


1997

The Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*): an international program to assess, manage and restore biodiversity

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Recommended Citation

(1997) "The Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*): an international program to assess, manage and restore biodiversity," *Rapa Nui Journal: Journal of the Easter Island Foundation*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol11/iss1/9>

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nium risk to humans. He stated that something fell in that area, but it is not known if it was the plutonium capsule or only a piece of the probe.

The following day it was reported that a B-707 Condor, an electronic vigilance plane of the Air Force, was headed for the zone where the probe fell. This report stated that a portion of the probe landed some 1,255 nautical miles northwest of Santiago at latitude 31 South, longitude 93 03 West.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 21 November 1996

Editor's note: other latitudes and longitudes have been stated in Chilean papers, and none are quite the same as either of the above. There was also a report that a piece of the probe landed off the coast of Peru or maybe in the desert of Northern Chile.

The President of the Court of Appeals in Valparaíso, Manuel Silva Ibáñez, is urging the construction of a prison on Easter Island, saying that the project should be given a high priority and professional prison guards should be stationed there. He noted that now the *carabineros* guard the jail, something that they are not trained for nor normally expected to do.

The current conditions are deplorable. The regular jail annex is more than 70 years old, there is no section for women prisoners, and it is located inside the area where the *carabineros* live with their families.

In 1996, Silva Ibáñez stated that 180 criminal cases and 230 civil cases were handled by the local court; 71 involved minors, 58 cases involved inebriation, and there were 212 minor police actions (presumably traffic tickets). The most common arrests are for robberies and fights resulting in injuries.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 13 December 1996

The Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*): an international program to assess, manage and restore biodiversity

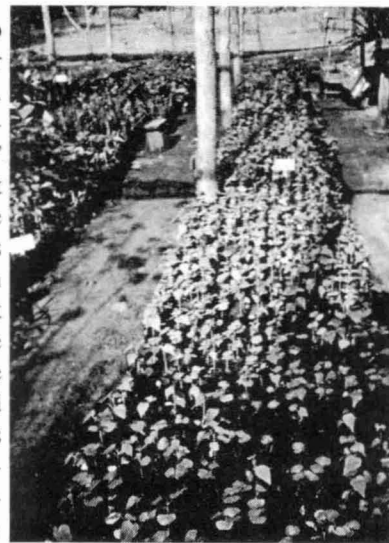
Alistair Culham, Wolfram Lobin, Mike Mauder, Catherine Orliac and Georg Zizka

The Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*) is a species of the leguminosae, Faboidcae, endemic to Easter Island. The history of this treelet by now has become quite well known: For decades (since the beginning of this century), there probably remained only one living plant on Easter Island. This last specimen disappeared in the 60s, and the species seemed to have become extinct. By chance, 5 plants survived in the Botanical Gardens of Göteborg, Viña del Mar and Bonn.

The international Toromiro Management Group was founded to combine various fields of expertise and research to prepare the reintroduction of the Toromiro to Easter Island and—if possible—assure its future survival in combination with conservation and restoration of the remaining idiochorous flora.

The few surviving specimens were propagated by various methods and, in the first step, distributed to additional Botanical Gardens to assure the species' survival. The specimens were successfully propagated by seeds, cuttings and in vitro. After few unsuccessful attempts in the past, 170 offspring

were brought back to Easter Island in 1995 for experimental plantation. With the recent upcoming of other "Toromiros" of doubtful origin, a fast and absolutely reliable identification of species and genotype became an urgent need. The best methods to identify the specimens—even to the single clones—turned out to be DNA studies (RAPD and Microsatellite). For future management of as high genetic variety as possible, the documentation of the represented genotypes is of vital importance for propagation and reintroduction.



The CONAF plant nursery at Mataverí, Easter Island (photo: José Miguel Ramírez)

Of importance for the intended reintroduction has been the production of a flora of Flowering Plants and investigation of its changes through Man as well as wood-anatomical and archaeobotanical studies of subfossil plant remains to reconstruct the former flora and vegetation of the island. Important information was also taken from palynological investigations by John Flenley and collaborators.

With the data and the plant material in hand, for the future survival of the Toromiro and of the few other remaining endemic and idiochorous species of the island, the TMG is supporting the setting up of a Botanical Garden on Easter Island. This garden could also be used to collect and conserve the old local cultivars of plants used by the islanders and thus contribute to education and agronomy of the Island.

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

The second technical mission to Orongo, which WMF had tentatively scheduled for the past month of October, had to be delayed in order to resolve technical and logistic problems.

The objective of this second mission is to determine the exact location of the sound rock front into which the retaining wall has to be anchored. The construction of the retaining wall along the sea-side and the reconstruction of the original platform around the Mata Ngarau sacred precinct were the solution proposed for the stabilization of this site by the first WMF mission to Orongo in 1995 (1, 2). This mission was carried out by Profs Vouvé and Clement of the University of Bordeaux I, with the collaboration of Prof. Marchetti of the University of Chile.

To determine the sound rock front behind the weathered exposed basalt, analysis of drillings taken at the site are necessary. These drillings require equipment sufficiently powerful to bore deep enough without inducing any damage to the site. The identification of such equipment (drilling