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Research Group in Orchids, Ecology and Plant Systematics: an inter-institutional initiative for plant conservation and sustainable use in south-west Colombia

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The Research Group in Orchids, Ecology and Plant Systematics is an alliance of researchers from several institutions in south-west Colombia dedicated to the research and sustainable management of the flora and associated ecosystems in this biodiverse region. Research activities of the group are carried out in both the biodiversity hotspots of the regions: The Chocó biogeographic region on the Colombian Pacific coast; and the Tropical Andes region. The research group was registered in the Colombian System for Science and Technology in COLCIENCIAS in 2006 and has the endorsement of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana-Cali, and the Universidad del Pacífico de Buenaventura, Colombia. That of other institutions is in process. The research lines and coordinators are as follows; however, many research projects are collaborative activities among

the different members of the group: 1. Plant Ecology (Tupac Otero); 2. Conservation Genetics & Molecular Ecology (Nicola Flanagan); 3. Diversity, Ecology and Sustainable Use of *Vanilla* (Robertulio Gonzalez); 4. Plant-Microorganism Interactions (Ana T. Mosquera-Espinosa); 5. Plant Systematics and DNA Barcoding (Philip A. Silverstone-Sopkin); 6. Pollination Biology (Marcela Cuartas-Domínguez); 7. Plant Biogeography (Guillermo Reina); 8. Orchid Conservation (Nhora Helena Ospina-Calderón). Each research line has a portfolio of projects, both completed and ongoing. Funding has been obtained at the regional, national, and international levels. Further collaborators are always welcome in order to advance knowledge of this biodiverse region and to develop successful strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of this biodiversity.

Orchids of the cloud forests of Dapa (Valle del Cauca, Colombia): research and conservation of forest treasures

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In the framework of the project “Community building for the conservation of wild orchids and annotated list of Orchidaceae in the cloud forests

of Dapa,” funded by San Diego County Orchid Society (EE.UU), several orchid inventories were conducted in remnant cloud forests from Dapa