

8 new species discovered in Boliva national parks

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Botanists at the Missouri Botanical Garden have described eight new plant species collected in the Madidi National Park and surrounding areas located on the eastern slopes of the Andes in northern Bolivia. The new species are from several different genera and families and are published in a recent edition of the Missouri Botanical Garden journal *Novon*.

Missouri Botanical Garden scientists and colleagues from the National Herbarium in La Paz, Bolivia describe *Prestonia leco*, *Passiflora madidiana*, *Siphoneugena minima*, *Siphoneugena glabrata*, *Hydrocotyle apolobambensis*, *Weberbauerocereus madidiensis*, *Styloceras connatum* and *Meriania horrida*. All but one [species](#), *Siphoneugena glabrata*, were collected as part of Proyecto Madidi (Project Madidi), a ten-year effort to inventory [plant species](#) in the National Park, educate graduate students and conduct an ecological inventory of the national park. The new species will be made available for incorporation in the upcoming Bolivian catalog of vascular plants.

Some of the new species are only found in very specific areas of the National Park and surrounding areas and have been assigned a provisional [conservation](#) status of Vulnerable following the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines. Others are more broadly distributed and clearly indicate that more is to be found. Dr. Peter Jørgensen, associate curator at the Missouri Botanical Garden considers the threat to the species to be limited if the protected areas are respected, but several places within the region are at risk of

fragmentation as a result of the construction of new roads and the increase in cattle and farming activities.

"Before we started this project in 2000, this botanically rich area was essentially a white area on the map, almost unexplored," said Jørgensen. "There has been very little general collecting in this area. Over the course of a decade we have documented more than 7,000 species, which is about a third of what you can find in North America."

Since the start of the Madidi Project, [botanists](#) have identified about 132 new species; 32 of which have been published. Eighteen species are currently in preparation for publication and the remaining need additional collections and documentation. The study area in the project encompasses 110,000 kilometers and includes three protected areas: the Madidi National Park, Pilon Lajas and Apolobamba. Ranging from the glacier-covered peaks of the high Andes Mountains to the tropical rainforests of the Tuichi River, Madidi is recognized as one of the world's most biologically diverse regions.

With scientists working on six continents in 38 countries around the globe, the Garden has one of the three largest plant science programs in the world, along with The New York Botanical Garden and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (outside London). The Garden focuses its work on areas that are rich in biodiversity yet threatened by habitat destruction, and operates the world's most active research and training program in tropical botany. Scientific study at the Garden focuses on the exploration of selected tropical regions, which encompass Earth's least known, most diverse, and most rapidly vanishing ecosystems. Because of the speed with which irreversible changes occur in tropical regions, the Garden has made a long-term commitment and assumed a leadership role in the study and conservation of these imperiled habitats.

Provided by Missouri Botanical Garden

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