

# 2012 Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award in Tropical Conservation & Development

We are pleased to announce that **Christine Lucas** has been selected as the 2012 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Award for the Outstanding Dissertation in Tropical Conservation and Development.

Dr. Lucas completed her dissertation in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation under the supervision of Dr. Emilio Bruna. Her dissertation was entitled "*Successional dynamics and seedling regeneration in Amazonian floodplain forests.*" The selection committee was particularly impressed by Dr. Lucas' innovative use of participatory research methods and her commitment to capacity building. In addition, the committee highlighted the high standards for the science behind her project that will have real impacts on conservation and development in the region. Dr. Lucas' dissertation exemplified the TCD mission of bridging theory and practice to conserve biodiversity, promote sustainable resource use, and advance human well-being. Throughout her tenure at UF, Dr. Lucas was an active participant in the TCD community and a recipient of numerous awards, including fellowships from the Working Forests in the Tropics NSF-IGERT Program and the Inter-American Foundation and an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Enhancement Grant.



For her dissertation Dr. Lucas focused on the influence of land-use history and resource extraction by local land-holders on the regeneration of Amazonian flooded forests. The flooded forests of the Amazon are incredibly important ecosystems that not only sustain the productivity and diversity of the largest and most diverse freshwater system of the planet, but also contribute substantially to the economy and culture of the millions of people that live in the region. Despite this, these forests are under great pressure from cattle ranching, over-fishing, and timber extraction. Dr. Lucas' research revealed how these disturbances and environmental stresses, such as severe floods, interact to affect forest regeneration at multiple scales. Further, her research evaluated the social and economic aspects of alternative forest uses for local communities

During the course of her research, Dr. Lucas worked closely with local community residents from Ilha do São Miguel, Santa Maria do Tapar, Tapar-miri, and Aracampina do Ituqui in eastern Amazonia region of Brazil. She also established collaborations with scientists at the Universidade Federal Rural da Amazonia (UFRA), Instituto Nacional de Pesquisa Amaznica (INPA), Large Scale Biosphere-Atmosphere Experiment (LBA) in Santarem, Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuria (EMBRAPA) and Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amaznia (IPAM). In the tradition of TCD, Dr. Lucas contributed to local capacity building through engaging women from local communities to organize and conduct research on seed dispersal by commercially important fish. She also mentored women undergraduate students from the Universidade Federal do Para and served as an excellent role model for aspiring young scientists from the region.

Dr. Lucas is currently collaborating with *Grupo de Biodiversidad y Ecologa, Instituto de Ecologa y Ciencias Ambientales* at the Universidad de la Republica del Uruguay where she is developing a program to assess and monitor the ecological integrity of National System of Protected Areas (SNAP).

The Selection Committee – composed of TCD faculty members Dr. Rick Stepp and Dr. Stephen Perz and TCD alumnus Dr. Alfonso Alonso – congratulates Dr. Lucas on her selection as the **2012 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award.**



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