



Maria Claudia SEGOVIA-SALCEDO

Home Country

Ecuador

Degree

PhD in Molecular Systematics

Expertise

Botany

Research Focus

Conservation Genetics and Molecular Systematics

Host University

University of Florida, United States

Fellowship Awarded

2010

Claudia Segovia-Salcedo was born the oldest of four children (she has two sisters and one brother) in Cuenca, Ecuador but spent her childhood in the capital city of Quito. She loves travelling, trekking expeditions and spending time with her two children along with reading and making jewelry. She is married to a biologist and says that for as long as she can remember she has been fascinated by living things.

Claudia obtained her bachelor's degree at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in 1996 and her Master of Science degree in environmental and plant biology at Ohio University in 2000, where she also began studying for her PhD in molecular and cell biology. In 2009 she became a PhD candidate in the biology department at the University of Florida.

In Florida she is interested in the Andean paramos – high-elevation, neo-tropical ecosystems now occupying less than two percent of the northern Andes and characterized by high biodiversity, large numbers of endemic species and isolated distribution as a result of large-scale destruction. The tree genus *Polylepis* is the dominant vegetation of the Andean paramos, but *Polylepis* forests continue to disappear at an alarming rate partly due to population growth and partly because people follow unsustainable cultural traditions such as slash-burn agriculture and shepherding exotic animals. Claudia is researching the genetic composition of *Polylepis* as an essential component of comprehensive conservation planning. Her research is among the first to use genetic divergence and uniqueness to identify areas of conservation importance in Ecuador, and she hopes it will be used in the development of reforestation programs across the Ecuadorian highlands.

When she completes her PhD Claudia plans to teach at the Army Politechnic School in Ecuador.