

PALM NEWS

A recent thesis submitted by M.I. Ojeda García of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, **examines the seed dispersal of two common Amazonian palms, *Oenocarpus bataua* and *Mauritia flexuosa***. She examined both primary and secondary seed dispersal using direct observations and camera traps and found 52 animal species associated with *O. bataua*, 22 of which were seed dispersers. For *M. flexuosa*, she found 49 species of animals, of which 18 were dispersers. The White Capuchin Monkey (*Cebus albifrons*) was the most common primary disperser of *O. bataua*, while the Red Bellied Macaw (*Orthopsittaca manilata*) was the most common for *M. flexuosa*. The most common secondary dispersers were Green Acouchi (*Myoprocta pratti*) for *O. bataua* and the Black Agouti (*Dasyprocta fuliginosa*) and Lowland Paca (*Cuniculus paca*) for *M. flexuosa*. Most surprisingly, there is only 18% overall similarity between the dispersers of the two palms. These findings reinforce the critical importance of palms in the ecosystems in which they occur.



We are saddened to learn of **the deaths of two major researchers in the field of diseases of coconuts and other palms**. In October 2015 the coconut specialist Dave Romney died, aged 86. He played a crucial role, particularly in Jamaica, in the establishment of strategies to combat lethal yellowing disease of coconuts and in the redevelopment of coconut plantations after the devastation caused by the disease. In May 2016, the plant pathologist Karl Maramorosch died, aged 101. He was an early investigator into coconut lethal yellowing as well as *cadang cadang* and the diseases of palms generally. He was the author or coauthor of more than 800 research papers with major interests in comparative virology, invertebrate cell culture, parasitology, diseases caused by spirochetes, viroids, phytoplasmas and spiroplasmas.

The city of Phoenix, Arizona, has found an **innovative way of dealing with the tens of thousands of palm leaves that are disposed of every year** by residents. The leaves of *Phoenix* species are too fibrous and spiny to mulch with other green waste, and they take decades to biodegrade in the desert climate of Phoenix. About 34,000 tons go into the local landfill each year. The city has contracted with Palm Silage Inc., of Thermal, California, a company that uses palm leaves to make a pelletized feed for cows, horses, chickens and pigs. The feed, which also incorporates dates as a sweetener, is as nutritious as medium-grade hay.