

For immediate release
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MacArthur Foundation Sponsors The New York Botanical Garden's Conservation Research in Dominican Republic

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has awarded The New York Botanical Garden \$300,000 toward a plant conservation and sustainable management project in the Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve in the Dominican Republic. The three-year project will be undertaken by the Botanical Garden in collaboration with Grupo Jaragua, a non-governmental organization in the Dominican Republic, and the Jardín Botánico Nacional in Santo Domingo.

The project's goal is to identify priority areas for conservation—the most important areas to save—in the Biosphere Reserve with respect to plants such as areas rich in endemic (occurring nowhere else) and threatened plant species, and key biodiversity corridors connecting the three separate parcels that make up the Reserve. The results will identify the optimum location and structure of these conservation corridors as well as areas that show particular botanical richness.

Brian Boom, Ph.D., Director of the Botanical Garden's Caribbean Biodiversity Program, comments, "The results of the project will guide the conservation and management of plant resources in the Biosphere Reserve, influencing the economic sustainability of residents of the Reserve's buffer zones as well as the location of conservation corridors. The project will also establish best practices for addressing further plant conservation and sustainable management dilemmas across the Caribbean basin."

In addition to compiling a comprehensive plant survey, the project will map geographic information of endangered plants, develop a database of "keystone plants" critical to their ecosystem, and train local scientists and technicians. Data from the field research will be compiled and organized as part of the Botanical Garden's C. V. Starr Virtual Herbarium. Results will be published in multiple forms.

The Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve includes 476,700 hectares in southwestern Dominican Republic, encompassing three national parks: Jaragua National Park, Bahoruco National Park, and Lake Enriquillo Natural Park. The Reserve includes a wide range of habitats from cloud forests to coral reefs and mangroves. Some are the most biodiversity-rich habitats in the country. The Reserve has high levels of both plant diversity and endemism, including, for example, the highest diversity of cacti on the island of Hispaniola.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is a private, independent grantmaking institution helping to build a more just and sustainable world. Through the support it provides, the Foundation fosters the development of knowledge, nurtures individual creativity, strengthens institutions, helps improve public policy, and provides information to the public, primarily through support for public interest media. With assets of more than \$6.4 billion, the Foundation makes approximately \$260 million in grants annually. More information is available at www.macfound.org.

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The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant kingdom. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of living plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive education programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging research programs of the International Plant Science Center. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit our Web site at www.nybg.org.

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by the New York City Council and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

Media Contact: George Shakespear 718.817.8512