

Restoring Forests, Improving Quality of Life



Blair Hedges

Carnell Professor and Director, Center for Biodiversity



CURRENT RESEARCH

Saving Haiti's environment and biodiversity

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas and its people have suffered greatly from disease epidemics, poverty, and the 2010 earthquake. However, few people know that Haiti is also moving towards being the first country of significant size to undergo a full collapse of its terrestrial biodiversity--in other words, a mass extinction, with its natural forest cover being only 1% of its original extent. If this happens, the resulting environmental damage that will affect water and energy resources will lead to even more human suffering. Dr. Blair Hedges, of Temple University, studies the dynamics of deforestation and loss of biodiversity so that he and his team can devise a way to slow or stop extinction from occurring in Haiti and elsewhere. In addition to assisting Haiti, Dr. Hedges' results will be relevant and useful for understanding and preventing mass extinctions in other countries that are similar to Haiti, such as those in East Africa and the Congo River Basin.

Most of the world's biodiversity, which includes animals, plants, fungi, and microbes, originally blanketed the Earth's land surface. The removal of forests has not only threatened the survival of species on land, but it has caused soils to wash out to oceans, killing coral reefs and fishes. In turn, in the absence of soils and trees that normally slow down the flow of water, massive flooding occurs when it rains, and desert conditions are present when it is not raining, both of which drastically affect local human populations that require water for drinking and agriculture. Dr. Hedges and his team therefore travel to remote parts of Haiti, by helicopter, and survey biodiversity in the last 1% of forests. They estimate that there are at least...

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AFFILIATION



Temple University of the Commonwealth

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in Zoology 1988, University of Maryland
- B.S. in Biology 1981, George Mason University

AWARDS

- Elected Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2009
- Science News of the Year, Life, Science News Magazine, 2008
- Faculty Scholar Medal, Pennsylvania State University, 2011
- Garrett Lectureship in the History of Cartography, University of Texas, 2012
- Darwin Lecture (Natural History Museum, London), 2001

RESEARCH AREAS

Environment, Ecology, Natural Disasters / Emergency, Oceanic

FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will support the continued research of Dr. Blair Hedges, of Temple University, which aims to prevent mass extinction in Haiti. Donations will support the necessary \$650K required for travel, personnel, and materials. In choosing to donate, you will play a role in protecting biodiversity and identifying areas in the greatest need of protection.