Plant biodiversity in the new millennium faces an uncertain future resulting from unplanned exploitation of and damage to the natural resources that also brings about large scale deterioration in the environment. Bose Institute, Kolkata, India will host an international symposium on “Plant Biodiversity: Conservation and Evaluation” on 17-20 December 2002. The scientific session will address issues of exploration and benefit sharing; germplasm conservation; evaluation of plant genetic resource for useful secondary metabolites; genome analysis, molecular markers and bioprospecting for useful genes; biotechnological approaches; bio-informatics for database development; and strategy and action plan for biodiversity conservation in West Bengal.

Eminent scientists from India and abroad, frontline academics, policy makers, NGOs, plant biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries will participate and interact at this symposium. Dr. M. S. Swaminathan will inaugurate the symposium. Interested scientists, scholars, agriculturists, environmentalists are invited to participate. Presentations will include invited lectures and contributed papers mainly as posters.

For more information, contact Swati Sen-Mandi, Organizing Secretary, Department of Botany, Bose Institute, 93/1, A.P.C. Road, Kolkata 700 009, India; Tel: 91-33-350-6619/2402/2403 Ext. 215; Fax: 91-33-350-6790; E-mail: senmandi@bosemain.boseinst.ac.in.

New Publications

Medicinal plants are important natural resources and play a vital role in the maintenance of human health throughout the world, particularly in remote mountainous areas. They are of critical importance in poor communities where even relatively cheap western medicines remain prohibitively expensive. Knowledge of medicinal plants may be locally known and their efficacy is trusted and tested based on a long history of use. “Traditional Knowledge on Herbs and Medicinal Plants in Hindu Kush Himalayan Region of District Chitral, Pakistan,” by Aziz Ali, examines the uses, knowledge, and conservation practices of medicinal plants in Northern Pakistan. Available from the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), the report provides traditional knowledge of 38 plant species. Specific objectives of the study include providing information of the traditional uses of medical plants; encouraging and empowering local people through research and scientific assessment; disseminating local knowledge to planners who are directly or indirectly involved with biodiversity conservation and management; and, discovering plants that may have possible market application, beyond the realm of the local. To receive a copy of the report, contact Aziz Ali at azizalicharun@yahoo.com.
Information Highway Hi-Lites

World Atlas of Biodiversity <http://stort.unep-wcmc.org/imaps/gb2002/book/viewer.htm> is an outstanding new Web site from the United Nations Environment Programmes World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC). Like other GIS-based programs, the features of this Web site can be useful in demonstrating spatial patterns of environmental problems. Users can choose from dozens of map layers (derived from biodiversity and related data) to superimpose on geographical maps of the planet on a global, regional, or even local scale. Manipulating the maps is relatively straightforward. For example, to explore the correlation between human population density and bird extinctions in North America, drag a box around the continent, select Human Population Density and Bird Extinctions from the map layer menu, and then click Refresh Map. One does not have to be familiar with GIS programs to use this Web site, but a quick look at the Help page should clarify any confusion regarding the site’s toolbar icons or other features.

- from the NSDL Scout Report for the Life Sciences
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http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/

Scientists from the Hawaii Biological Survey and Bishop Museum provide the online “Guidebook of Introduced Marine Species in Hawaii” <http://www2.bishopmuseum.org/HBS/invertguide/index.htm>. Although brief, the guide focuses on the most common introduced species with the hope that it will educate individuals about the threats posed by introduced species and encourage them to report occurrences of other unknown species. The Invertebrates section can be navigated through a species list of scientific names, or by viewing groups of photos. Each species has a page that includes description and habitat information, as well as photos of other similar organisms. Not as easy to navigate, the Algae section is hosted by the University of Hawaii. The entire Invertebrate section or individual species pages can be downloaded in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format.

- from the Scout Report

Current Literature


Ejmaes, R., Aude, E., Nygaard, B., and Münier, B. 2002. Pre-


Müssner, R., and Plachter, H. 2002. Methodological standards...


