

Project Update: February 2015

On March 2014, I began my Project thanks to Rufford Foundation, who help me to achieve the proposed goals. I proposed this project because there is a big unknown about Fungi in my country. Fungi are an important and ancient group of organisms, which together with bacteria and protozoa recycle most materials in our planet and nourish our ecosystems. Despite this, recognition and protection of threatened fungi has been until recently almost ignored. There are very few mycologists in Cuba and just some of us are working with criteria and methods for recognising and managing the threatened fungi of Cuba. On the other hand, there is no information of fungi from the majority areas of Cuba and this is a reason we can not evaluate the species. We need more information on the subject.

First, I updated the fungi collection (*Ganodermataceae*) in the National Botanical Garden herbaria and I detected some problems with incorrect identifications, for instance. Then, I update a digital database with pictures and details from herbaria specimens and my own specimens from my field's studies. Thanks to field material obtained to Rufford I take pictures and I made some expeditions. During this time I collected *Ganoderma* and others fungi in Cuba western. We had a little problem with two optical microscopes they broke and we fixed. The optical microscope is essential to fungi work.

We found 9 *Ganoderma* species, one of them are rarely, but we need to explore the Cuba Eastern because there are low information in Herbaria from this area. This information was showing in the Latin American Congress of Mycology on November 2014 in Colombia and other part will be publishing in National Botanical Garden Journal and will be part of field guide from Viñales National Park.

On March, we called a meeting of the mycologists of all country and we celebrated the National Mycological Meeting because we need to know what kind of work about fungi is doing in Cuba. The majority of works were about pathogens species in Cuba and their effects in agriculture and the human health. Only two presentations were about fungi conservation because there are many problems, in part, in applying IUCN conservation criteria, and the poor knowledge on the diversity and distribution of some groups. We agreed to work very hard because the Cuban people need to know about the importance of fungi and their conservation.

In this meeting, we created The Mycological Section within the SOCUBOT (Cuban Botanical Society). We don't have a National Mycological Society so this is the first step to make something like this. The Cuban Mycologists wish to make own association in the future, separated of Botanical Society, but this second step needs time and government permission. I was selecting like coordinator and I keep the communication between the mycologist with interesting news, information about meetings, congress, and provide literature, for instance. On the other hand, this meeting got some students interested in the mycology together at the same place. This point is very important to the future conservation work.

Between May and August we celebrated some activities with children between ages of five and fourteen in Havana communities like the science festival in Havana (May 31th) included field activity with their parents, explanation and pictures, color and design activities. The

next festival will be on February 7, 2015 with university students. We decided to make some special literature for children because the fungi world is very complicated for them. We printed 200 little books with pictures of fungi to colour and they were distributed free among the children. The English book name was *Fungi a Different World*. The distribution was in some communities activities, for instance, on June 1st: children's day, on July 5th: (environmental day) and on August 10th: in summer activity. The participation of university students was very important in all celebrations.

We visited some communities in Havana and we appreciated the low knowledge about fungi in that people, even some of them didn't know that fungi are not neither plant nor animal. We organized some workshops where we showed some pictures and a short film about the five Kingdoms. We spoke with these people and they understood everything.

We made a guide book of National Botanical Garden Fungi, the first fungi guide publishing in Cuba. The presentation will be on Mars 2015. This book will be useful to develop conservation actions and will provide valuable environmental education material. At the same time we are making a calendar for this year (2015) with some fungi pictures and we continued working in the field guide from Viñales National Park. All books published have the foundation logo.

During this time we created the slogan: *Fungi a Different World* and we are making our logotype graphic design who will be accompany our Micologist Section.

We did our goals and we have many ideas because we want that Cuban people know about fungi. Tropical and subtropical areas are know to be areas of high biodiversity, yet the study of fungi always lagged behind other groups of organisms. World biodiversity inventories have dealt with cataloguing plants, mammals, and bird species for example, but very few of these have been focused in the study the fungi. But if people don't know about these organisms they won't be able to conserve.