

Introduction and Dedication

Knowledge of species diversity and distribution of fungi in the neotropics is sparse compared to information available on nearly all animal and plant groups. Consequently, the role that mycology can play in the vital discussions on tropical diversity and biology is weakened.

Several ongoing studies are now in place that are directly addressing this problem. For example, sufficient data are now available to begin assessing the diversity and distribution of holobasidiomycetous fungi in Costa Rica and Colombia. Both countries rank among the top twenty countries worldwide in plant and animal biodiversity due in large part to the wide variety of topology and rainfall.

The papers in this volume focus on work being done by an international group of mycologists in Costa Rica and Colombia and cover a variety of taxa.

Many of the manuscripts in this volume were modified from papers delivered by the authors as part of a symposium organized by G.M. Mueller, R.E. Halling and C. Ovrebo at the 5th International Mycological Congress held in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1994. Abstracts for these papers were distributed as part of the Congress proceedings.

Authors in that symposium were asked to address the following issues: a) an overview of what is currently known regarding the diversity and distribution of the group under discussion, b) estimates about how well the group is known for Costa Rica and/or Colombia in particular and the neotropics in general, and c) comparisons of its estimated neotropical diversity and composition to the temperate mycota..

The National Science Foundation and the Office of Forestry, Environment and Natural Resources, Bureau of Science and Technology of the U.S. Agency for International Development (DEB-9300798, awarded to G.M. Mueller and R.E. Halling) provided financial support for this special volume.

This volume is dedicated to Rolf Singer. Dr. Singer's pioneering and extensive work in the neotropics, including Costa Rica and Colombia, set the stage for modern systematic research on macrofungi in neotropical countries. He started his work on Costa Rica fungi in 1975 at the invitation of Luis Diego Gomez, and this work was the major focus of his activities during the ensuing 19 years. His death in 1994 at age 87 came before he was able to complete the ongoing treatment of the Agaricales of Costa Rica. His vast knowledge and insights are deeply missed.

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