edited by JOCELYN KAISER

Smoky Mountains All-Taxa Survey Proposed

A year after their plan to conduct the world's first all-species survey in a tropical forest fell apart, biodiversity experts are now reviving the idea—at a higher latitude. Next week, over 100 ecologists and systematists will meet in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to discuss how they might catalog every species, from black bear to wasp to fungus, in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The survey idea comes from University of Pennsylvania tropical biologist Daniel Janzen, who in 1993 spearheaded a planned $90 million effort run by the Costa Rican National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) to inventory all species in Costa Rica's Guanacaste Conservation Area. Supporters hoped the project would promote conservation and find potential new medicines, among other benefits. But the All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) died late last year after INBio decided a limited national survey geared toward sustainable development—ecotourism and the like—was more in Costa Rica's interest (*Science*, 9 May, p. 893).

Undaunted, Janzen, several colleagues, and officials at the 500,000-acre U.S. national park are planning a temperate ATBI. While the park's estimated 40,000 to 70,000 multicellular species make it only one-fourth as diverse as Guanacaste, it's one of the most species-rich temperate areas in the world, says University of Georgia insect ecologist John Pickering. And it's a lot easier to visit and work in, he adds. The survey there would help manage natural resources and educate the public, as well as yield new ecological insights, he says.

The 2-day workshop to discuss the new ATBI, dubbed "Discover Life in America," will include several Costa Rican scientists, from whom the Smokies group hopes to borrow methods for cataloging species. One key question is the the project's magnitude. While some want to seek tens of millions of dollars from Congress, others envision a less costly plan that would use students and volunteers to expand existing efforts. "There is a diversity of opinion," notes park biologist Keith Langdon.

JOHN PICKERING

Collectors' items. Insect traps last spring in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, part of a pilot project for an all-taxa survey.

U.S. Signs On to Collider Project

U.S. high-energy physicists can finally forget the trauma of the Superconducting Super Collider's demise 4 years ago. At a White House ceremony earlier this week, U.S. and European government officials signed an agreement cementing U.S. participation in the $6 billion Large Hadron Collider (LHC) project now under construction at CERN near Geneva.

Researchers around the world are anxious to use the LHC, the world's most powerful proton accelerator, to study such questions as the nature of dark matter. The project is unusual in the number of international partners, including 19 European nations and Japan, Canada, Israel, and India. But U.S. participation, which will total $531 million—nearly 10% of the project's cost—didn't come easily. Some members of Congress, especially Jim Sensenbrenner (R–WI), criticized the draft U.S.-CERN agreement this spring as too favorable for CERN. Negotiators were able to come up with a slightly modified version that won congressional support (*Science*, 23 May, p. 1190).

The politics of doing so "at times seemed much more complex than particle physics," said CERN Director-General Christopher Llewellyn Smith at the signing ceremony. He added that the project remains within budget and on schedule for a 2005 start-up.

NSF Heeds Watchdog—Selectively

Sometimes a federal agency wants to save money. And sometimes it doesn't. Take the National Science Foundation's (NSF's) reaction to the latest advice from its Inspector General (IG), an independent watchdog whose job is to make sure federal agencies spend their money wisely.

NSF officials are not happy with a recommendation in the IG's new semiannual report that they stop paying some visiting scientists much higher salaries than they would receive as federal employees (*Science*, 12 September, p. 1599). The IG says NSF could save $10.2 million over 5 years by imposing caps, changing the formula for equating 9-month academic salaries with a full year of government service, and getting universities to contribute more than the 5% they do now. NSF officials worry that the proposed changes would make it harder to attract good people as managers, so they have reacted with a time-honored response—a study of how many people would be affected.

In contrast, NSF officials have already begun to implement a suggestion from the IG to reclassify $100 million in research funds so they won't count toward NSF's mandatory 2.5% contribution to the government-wide Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. The IG says the excluded activities, which cover some education, training, and program support, don't fit the federal definition of R&D. NSF officials like the idea of shifting $2.5 million a year from SBIR—whose quality has come under fire (*Science*, 17 May 1996, p. 942)—to higher priority activities. And the IG's recommendation gives them ammunition against small-business advocates, who are fiercely protective of the program.

European Union Opens R&D Program to Americans

A new agreement allows U.S. scientists access to European Union (EU) R&D projects, which are funded to the tune of $3 billion a year. The science and technology accord, signed last week in Washington after 2 years of negotiations, opens the door to American participation in efforts ranging from materials technology to the social sciences.

Most EU projects—information technology and global change are prominent exceptions—are set up with commercial competition in mind and have excluded Europe's largest trade rival, the United States. But an increase in multinational ventures helped convince EU officials to change their policy. The agreement "should help researchers on both sides ... to work more closely in a variety of fields," says EU Council President Jacques Poos. Proposed collaborations will be reviewed by a joint consultative group that will meet regularly.

U.S. officials are delighted, although they don't expect American scientists and their colleagues at EU-funded organizations will work out a flood of joint research proposals right away. In the long run, however, White House and National Science Foundation officials say the agreement promises to strengthen academic and industrial R&D ties between the United States and EU countries.