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2025 Update: Parataxonomists at Área de Conservación Guanacaste (ACG) in Costa Rica

Project partner: Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund

We wanted to thank you again for your support for this project give you this update.

Highlights of the past year:

- ◆ 2025 was a pivotal and action-oriented year for the GDFCF's Parataxonomist Program, with the continuation of a transition begun in 2023-2024. While Parataxonomists continued their core scientific and conservation activities within ACG, 2025 saw leadership transitions, institutional restructuring, and the repositioning of the program for its next scientific chapter.
- ◆ Parataxonomists completed its decades-long inventory of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) in 2025. The study of the ecology and life history of this ecologically important group has fundamentally reshaped global understanding of tropical biodiversity. The wind-down included arranging for specimen curation and knowledge transfer to ensure the lasting value of more than three decades of research.
- ◆ The GDFCF Science Committee kept busy translating strategic guidance into actionable priorities for the Parataxonomist workforce. The committee worked closely with ACG leadership to identify applied conservation and management needs—such as biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem protection, and site presence—and to align Parataxonomist work with those priorities.
- ◆ Institutionally, 2025 marked a decisive step toward Costa Rica-based leadership and governance of the program. The new Asociación de Conservación Guanacaste Bosque y Mar began operation. Under the leadership of Dr. Bruce Young—appointed as Executive Director in early 2025—'Bosque y Mar' began guiding the day-to-day coordination of the Parataxonomist program in close collaboration with GDFCF Science Advisor Roberto Fernández and ACG counterparts.
- ◆ Founders Dan Janzen and Winnie Hallwachs continued to step back from daily management while remaining engaged as scientific and institutional advisors, and founding Executive Director Eric Palola completed his tenure, closing a foundational chapter in the organization's history.

Looking ahead

This year there is continued development of new, individualized work plans for Parataxonomists—including their essential 'protection by presence' roles at their field stations. Parataxonomists have expressed enthusiasm about the evolution of their roles and interest in learning new skills, reinforcing confidence in the program's ability to adapt and thrive.

Thank you for your support for this project! Please let us know if you have questions or would like to discuss this project or receive further information.

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