**Project Update: December 2023**

We started our first fieldwork in search of bats of the genus *Lophostoma*. The field team visited two areas in the Chocó biogeographic region, at the Pacific Botanical Garden and Utria Natural Park. For this, we set up eight mist nets in different types of habitats, which remained open from 18:00 h to 00:00 h for five effective nights of sampling in each area.

*Pacific Botanical Garden, Chocó, Colombia.* © Diego A. Esquivel.

Chocó is considered a biodiversity hotspot and is known for being one of the places with the highest bat richness in Colombia (> 120 species). This region has high precipitation and extensive forests that are mostly preserved in their entirety. Unfortunately, illegal logging, drug trafficking, and hunting of wildlife are some of the main threats to its biodiversity. This is the home of our cryptic bat *Lophostoma* that we are searching for! What other cryptic bats could exist here?

*Vegetation in the Utria natural Park, Chocó, Colombia.* © Diego A. Esquivel.

In total, we managed to capture 45 individuals belonging to the following species:

| **Family** | **Genus** | **Species** |
|---|---|---|
| Phyllostomidae | *Artibeus* | *jamaicensis* |
| | *Carollia* | *brevicaudum* |
| | *Carollia* | *perspicillata* |
| | *Carollia* | *castanea* |
| | *Dermanura* | *sp* |
| | *Desmodus* | *rotundus* |
| | *Chrotopterus* | *auritus* |
| | *Glossophaga* | *soricina* |
| | *Platyrrhinus* | *dorsalis* |

Each specimen was measured, photographed, and samples were taken for genetic studies before being released at the capture site. Some data have been collected and are being processed in the laboratory. Furthermore, we established partnerships with other taxonomists, such as Dr. Anderson Feijó at the Field Museum of Natural History, to enhance our team's capabilities.

*Glossophaga soricina*

*Chrotopterus auritus*

*Desmodus rotundus*

*Artibeus jamaicensis*

*Dermanura sp.*

*Carollia perspicillata*

We also are creating a social media profile that will focus on our central theme of cryptic diversity, especially highlighting our project in the coming months. We hope to use social media to amplify the impact of our research and to find more allies willing to work towards unraveling cryptic diversity in Neotropical bats, thereby contributing to the conservation of species that are currently 'invisible''.