

The second Expedition to the Azariamas Canyon

Leslie Cayola led this expedition with the participation and collaboration of thesis students Consuelo Campos and Abraham Poma. Our guides were Ramiro Jove, Hugo Ubano, and Mildred Sevillanos was our cook. The expedition lasted 27 days from September 26 to October 22, 2005.

Results

We installed 16 non permanent plots each 0.1 ha in size (Table 1). The plots were located either in the valley bottom, on the slopes or on the ridgeline. We measured 6532 trunks and made 275 vouchers documenting the inventories (Table 2).

Plot no.	Topographic location	Coordinates	Elevation (m)	No. of stems
1	Valley bottom	14°13'58.4"S 68°31'34.6"W	679	404
2	Valley bottom	14°14'28.5"S 68°31'47.7"W	667	375
3	Ridgeline	14°13'14.8"S 68°31'16.7"W	767	327
4	Slope w. SW exposure	14°14'45.9"S 68°31'47.2"W	810	273
5	Ridgeline	14°13'52.6"S 68°32'02.8"W	902	381
6	Slope w. NW exposure	14°14'27.2"S 68°32'17.9"W	699	676
7	Valley bottom	14°15'27.6"S 68°31'55.7"W	651	351
8	Slope w. NE exposure	14°13'48.3"S 68°32'33.7"W	963	276
9	Slope w. SW exposure	14°14'23.9"S 68°32'49.4"W	678	416
10	Valley bottom	14°12'46.5"S 68°30'39.8"W	660	297
11	Valley bottom	14°13'50.7"S 68°49'36.6"W	698	436
12	Ridgeline	14°08'58.8"S 68°49'52.3"W	812	623
13	Ridgeline	14°15'08.7"S 68°31'17.1"W	1005	392
14	Ridgeline	14°15'11.1"S 68°31'32.3"W	972	520
15	Slope w. NE exposure	14°13'53.6"S 68°31'52.1"W	827	373
16	Slope w. NW exposure	14°14'33.6"S 68°31'33.3"W	767	412

Participants	# collections
Leslie Cayola P.	265
Consuelo Campos V.	3
Abraham Poma Ch.	7

Notes from the expedition

We arrived in Azariamas without problems, but the trip to our pre-selected campsite took longer than anticipated. It was a full three hours walking from Azariamas. Our campsite was beautifully located on the banks of the Tuichi at the entrance to the canyon of Azariamas, the canyon was created by the Tuichi river cutting through the low mountain ridge Serrania de Azariamas.

The canyon forms a natural border between the dry forest and the much wetter forest on the northern side of the



View of Azariamas Canyon cutting through the Serranía de Azariamas (L. Cayola).

canyon. On the other side humid lowland rain forest is found in the bottom of the valley all the way to San José de Uchupiamonos, while smaller patches of dry forest is only seen on the steepest slopes where drainage is very rapid. The objective of the trip was to gain a better understanding and measurements of the transition between the dry and wet forest.

The forest at this locality is low, the emergent trees does not reach 25 m. The mixture and change in the vegetation between rain forest and dry forest is obvious and principally found in the bottom of the valley and up some of the slopes. One of the key species of lowland rain forest is *Syagrus sancona* (Arecaceae), here found mixed in with dry forest elements in the bottom of the valley. On the other hand, *Anadenanthera colubrina* (Fabaceae) a key species of the dry forests and the Pleistocene arch, was less frequent than in other nearby localities such as Yarimita and Pintata. We found *Erythrochiton fallax* (Rutaceae) frequently in the valley bottom plots, while *Oxandra espintana* (Annonaceae) was more frequent in on the slopes. Our entrance in the beginning of the rainy season was rewarded by several species in flower that we had not seen before such as *Pseudananas sagenarius* (Bromeliaceae), *Capparis coimbrana* Capparidaceae), *Juanulloa* sp. (Solanaceae), *Cissus camiriensis*. (Vitaceae) and *Amaryllis* sp. (Amaryllidaceae). The most diverse families in the plots were Fabaceae, Polygonaceae, Erythroxylaceae, Myrtaceae, and Rutaceae.



Dry forest on the steepest slopes of Serranía de Azariamas (L. Cayola).



Juanulloa sp., top left. Fruits of *Capparis coimbrana*, top middle. Fruits of *Cissus camiriensis*, bottom left. *Pseudananas sagenarius*, bottom middle. *Hippeastrum* sp., right. (L. Cayola).

The highest ridges above the valley are not covered by forest but rather by grassland, where according to the people in Azariamas both puma and spectacled bears can be found. The lower lying ridges are, however, covered by forests, the majority of these ridges have rocky outcrops, are very steep, and have very shallow soil formations.

We were surprised and concerned by finding several large clearings in the forest near the Tuichi river, apparently established to outline the road connecting Apolo and Ixiamas. From our observations it appears that the road will be build, despite the risk it will inflict on the national park, and more important it will be build, not as publicly announced, in the NAIM Madidi (buffer zone) but inside the park proper.

In the days we spent at the canyon we observed howler monkeys (*Alouatta* spp.), military macaw (*Ara militaris*), deer (*Mazama* sp.) and several bird eggs. We heard the Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) and collared peccary (Pecari tajacu) regularly, but never saw any of them. On the less pleasant front we had two snake encounters, both the pucarara and the jampatupalli are venomous. The pucarara (*Lachesis muta*, bush master), is very territorial and attach almost anything that enter its territory. The jampatupalli, its name translates as the “back of the toad,” expand



Rocky outcrops on Cerro Jauk'antista, left. Pucarara, above. Jampatupalli, right. (L. Cayola).

its neck to appear larger than it really is — it surprised us in camp. The insects that mostly called our attention were the rococos, this sandfly is the main vector of Leishmaniasis. We have in the past had several people come down with Leishmaniasis, which is obligate intracellular protozoa that attach the skin and cartilage resulting in large wounds that will not heal. We were justly worried about the rococos, but so far none have experienced any symptoms. When talking about parasites; we also noted a cicada infested with fungi (*Massospora*, Zygomycota, identification T. Læssøe), the fruiting bodies already protruding over most of its abdomen.

As already mentioned we were in the beginning of the rainy season. The Tuichi river impressed us with its rapidly growing volume, it kept growing in size and speed as the rains intensified. Our guides went fishing, that is the local tradition when the river rises, the fish concentrate in certain places where the current is less strong, and thanks to the abilities of our guides we had the pleasure of trying the sábalo (*Prochilodus* sp.). The fish was cooked on our stove build by Mildred, our cook.



Sabalo (*Prochilodus* sp.), top. Earthen stove, right. (L. Cayola).

