

La Plata, February 26, 2020

IAPT Research Grants in Plant Systematics

Dear members of the evaluation committee,

I am writing in support of Dr. Marcelo Monge to the call for IAPT Research Grants in Plant Systematics. The title of his project is “Evolution of Amazonian and Atlantic Forests: Historical Biogeography of *Stiffia* J.C. Mikan (Asteraceae)”. This project is of great scientific importance since it aims to contribute to knowledge about the biodiversity of two extremely diverse Brazilian ecosystems that are seriously threatened by deforestation and fire. Understanding the evolutionary processes that have shaped and sustain biodiversity is essential to develop correct conservation strategies. Stifftieae is a morphologically and biogeographically complex group that present exclusively South American distribution and represents a basal lineage within one of the most diverse family of angiosperms, the Asteraceae. The genus *Stiffia* belong to the core of this tribe and have six species, from which two occur in the east portion of the Amazon Forest and the remaining species occur in Atlantic Florest. The current knowledge on the phylogenetic hypothesis, patterns of diversification, morphological evolution and biogeography are poorly known for *Stiffia* and also for Stifftieae, or biased by low sampling. The applicant has already sampled 5 of the 6 species of the genus and it remains to obtain samples of *Stiffia cayenensis*, which is a vine that was collected in Amazon Forest borders in northern French Guyana, between Saint Laurent and Paul Isnard. This species is only known by the type specimen, which have been collected almost forty years ago; therefore, the applicant requests financing to find this species and complete the sampling of the genus, in addition to analyzing its conservation status.

The applicant is a Post-doctoral researcher at Plant Biology Graduate Program, specialist in Asteraceae and with a lot of experience in the study of the systematics and biogeography of this family of flowering plants.

Likewise, the applicant has experience in field trips and collection and processing of plant material and has the necessary institutional support to carry out this project. On the other hand, the applicant proposes to accomplish this project in collaboration with two renowned

botanist's specialists in Asteraceae and with extensive experience in the study of this family:
Jimi Naoki Nakajima and Paola Ferreira de Lima.

For all the above, I consider that the applicant has the technical, academic and logistical capacity to carry out this project.

Name: Dra. Mariana A. Grossi

Position held: Researcher. National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET). Museo de La Plata. Universidad Nacional de La Plata. La Plata. Argentina.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Mariana A. Grossi', written over a horizontal line.

Signature: