

Project Update: August 2013

Here are the latest updates on our on-going Plecoptera Fauna Project in Compostela Valley. The survey team conducted its last sampling site at Mt. Candalaga, Maragusan Compostela Valley Province on September 5th-9th 2013. Since this is the last sampling of the team, we made a short programme for my biology students training them some basic biodiversity research methods. The participants of the expedition includes eight of my biology students, one from the tourism office of Maragusan, two guides, and two of my research assistants. We arrived at the foot of Mt. Candalaga in Barangay New Albay on September 6th 2013 at 9:00 AM, and then we started walking approximately 13 hours until reaching our camp site. We reached our camp site at approximately 10:00 PM and have our dinner at 12:00 midnight. The team stayed in the camp site for four nights and five days. We are so lucky for having the right weather during the entire expedition hence we manage to collect diverse insect fauna from different elevations of Mt. Candalaga.

Students were trained to conduct basic standard protocols in insect sampling on the following groups: fireflies (Lampyridae), Odonata (damselfly and dragonfly), spiders, dung beetles (specifically Genus Onthophagus), ants (Hymenoptera), moths (Lepidoptera: Sphingidae), weevils, and Plecoptera. I am hoping that these students will continue the conservation efforts we have started in Compostela Valley particularly the insect fauna. I am happy for the response of the students and right now they are doing their own simple biodiversity studies on the above mentioned insect groups. For this I am so happy also for the Rufford SGF for funding this opportunity especially in sharing what we (the survey team) have experienced in the field. We have prepared a video during our expedition and I am excited to present it to you soon perhaps together with my terminal report.

Two main problems we encountered in the project; first is the weather, Mindanao had been visited by numerous typhoons within this year (a peculiar phenomenon since Mindanao is part of the Philippines considered as a typhoon free over the past few years and I think our climate is already changing). This forces us to keep changing our sampling schedules. Second is the strong presence of insurgents particularly in the eastern part of the province and this includes Maragusan, Pantukan, and Maco. We are lucky to be permitted to conduct sampling at Mt. Candalaga in Maragusan with the help of the tourism office and the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office or MENRO. Unluckily we are not allowed by the Local Government Unit (LGUs) to enter and conduct sampling at the Municipalities of Pantukan and Maco. These two municipalities are considered to be the stronghold of the rebels (commonly known as New People's Army or NPA). But I think we have now a clear idea of the Plecoptera fauna in the Province. For now, we have a total of 109 second batch of plecoptera materials ready to be shipped to Dr. Ignac for confirmation of the ID. The materials we have are quite uniform with mainly from Genus Phanoperla and Neoperla. I am praying that the materials we gathered from the different places of Compostela Valley would reveal new genus or species to be added to the Philippine list of insects.

Right now I am preparing my terminal report of this very momentous project. This may not be related to the project but I think it is worth sharing. My wife is about to give birth to our first baby boy within this month and we are planning to name him Rufford, you know just to

remind me, my team, and my family the generosity of the facility. Furthermore, please include her (my wife) in your prayers for her safe delivery.





