

Martin-Baker Research Award: Thomas Edison E. dela Cruz

The George W. Martin and Gladys E. Baker Research Award supports new or ongoing research in mycology by a recent-Ph.D. mycologist (preferably within 5 years of receiving the degree), who also has significant teaching commitments.

Dr. Thomas Edison E. dela Cruz finished his B. Sc. in Microbiology and M. Sc. in Biological Sciences at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines. He then pursued his Doctor of Natural Sciences (Dr. Rer. Nat.) in 2002 at the Institute of Microbiology, University of Braunschweig in Braunschweig, Germany with a graduate scholarship grant given by the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) and under the supervision of Dr. Barbara E. Schulz. Upon completion of his dissertation, he continued his teaching position at the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Santo Tomas where he teaches introductory and advanced courses in microbiology, microbial genetics and microbial ecology. He also continued with his researches at the Research Center for the Natural Sciences in the same university and started the Fungal Biodiversity and Systematics Group. His interest on slime molds began when he attended a seminar-workshop on myxomycetes by Prof. Dr. Steven L. Stephenson, University of Arkansas, USA. Together with his undergraduate and graduate students, they re-



dela Cruz

cently studied the myxomycete flora of selected highlands in Luzon and the Hundred Islands in Pangasinan where they recorded nine species as new for the Philippines. With the support from the Martin-Baker Research Fund, Tom continues to explore the myxomycetes in other islands of the Philippines, more particularly of those unexplored and geographically isolated habitats in the country. He will be working with his graduate students on the diversity and taxonomy of myxomycetes in the Lubang Islands in the province of Occidental Mindoro, one of the major hotspots of biodiversity in the country. Specifically, his research project will look into the myxomycete flora of the coastal terrestrial forests in Lubang Island and compare this with the myxomycetes found in the montane forest

of Mt. Gonting located in the center of the island. Data that will be gained from this study will eventually be incorporated in the on-going assessment of the myxomycete biodiversity of the Philippines and will also be used for the development of interactive database, all aimed in promoting biodiversity research and conservation awareness in the country.

Research Awards Committee: Michelle Seidl, Chair, Gary Warren, Thorsten Lumbsch, Dennis Desjardin, Teresa Pawlowska, Terry Hill, *ex officio*, Past Chair

Forest Fungal Ecology Research Award: Cassandra Swett

This award supports ecological research by a graduate or undergraduate student, examining fungal interactions in old growth forests or other unique or endangered ecosystems. Studies should address innovative approaches to examining fungal systems or interactions of individuals, or groups of fungi, with hosts or substrates in old growth forest or other sensitive ecosystems.

Cassandra Swett is Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Plant Pathology, University of California at Davis under the supervision of Dr. Tom Gordon. Cassandra is researching the role tree-inhabiting fungal endophytes play in reducing damage to the native Monterey pine forests by an exotic fungal pathogen. She will use the MSA award for studies investigating cryptic and diverse relationships between host plants and microorganisms in native forests of coastal California, using both culture- and non-culture-based methods. Her project title is "Fungal endophytes and the reduction of damage from biotic disturbance in native Monterey pine forests"

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