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Smithsonian to Host Pollen Specialists at Annual Meeting in Panama: American Association of Stratigraphic Palynologists Sept. 8-12

Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christie and John McClane from “Die Hard” would be fascinated by presentations at the 40th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Stratigraphic Palynologists to be held at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama City, Panama, Sept. 8-12. The meeting will be hosted by STRI staff scientist and AASP President Carlos Jaramillo.

Palynology is the analysis of organic-walled plant remains, especially pollen, and includes marine organisms, such as dinoflagellates. Why analyze plant remains? They provide clues for scientific sleuths—from determining the site of a murder to the treatment of hay fever to the discovery of new sources of oil. Pollen grains preserved in rocks reveal past climate change. Pollination (plant sex) is essential for crop production. Pollen in archaeological remains sheds light on the origins of agriculture and human diets in the past.

Attendees will learn about novel uses of plant remains to discover sources of oil and gas. New information about the history of vegetation in the Amazon basin will be explored during two symposia. “Pollen Morphology and Phylogeny,” organized by David M. Jarzen, senior biologist and collections manager for paleobotany and palynology at the Florida Museum of Natural History, will be held Monday, Sept. 10, at 10:30 a.m. “Tropical Pollen and Spores: Tracking Vegetation Dynamics of the Neotropics during the Cenozoic,” organized by Vladimir Torres, biostratigrapher at Ecopetrol in Colombia, is scheduled for Wednesday, September 12, at 8:30 a.m..

A free, half-day workshop Sunday, Sept. 9 will give participants hands-on experience in analytical techniques for palynological analysis using the free share program, “R for Statistical Computing.”

Highlights of the meeting will be published in the journal *Palynology*. Meeting sponsors include BP, Conoco, Chevron, Ecopetrol, Exxon and Statoil.

The American Association of Stratigraphic Palynologists was founded in 1967 “to promote the science of palynology, especially as it relates to stratigraphic applications and biostratigraphy (the layering of biological remains); to foster the spirit of scientific research among its members; and to disseminate information relating to palynology.”

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, headquartered in Panama City, Panama, is a unit of the Smithsonian Institution. The Institute furthers the understanding of tropical nature and its importance to human welfare, trains students to conduct research in the tropics and promotes conservation by increasing public awareness of the beauty and importance of tropical ecosystems.

American Association of Stratigraphic Palynologists Web site: <http://www.palynology.org/>.

AASP meeting Web site: <http://striweb.si.edu/aasp07/program.html>

Note to Editors: Alfred Traverse, one of the founders of palynology, will be at the meeting. For more information about Traverse, visit <http://www.palynology.org/historytraverse.html>.

Photos:

Alchornea sp pollen.jpg

Asteraceae pollen.jpg

