

## NEWS and COMMENTS

### SOCIETY OF ETHNOBIOLOGY NEWS

#### Tenth Annual Conference

The 10th Annual Conference of the Society of Ethnobiology will be held March 5-8 1987 at the Florida State Museum, University of Florida. Papers are invited on the following and related topics: cultural ecology, plant and animal domestication, ethnozoology, zooarchaeology, ethnobotany, archaeobotany, palynology, ethnopharmacology, human diet and nutrition, folk taxonomy. For further information please write to Elizabeth S. Wing, Florida State Museum, Gainesville, FL 32611 / (904) 392-1721.

#### Barbara Lawrence Prize Announced

The Society will award a prize in honor of Barbara Lawrence for the best paper submitted by a student for presentation at the 10th Annual Meeting. The competition is open to any member who considers themselves a student and has not held the PhD degree at the end of the preceding summer session. The paper can be presented in an oral or a poster session and will be considered for publication in the *Journal of Ethnobiology*.

Manuscripts submitted for this competition should be single authored only; joint efforts will not be considered. Manuscripts are judged solely on quality, originality, and presentation of research. They should follow the *Journal of Ethnobiology* format and should be sufficiently precise and documented to enable the reviewing committee to judge their merits. Manuscripts are limited to eight doubled-spaced, typed pages, including a required abstract but excluding copies of figures, tables, and references.

Please include a cover letter indicating that you are a Society member and meet the criteria listed above and send it and your paper to the 10th Annual Conference committee, Florida State Museum, Gainesville, FL 32611.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS and REQUESTS

**The Society for Economic Botany** announces the appointment of a new editor of the Society's journal *Economic Botany*. John Thieret replaces Oswald Tippo as of June 1986. The Society's 27th Annual Meeting was held 13-16 June this year at the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, New York. Highlights included a symposium on palms and a keynote address by this year's Distinguished Economic Botanist, Efraim Hernandez-Xolocotzi. The 28th Meeting is scheduled for Chicago 22-25 June 1987, with a symposium on traditional medicine as focal point. Contact Susan Verhoek, Society president, Department of Biology, Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA 17003, for more information.

**The School of American Research** sponsored a seminar on "Bone Chemistry and Past Behavior" chaired by T. Douglas Price, 3-7 March 1986. The chemical analysis of bones reveals information about diet, nutritional status, disease, even social status. Papers are to be published in the School's Advanced Seminar Series. The School of American Research also wishes to announce a 1 December 1986 deadline for applications to their anthropology resident scholars' fellowship program. Contact Susan Bodenstein at the school, P.O. Box 2188, Santa Fe, NM 87504, for details.

**The Laboratorio de Etnobiologia, Universidade Federal de Maranhão** announces plans for the First International Congress of Ethnobiology, 15-21 June 1988 at the University in São Luiz, Maranhão, Brazil. The six-day congress will be divided into three parts: (1)

three days devoted to specialized areas of ethnobiological research, (2) two days for interdisciplinary discussions arranged around geographic interests and area studies, and (3) a final day reserved for presentations of applied ethnobiological projects and discussions of the potential of ethnobiological research for the improvement of world conditions. Organized symposia are invited. For additional information please write: Prof. Dr. Darrell Addison Posey, Coordinator, Laboratorio de Etnobiologia, Largo dos Amores, 21, Universidade Federal do Maranhao, 65,000 Sao Luiz, Maranhao (Brazil) or phone 098-221-1796.

**Celestial Seasonings Laboratory** requests assistance in building a collection of herbarium voucher specimens and seeds. They are most interested in plants used in teas but are interested also in expanding their herbarium collections of toxic plants that may be adulterants in teas and in other economically valuable plants. For information contact Trish Flaster, Curator, at the Laboratory, 1780 55th St., Boulder, CO 80301, or call (303) 449-3779.

### ETHNOBIOLOGY in the NEWS

#### Gentians outlawed in Tennessee:

The Tennessee House voted 95 to 0 this past February to make it a misdemeanor to deliver, sell, or possess on school grounds the seeds of *Gentiana lutea*, equated in the legislation with "jimson weed." Not so, says Nashville botanist Milo Guthrie. The Latin designation for jimson weed is *Datura stramonium*. What the bill bans is a harmless plant bearing yellow flowers that grows in the Alps and Pyrenees. The legislature wanted to outlaw jimson weed seeds because chewing them produces a hallucinogenic effect and has made several Nashville students ill recently. The bill's sponsor, State Rep. Shelby Rhinehart, said it was drafted by the legislature's legal staff and can be fixed by the state Senate. "I just told them to outlaw jimson weed. I didn't tell them to put that Latin in there," he said. (Adapted from an AP report in the *Washington Post* on 17 February 1986.)

Robert Bye, who sent the clipping, suggests that the confusion may have arisen from a phonological conflation of "jimson" with "gentian" in the local dialect. Bye recommends that the lawmakers consult G. A. Mead's 1970 note "On the Improper Usage of Common Names when Giving Botanical Data," *American Antiquity* 35:108-109.

#### Are Fungi the Stradivari Violin's Secret Ingredient?

A Seattle P.I. Science Brief this spring reported that the secret of the pure tone of Stradavari violins may be due to the effect of a microscopic fungus that grows within the cells of the wood used to make these classic instruments. Microscopic examinations of the samples showed that traces of fungi—which could have grown only through water immersion—had altered the shape of the wood cells, according to Joseph Nagyvary, Texas A&M professor of biophysics and biochemistry. Water fungi eat gummy material in the wood and make it lighter and drier, he said. They also force the cells to separate and loosen up. Nagyvary traveled to Europe and examined old shipping records stored in villages and monasteries. The records showed that logs had been sent downstream along the rivers leading from the Tyrolean Alps, where most of the wood was cut, to the Italian towns where the instruments were made.

#### Haitian Pig Roast:

A. Oppenheimer reports from Port-au-Prince (Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* of 15 June 1986) that peasants are protesting the consequences of a \$22 million joint U.S.-Haitian program put into effect in 1984 to improve Haitian pig herds. Under the direction of the International Institute of Agricultural Cooperation Haiti's 1.2 million pig popula-

tion was exterminated in 1984 to be replaced by U.S.-bred pigs. Western experts had characterized the Haitian pigs as "a degenerate species (*sic*), a pig that hadn't been properly fed in 100 generations," a long-legged breed that "roamed freely" and subsisted on "orange peels, mango seeds, and garbage." These pigs were infected with African swine fever. The new breed of pigs, however, requires imported feed, concrete-floored stalls, expensive vaccines, and is too short of leg to walk to market. Critics of the program argue that the peasants, who constitute 70% of Haiti's population, traditionally relied on pigs as an investment, a way of saving for their children's education. The delicate new breed cannot be properly cared for and often dies prematurely, forcing Haiti's impoverished farmers to sell their land.

#### **Zapotec and High Tech:**

The *Mexico City News* of 27 January 1986 carried an account of Gary Martin's efforts in collaboration with local herbalists in Oaxaca, Mexico, to establish demonstration medicinal herb gardens and medicinal herb "libraries" in rural village centers, using a micro-computer to collate information on medicinal applications of Oaxaca's some 4000 plant species by indigenous curers. For further information contact Martin at G.A.D.E., A.C., Apartado Postal 379, 68000 Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico.

### **GRUPO ETNOBOTANICO LATINO AMERICANO (GELA) CHARTERED**

During the Fourth Latin American Botanical Congress, which was celebrated in Medellin, Colombia, from June 29 to July 4, 1986, the "Grupo Etnobotanico Latino Americano" (GELA) was chartered as a section of the Latin American Botanical Association. This council consists of one representative from each country in Latin America and one from the United States, including its coordinating committee. Mexico City, D.F., is the seat of the first coordinating committee, which is chaired by Javier Caballero, with Victor Manuel Toledo, Monserrat Gispert, Arturo Gómez-Pompa and Armando Contreras as members. The representatives from each of the other countries, at this point, include Anthony Anderson (Brasil), Eduino Carbono (Colombia), Sonia Lagos (Honduras), David Diaz-Miranda and Maximina Monasterio (Venezuela), Gary Martin and Arturo Gómez-Pompa (USA).

The principal function of GELA is to promote scientific exchange between different researchers who are actively working in the field of ethnobotany. This council will use the *Bulletin of the Latin American Botanical Association* as its medium of information dissemination.

The primary tasks of the Coordinating Committee of GELA are the following:

1. Form a directory of ethnobotanists from Latin America, the U.S. and other parts of the world, who are active in researching this topic. To move toward this goal, it will soon distribute a registration form to be entered into a computerized data base.
2. Form a bibliographic clearinghouse of publications by those researchers included in the directory, to be placed in the care of the Secretary of the Library of the Mexican Botanical Society. This library is actually located within the facilities of the Botanical Garden of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. This collection will be available to researchers of any country, via a photocopying service.
3. Promote the organization of a meeting of Latin American ethnobotanists just prior to the celebration of the next Latin American Botanical Congress. This meeting will be celebrated in Mexico in 1988.

For more information of GELA, write to: Javier Caballero, Jardín Botánico, UNAM, Ciudad Universitaria, Coyoacan 04510 México D.F. [Translated by Gary Nabhan].

Each spring semester the San Diego Natural History Museum and the Museum of Man jointly sponsor a one-day ethnobiology seminar honoring the late Dr. Raymond M. Gilmore (see *J. Ethnobiol.* 4:97-99, 1984). The first, in 1985, featured Dr. Johannes Wilbert on the cosmology of the Warao Indians of Venezuela. The following year Dr. Thomas R. Van Devender spoke on changes in climate and Sonoran Desert vegetation during the last 20 thousand years based on his studies of packrat middens.

Our next seminar, scheduled for Saturday, 7 February 1987, at the Natural History Museum, will be presented by a panel actively researching *Cucurbita* spp. (pumpkins and squash). Dr. Thomas W. Whitaker, Ms. Laura Merrick, and Dr. Gary Nabhan will present archaeological, ethnographic, and genetic aspects of this segment of the traditional New World corn-beans-squash trinity.

## Society of Ethnobiology 1987 Annual Meeting Notice

The 10th Annual Meeting  
of the  
Society of Ethnobiology  
will be held on  
March 5-8, 1987  
at the  
Florida State Museum  
University of Florida

Please see  
News & Comments  
on page 225 for details