the *Secretaria da Floresta* (SEF), the *Instituto de Meio Ambiente do Acre* (IMAC), and two community organizations, the *Associação Agroextrativista São José* and the *Associação Seringueira Porto Dias* (PAE). Much of my interaction with partner institutions in Rio Branco involved one-on-one meetings, with presentations of my research results, and work on research papers for publication. Community meetings in Porto Dias involved a formal dialogue with members of the two Project associations, allowing for dissemination of research results and discussion of possible implications for current management practices. I also visited various families within the Project to determine their current involvement with timber management programs, as well as to allow for a more informal setting for the distribution of my results. Project leaders were most intrigued by the confirmation that timber volume in their landholdings is very low and by the suggestion that they will need to diversify livelihood strategies to include more of the many non-timber forest products we discovered in our plots. Additionally, community members agreed that their involvement in future management plans is vital to the sustainability of the system.

***The Real Thesis Defense: Returning Research Results to Farmers in Esparza, Costa Rica***

Korey Force, MALAS & TCD.

I spent two weeks in Costa Rica in June 2013 to pursue two primary objectives: to return the results of my graduate research to the participants and informants of said research in Esparza; and to share the results of my graduate research with the academic community through a presentation at the ATBC/OTS 2013 conference in San José.



The first week of the trip was dedicated to the first objective. I worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) extension agents to plan an interactive presentation for farmers in the area that had served as research participants the previous summer. With the help of MAG, the presentation was hosted on June 23, 2013 and was attended by 20 of the 48 participants. The hour-long session included the following components: welcoming refreshments; an interactive presentation; and concluding discussions. The second week of the trip was dedicated to the second objective. I presented research from my master's thesis on Wednesday, June 26 in an oral session at the annual ATBC/OTS conference in San Jose. The session was entitled "Conservation Strategies" and attended by a minimum of 50 conference attendees.

The results of my trip were positive for both me and those with whom I reconnected and presented my research. My return to Esparza was an opportunity to reconnect with the professional contacts that had aided my research the previous summer. It also served as experience in planning and executing an interactive presentation within a defined community. This experience was also beneficial to Esparza in that the research results that I developed in my master's work were refined by the participants and community members so that they will more accurately reflect the context and subject in the future. Participants of the Esparza presentation were eager to engage in the discussion of my research and even used it as point from which to engage in new discussions about conservation and payments for environmental services. In this way, my presentation served as an inclusive mechanism as well as a conversation starter for other subjects related or more relevant in the current context.

My presentation at the ATBC/OTS annual conference served as a beneficial opportunity to gain experience in synthesizing and presenting large amounts of research in front of a scientific audience. The 15-minute oral presentation was well received and served as a conversation starter for ecologists and biologists about the human-level effects of payments for environmental services. My presence at the ATBC/OTS conference thus served as professional development (for me personally) and an opportunity to help shed light on the human dimensions of conservation strategies that are often problematic.