

system of protected areas. *Araucaria* forests exist in a dynamic relationship with fire, climate and human land uses such as grazing. Private protected areas in Chile offer a lot of flexibility in terms of what they are called, and how and for what purposes they are managed. One category is an 'area of high conservation value', and forest certification organizations recognize and reward forest owners who protect such areas. Around 70% of the property on which the site visited by Muir is located is native forest, and 30% is plantations of non-native species, mainly *Eucalyptus*. A group of nature and ecotourism operators in Malalcahuello, Chile, is interested in the Muir site being opened for limited access so that it can be added to one of the existing national Rutas Patrimoniales (Heritage Routes) in the Araucanía Region, and the National Tourism Service of Chile, SERNATUR, supports this idea.

The second day of the workshop involved a visit to the site where Muir camped and sketched. His sketches provide a unique record of an *Araucaria* forest at an identifiable site a century ago, and thus a baseline for understanding a century of forest change in the region. The *Araucaria* forest Muir sketched consisted of large old trees with an open understorey, probably the result of a stand-replacing fire at least several decades before his visit. We found old fire scars on several of the biggest *Araucaria* at the site, including one of the trees Muir sketched. After 1911 it seems likely that there was little or no fire in this area, indicated by the multi-aged stand of younger *Araucaria* now growing there, but grazing must have been intense to suppress the regeneration of *Nothofagus* species, the seedlings of which are eaten by cattle.

Following the workshop we are continuing to discuss options for a formal conservation agreement for the site with the private forestry company and other stakeholders. We are planning further studies to understand the fire history and forest dynamics that led to the current forest condition at the site, and we are also working on a plan for limited and regulated access so that local ecotourism operators can start marketing trips to the site to groups of specialized clients.

BRUCE A. BYERS *Bruce Byers Consulting, Falls Church, Virginia, USA. E-mail [bruce.byers@verizon.net](mailto:bruce.byers@verizon.net)*

JONATHAN BYERS *Alpine of the Americas Project, El Portal, California, USA*

MAURO E. GONZALEZ *Facultad de Ciencias Forestales y Recursos Naturales, Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia, Chile*

ANÍBAL PAUCHARD *Universidad de Concepción–Facultad de Ciencias Forestales, Concepción, Chile*

SERGIO PÉREZ *Suizandina Lodge, Malalcahuello, Chile*

## A 90-year-old mystery solved: a potentially new species of owl from Príncipe

In a recent expedition to a remote rainforest on the island of Príncipe, in the Gulf of Guinea, an apparently undescribed species of scops owl was observed. The owl appears to have vocalizations unlike any known scops owl. The news was first announced at an international conference on island biology in the Azores in July 2016.

Early explorers to Príncipe reported in 1928 that inhabitants of the island indicated the presence of a small and rare owl species; however, despite several expeditions, researchers failed to find it. In 1998 one of us (M. Melo) collected testimonials of local parrot trappers, who described seeing a scops-owl like bird in tree holes in the rainforest, and later reported that in the most remote forests one could hear unknown calls within the frequency range of scops owl calls (Melo & Dallimer, 2009, *Malimbus*, 31, 109–115).

In July 2016 P. Verbelen & F. Spina organized an expedition to Príncipe in search of the presumed owl. During 5 days in the southern rainforests the unidentified calls, from high in the forest canopy, were heard at various locations. The owl was lured into view, and was photographed and recorded at close range when an individual descended from the canopy in response to playback of its own recorded calls. A formal description of the Príncipe scops owl is now in preparation.

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe harbour 28 endemic bird species (29 including the new owl species) and have thus been dubbed the African Galapagos and the lost Eden of Africa. The rainforests on the islands are a global priority for biodiversity conservation, especially for birds, and the Natural Park of São Tomé and Príncipe is considered an irreplaceable protected area. In 2016 Fauna & Flora International joined forces with the Príncipe Trust Foundation to enhance the conservation of the island's outstanding biodiversity. A collaboration agreement was signed, a conservation strategy defined and two conservation managers seconded to the Foundation.

PHILIPPE VERBELEN *Ghent, Belgium*

MARTIM MELO *Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources, Porto University, Lisbon, Portugal*

GEORGE SANGSTER *Department of Bioinformatics and Genetics, Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm, Sweden*

FELIPE SPINA *Príncipe Trust Foundation and Fauna & Flora International, São Tomé and Príncipe*  
E-mail [felipe.spina@fauna-flora.org](mailto:felipe.spina@fauna-flora.org)