

Project Update: July 2008

In order to characterize the former distribution of the climber species of interest and to locate potential sites of present populations, we revised all specimens of these species in the two oldest and largest herbaria in Central and Northern Argentina, in Córdoba and Tucumán. On the basis of this and other information, we realized between February and June about 20 field trips to different areas. At every site where a population of a target species was found, we recorded latitude, longitude and altitude (with GPS), ecological conditions at the site and status of the population. If ripe fruits were present, we collected a sample of seeds; otherwise we returned in a later trip to collect seeds. We found populations of 14 rare or threatened climber species. For some species (e.g. *Dolichandra cynanchoides*, *Clitoria cordobensis*, *Mitostigma tomentosa*), we were able to collect multiple accessions and in some cases abundant quantity of seeds, that are sufficient for carrying out the planned germination experiments. However, of other species (e.g. *Morrenia stuckertiana*) only a few plants and no fruits could be found, indicating a more fragile conservation status.

The most exciting result so far was the rediscovery of *Mandevilla grata* Woodson, a species known only from two specimens collected in 1922 and 1923 near Tucumán city and never recorded again. In a trip to the area in March 2008 we realized that the original collection sites are now within the urban zone of the city. However, exploring one of the last remaining fragments of forest outside the city, we found a few plants with flowers identical to those of the type specimen of *Mandevilla grata*, within a population of *Mandevilla pentlandiana*. A population of very similar plants was found a few years ago in a site in the Córdoba Sierras, mixed with populations of both *M. pentlandiana* and *M. laxa*. We marked in February individual flowering plants of the different taxa and forms in this site and returned in May to sample seeds. *M. grata* has floral characteristics intermediate between the other two species and may be a product of natural hybridization and introgression between them, in certain conditions.

