

# Julissa Rojas-Sandoval

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FINCA Project: <https://finca.collaboration.uconn.edu/>

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## EDUCATION

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2005 – 2010 Ph.D. Biology. Major in Conservation Ecology. University of Puerto Rico.  
2001 – 2004 M.Sc. Biology. Major in Cell and Molecular Biology. Universidad de Costa Rica.  
1997 – 2001 B.S. Biology. Universidad de Costa Rica.

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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2019 – present Assistant Research Professor. Institute of the Environment, University of Connecticut.  
2017 – 2022 Research Associate. Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.  
2012 – 2017 Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.  
2010 – 2012 Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Center for Applied Tropical Ecology and Conservation, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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## FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

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2012 – 2017 Postdoctoral Fellowship. Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. Total Award: \$249,000.  
2010 – 2012 Postdoctoral Fellowship. Center for Applied Tropical Ecology and Conservation, University of Puerto Rico. Total Award: \$76,000.  
2012 Costa Rican National Academy of Sciences. Award Outstanding Young Investigator.  
2009 – 2010 Dissertation Fellowship Award. Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. Total Award: \$11,000.  
2008 – 2009 Exceptional Academics Executorial. Graduate Students Award. Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. Total Award: \$13,000.  
2002 Graduate Research Fellowship, Organization for Tropical Studies. OTS-02-13.  
2001 Graduate Fellowship Award. Dean of Graduate Studies (Vicerrectoría de Investigación). Universidad de Costa Rica.  
2000 REU Fellowship. Research Experiences for Undergraduate Students. Universidad de Costa Rica. Summer School on Research and Field Biology. Golfito, Costa Rica.

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## RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDED

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- 2021-2022 Caribbean Pollination Networks Project. Institute of the Environment, University of Connecticut. PI: J. Rojas-Sandoval. \$77,500.
- 2020-2022 General Assessment of Invasive Plant Species across Caribbean Islands. USDA-APHIS Grants. PI: Hilda Diaz-Soltero, Co-PI: J. Rojas-Sandoval. \$417,450.
- 2020 Monitoring grass invaded habitats on Mona Island. U.S. Wildlife Restoration Program. Grant PR-W-F20AF00016. PIs: J. Rojas-Sandoval, E. Meléndez- Ackerman. \$55,793.
- 2018-2020 Catalogue of Invasive Plant Species in Puerto Rico. USDA-APHIS Grant. PI: Hilda Diaz-Soltero, Co-PI: J. Rojas-Sandoval. \$233,000.
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## PUBLICATIONS

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### *Accepted and in press*

35. **Rojas-Sandoval, J.**, Ackerman, D., Marcano, H., and Willig, MR. Alien species affect the abundance and richness of native species in tropical forests: the role of adaptive strategies. *Ecosphere*.
34. Fridley, J., Bellingham, P. Closset-Kopp, D., Daehler, C., Dechoum, M., Martin, P., Murphy, H., **Rojas-Sandoval, J.**, and Tng, D. A general hypothesis of forest invasions by woody plants based on whole-plant carbon economics. *Journal of Ecology*.

### *Published*

33. Fumero-Caban, J.J., Melendez-Ackerman, E.J., and **Rojas-Sandoval, J.** 2022. Pollination ecology and breeding system of the tropical tree *Guaiacum sanctum* on two Caribbean islands with contrasting pollinator assemblages. *Journal of Pollination Ecology* 31:139–153. [https://doi.org/10.26786/1920-7603\(2022\)669](https://doi.org/10.26786/1920-7603(2022)669)
32. Olivero-Lora, S., **Rojas-Sandoval, J.**, Melendez-Ackerman, E.J. and Orengo-Rolón, J.L. 2022. Hurricane driven changes in vegetation structure and ecosystem services in tropical urban yards: a study case in San Juan, Puerto Rico. *Urban Ecosystems* 1: 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11252-022-01236-5>
31. **Rojas-Sandoval, J.**, and Ackerman J.D. 2021. Ornamentals lead the way: global influences on plant invasions in the Caribbean. *NeoBiota* 64: 177-197. <https://doi.org/10.3897/neobiota.64.62939>
30. Melendez-Ackerman, E., and **Rojas-Sandoval J.** 2021. Profiling native and introduced perennial garden plants in Puerto Rican urban residential yards. *Journal of Urban Ecology* 7: 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jue/juaa037>
29. Zimmerman, J.K., **Rojas-Sandoval, J.** and Shiels, A.B. 2021. Invasive Species in Puerto Rico: The View From El Yunque. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 9: 640121. [doi: 10.3389/fevo.2021.640121](https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2021.640121)
28. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Ackerman J.D, and Tremblay, L.R. 2020. Island biogeography of native and alien plantspecies: contrasting drivers of diversity across the Lesser Antilles. *Diversity and Distributions* 26: 1539-1550. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ddi.13139>
27. Franklin J., Andrade R., Daniels M.L., Fairbairn P., Fandino M.C., Gillespie T.W., González G., Gonzalez O., Imbert D., Kapos V., Kelly D.L., Marcano-Vega H., Meléndez-Ackerman E.J., McLaren K.P., McDonald M.A., Ripplinger J., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Ross M.S., Ruiz J., Steadman D.W., Tanner

- E.V.J, Terrill I., Vennetier M. 2018. Geographical ecology of dry forest tree communities in the West Indies. *Journal of Biogeography*, 45(5):1168-81 [doi.org/10.1111/jbi.13198](https://doi.org/10.1111/jbi.13198)
26. Seebens H., Blackburn T.M., Dyer E.E., Genovesi P., Hulme P.E., Jeschke J.M., Pagad S., Pyšek P., Winter M., Arianoutsou M., Bacher S., Brundu G., Capinha C., Celesti-Gradow L., Dawson W., Dullinger S., Fuentes N., Jäger H., Kartesz J., Kenis M., Kühn I., Liebhold A., Mosena A., Nishino M., Pearman D., Pergl J., Rabitsch W., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Roques A., Rorke S., Rossinelli S, Roy H.E., Scalera R., Schindler S., Štajerová K., Tokarska-Guzik B., van Kleunen M., Walker K., Yamanaka T. and Essl F, 2018. Global rise in emerging alien species results from increased accessibility of new source pools. *PNAS*, 115(10): 201719429 <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1719429115>
  25. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Tremblay R.L., Acevedo-Rodriguez P., and Diaz-Soltero H. 2017. Invasive plant species in the West Indies: geographical, ecological and floristic insights. *Ecology and Evolution* 7: 4522–4533. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.2984>
  24. Seebens H., Blackburn T.M., Dyer E.E., Genovesi P., Hulme P.E., Jeschke J.M., Pagad S., Pyšek P., Winter M., Arianoutsou M., Bacher S., Brundu G., Capinha C., Celesti-Gradow L., Dawson W., Dullinger S., Fuentes N., Jäger H., Kartesz J., Kenis M., Kühn I., Liebhold A., Mosena A., Nishino M., Pearman D., Pergl J., Rabitsch W., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Roques A., Rorke S., Rossinelli S, Roy H.E., Scalera R., Schindler S., Štajerová K., Tokarska-Guzik B., van Kleunen M., Walker K., Yamanaka T. and Essl F. 2017. No saturation in the accumulation of alien species worldwide. *Nature Communications* 8:14435 <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms14435>
  23. Ackerman J.D., Tremblay R.L., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, and Hernández-Figueroa H. 2017. Biotic resistance in the tropics: patterns of seed plants invasions within an island. *Biological Invasions* 19:315-328. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10530-016-1281-4>
  22. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Meléndez-Ackerman E., Anglés-Alcázar D. 2016. Assessing the impact of grass invasion on the population dynamics of a threatened Caribbean dry forest cactus. *Biological Conservation* 196: 156-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2016.02.015>
  21. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Meléndez-Ackerman E., Fumero-Cabán J, García-Bermúdez M, Sustache J, Aragón S, Morales-Vargas M, Olivieri G, and Fernández DS. 2016. Long-term understory vegetation dynamics and responses to ungulate exclusion in the dry forest of Mona Island. *Caribbean Naturalist* 1:138–156.
  20. Meléndez-Ackerman E., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Fernández D.S., González G., López H., Sustache J., Morales M., García-Bermúdez M., and Aragón S. 2016. Associations between soil variables and vegetation structure and composition of Caribbean dry forests. *Caribbean Naturalist* 1:176–198.
  19. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Acevedo-Rodríguez P. 2015. Naturalization and invasion of alien plants in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. *Biological Invasion* 17: 149-163. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10530-014-0712-3>
  18. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Meléndez-Ackerman E., Fumero-Cabán J., García-Bermúdez M.A., Sustache, J., Aragón, S., Morales, M., and Fernández, DS. 2014. Effects of hurricane disturbance and feral goat herbivory on the structure of a Caribbean dry forest. *Journal of Vegetation Science* 25: 1066-1077. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jvs.12160>
  17. Moreno L.M., Meléndez-Ackerman E., Cheleuitte C., Lastra L., Rodríguez R., **Rojas-Sandoval J.** 2014. Potential impacts of the invasive grass *Megathyrsus maximus* (Poaceae) on ground-dwelling arthropods in a Caribbean dry forest. *Caribbean Naturalist* 7: 1-15. \*Lead by undergraduate students.

16. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2013. Population dynamics of a threatened cactus species: general assessment and effects of matrix dimensionality. *Population Ecology* 55: 479-491. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10144-013-0378-1>
15. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2013. Spatial patterns of distribution and abundance of *Harrisia portoricensis*, an endangered Caribbean Cactus. *Journal of Plant Ecology* 6: 489-498 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpe/rtt014>
14. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2012. Effects of an invasive grass on the demography of the Caribbean cactus *Harrisia portoricensis*: implications for cacti conservation. *Acta Oecologica* 41: 30-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actao.2012.04.004>
13. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2012. Factors affecting establishment success of the endangered Caribbean cactus *Harrisia portoricensis*. *Revista de Biología Tropical* 60: 867-879.
12. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Meléndez-Ackerman E., and Fernández D.S. 2012. Plant community dynamics of a tropical semi-arid system following experimental removals of an exotic grass. *Applied Vegetation Science* 15: 513-524 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1654-109X.2012.01199.x>
11. Curbelo-Rodríguez J., Meléndez-Ackerman E., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, and Segarra-Carmona A. 2012. New Record of *Cybocephalus kathrynae* (Coleoptera: Cybocephalidae) on Mona Island, Puerto Rico. *Revista Brasileira de Entomologia* 56: 119-121. \*Lead by undergraduate student.
10. Guerrero P.C., Carvallo G.O., Nassar J.M., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Sanz V., and Medel R. 2011. Ecology and evolution of negative and positive interactions in Cactaceae: lesson and pending tasks. *Plant Ecology and Diversity* 5:205-215., <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550874.2011.630426>
9. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2011. Reproductive phenology of the Caribbean cactus *Harrisia portoricensis*: rainfall and temperature associations. *Botany* 89: 861-871. <https://doi.org/10.1139/b11-072>
8. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2011. Reproductive wind-facilitated self-pollination in *Harrisia portoricensis* (Cactaceae): A mechanism for reproductive assurance. *International Journal of Plant Reproductive Biology* 3: 1-5.
7. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2011. Notes on the natural history of *Harrisia portoricensis* (Cactaceae): a general update including specific recommendations for management and conservation. *Caribbean Journal of Science* 47: 118-123. <https://doi.org/10.18475/cjos.v47i1.a1>
6. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** 2010. Natural history of the threatened cactus species *Harrisia portoricensis*. *Kaktusy i Inne. Journal of Polish Cactus and Succulent Society* 7: 4-8.
5. **Rojas-Sandoval J.** and Meléndez-Ackerman E. 2009. Pollination biology of *Harrisia portoricensis* (Cactaceae), an endangered Caribbean species. *American Journal of Botany* 96: 2270-2278. <https://doi.org/10.3732/ajb.0900026>
4. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Budde K., Fernández M., Chacón E., Quesada M. and Lobo J.A. 2008. Phenology and pollination biology of *Ceiba pentandra* (Bombacaceae) in the wet forest of southeastern Costa Rica. In: Weisserhofer A., W. Huber, V. Mayer, S. Pamperl, A. Weber and G. Aubrecht (Eds). *Natural and Cultural History of the Golfo Dulce Region, Costa Rica*, pp 539-545. *Staphia* 88, Freistadt, Austria.

3. **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, Lobo J.A., and Quesada M. 2008. Phenological patterns and reproductive success of *Ceiba pentandra* (Bombacaceae) in tropical dry and wet forests of Costa Rica. *Revista Chilena de Historia Natural* 81: 443-454.
2. Meléndez-Ackerman E., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, and Planas S. 2008. Self-compatibility of microgametophytes in *Heliconia bihaii* (Heliconiaceae) from St. Lucia. *Caribbean Journal of Science* 44: 145-149.
1. Lobo, J.A., Quesada M., Stoner K., Fuchs E., **Rojas-Sandoval J.**, and Saborío G. 2003. Factors affecting phenological patterns of Bombacaceous trees in seasonal forest in Costa Rica and Mexico. *American Journal of Botany* 90: 1054-1063. <https://doi.org/10.3732/ajb.90.7.1054>

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## TECHNICAL REPORTS

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**Rojas-Sandoval J.** 2012-2022. Invasive Plant Species in the West Indies. Revision of the distribution, invasion status, history of introduction, habitat preferences, and management recommendations for 425 plant species behaving as invasive on Caribbean islands. Technical reports commissioned by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Smithsonian Institution, and the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI). Invasive species datasheets available online at the **CABI Invasive Species Compendium** (<http://www.cabi.org/isc/>).

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## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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Spring 2022	Guest Lecturer: <i>Invasive Species Biology</i> . University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras.
Fall 2021	Instructor: EEB 5369: <i>Current Topics in Biodiversity</i> . University of Connecticut.
Fall 2021	Guest Lecturer: <i>Dynamics of Biological Invasions</i> . University of Puerto Rico.
Spring 2021	Guest Lecturer: <i>Community Ecology</i> . University of Puerto Rico, Humacao Campus.
Fall 2020	Guest Lecturer: <i>Invasive Species Biology</i> . University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras.
Spring 2008	Teaching Assistant: <i>General Biology II</i> . University of Puerto Rico.
Fall 2007	Teaching Assistant: <i>General Biology II</i> . University of Puerto Rico.
2004 – 2005	Instructor and Coordinator: <i>Environmental Education Program</i> . Fundación Neotropica. Tropical Center, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica.
Spring 2004	Teaching Assistant: <i>Tropical Ecology and Conservation</i> . Organization for Tropical Studies. OTS-ETC 04-2. Costa Rica.
2003 – 2004	High School Teacher. <i>General Biology and General Science</i> . Puerto Jimenez Public High-School. Puerto Jimenez, Península de Osa, Costa Rica.
Fall 2001	Teaching Assistant: <i>General Ecology</i> . University of Costa Rica. San Jose, Costa Rica.
Spring 1999	Teaching Assistant: <i>General Biology</i> . University of Costa Rica. San Jose, Costa Rica.

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## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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- 2020 – present      Lead Principal Investigator. FINCA Project: Flora Introduced and Naturalized in Central America. University of Connecticut. <https://finca.collaboration.uconn.edu/>
- 2019 – present      Lead Principal Investigator. Caribbean Pollination Network Project. Institute of the Environment. University of Connecticut.
- 2017 – present      Research Associate. Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.  
*Projects led:* (1) Factors explaining the naturalization and invasion of alien plants in the West Indies. (2) Invasive plants in the West Indies: Compilation of datasheets for CABI-Invasive Species Compendium. Collaboration with: Pedro Acevedo (SI), Hilda Diaz-Soltero (USDA), Lucinda Charles & Gareth Richards (CABI), James Ackerman & Raymond Tremblay (University of Puerto Rico).
- 2012 – 2017      Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.  
*Projects led:* Invasive plants in the West Indies: Compilation of datasheets for CABI-Invasive Species Compendium. Collaboration with: Pedro Acevedo (SI), Hilda Diaz-Soltero (USDA), Lucinda Charles & Gareth Richards (CABI).
- 2010 – 2012      Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Center for Applied Tropical Ecology and Conservation, University of Puerto Rico.  
*Projects led:* (1) Vegetation community dynamics of a tropical semiarid system following experimental removals of exotic grasses. (2) The impact of feral ungulates on Mona Island vegetation.
- 2005 – 2007      Graduate Research Assistant. Tropical Plant Ecology and Evolution Laboratory, University of Puerto Rico. Topic: Micro-morphological characterization of the vegetation of Mona Island. Project Director: Elvia Meléndez-Ackerman.
- 2001 – 2004      Graduate Research Assistant. University of Costa Rica. Topic: Reproductive biology and phenology of *Ceiba pentandra* (Bombacaceae) in two life zones of Costa Rica. Directors: Jorge A. Lobo-Segura, Mauricio Quesada.
- 2001 – 2002      Graduate Research Assistant, Universidad de Costa Rica and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Topic: Effects of fragmentation and spatial isolation on the reproductive success of trees in the Bombacaceae family. Project Directors: Mauricio Quesada, Jorge A. Lobo-Segura
- 1998 – 2000      Undergraduate Research Assistant. Department of Natural History, National Museum of Costa Rica. Director: Bernal Rodríguez.

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## PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED TALKS (last 5yrs)

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- *Alien woody species are linked to reduced native richness and abundance in Caribbean forests.* Oral Presentation. 2022 ESA Annual Meeting-Ecological Society of America, Montreal, Canada. August 2022.
- *Loss of functional diversity and homogenization driven by biological invasions on islands.* Invited Seminar. University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. May 2022.

- *Woody plant invasions in the Caribbean: Introduction history and ecological insights*. Oral Presentation. 2021 ESA Annual Meeting. Session Title: Woody Invaders in Temperate and Tropical Forests: Different Species, Same Strategy? Virtual Meeting. August 2021.
- *Biological Invasions within the context of Community Ecology*. Invited Seminar. University of Puerto Rico. Humacao. Puerto Rico. April 2021.
- *Inventory of the Naturalized Vascular Flora of Central America*. Invited Seminar. Universidad de Costa Rica, San Jose. March 2021.
- *Biological Invasions across Caribbean Islands*. Invited Seminar. University of Puerto Rico. San Juan, Puerto Rico. October 2020.
- *The impacts of alien pollinators on native species*. Invited Seminar. Puerto Rico Honeybee and Evolution of Invasive Organisms on Islands Conference. San Juan. August 2019.
- *Biogeography of native and invasive plant species: contrasting drivers of diversity across the West Indies*. Invited Seminar. Department of Biology, University of Puerto Rico. August 2019.
- *Plant Invasions in the West Indies: what, why, and where?* Invited Seminar. Puerto Rico Invasive Species Awareness Conference. San Juan, April 2019.
- *Invasive plants in the Caribbean: application of herbarium collections to protect a regional biodiversity hotspot*. Invited Seminar. Island Invasives Conference 2017. University of Dundee, Scotland. July 2017

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## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS - MEMBERSHIPS

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Ecological Society of America  
 Botanical Society of America  
 The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation  
 The Society of Plant Reproductive Biologists  
 Asociación Latinoamericana de Botánica  
 Sociedad Latinoamericana de Cactáceas y Suculentas

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## SERVICE AND OUTREACH

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### **Reviewer for:**

American Journal of Botany	Allelopathy Journal
Applied Ecology	Biological Invasions
Biotropica	Journal Plant Ecology
Caribbean Journal of Science	Caribbean Naturalist
Diversity and Distributions	Guyana Botánica
Journal of Pollination Ecology	Haseltonia
Neotropical Biodiversity	Plant Ecology and Diversity
Plant Ecology	Revista de Biología Tropical
Population Ecology	Journal Tropical Ecology
The Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society	PLoS One
Journal of Plant Reproductive Biology	International Journal Plant Science

***Outreach activities and community engagement:***

- Mentor for Undergraduate Students Capstone Projects. Multidisciplinary Program, University of Puerto Rico. Two undergraduate students were mentored between August 2021 and May 2022.
- Member of the Research Committee for the NGO 350-Brooklyn, NY.
- Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the 350-Brooklyn campaign “Stop Williams Pipeline.” Brooklyn, NY.
- Member of the Latin American Society of Cactus and Succulents. Regional delegate for Costa Rica.
- Volunteer for the Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) Survey at Mona Island. Southern Research Station and IITF US-Forest Service. April 2008.
- Mentor for the REU Program. University of Puerto Rico. 2007-2010.
- Mentor for the AKKA-SEEDS Program. ESA-SEEDS Puerto Rico Chapter. 2007-2008.
- Environmental Educator. Children and Nature Program. Fundación Neotropica. Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica. January-December 2004.
- Volunteer for the Project “Environmental Education and Interpretation in Protected Zones of Costa Rica.” Barra Honda National Park. Costa Rica, June-July 2000.
- Volunteer: Association for the Protection of National Parks (ASVO Costa Rica). Costa Rica, 1997-2005.

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**REFERENCES**

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