

Editorial

Sandra Brown (1944–2017): A Distinguished Tropical Ecologist

Ariel E. Lugo * and Grizelle González 

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, International Institute of Tropical Forestry,
Jardín Botánico Sur, 1201 Ceiba St.-Río Piedras 00926, Puerto Rico; ggonzalez@fs.fed.us

* Correspondence: alugo@fs.fed.us; Tel.: +1-787-764-7800; Fax: +1-787-766-6302

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We dedicate this Special Issue commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service—International Institute of Tropical Forestry to the late Dr. Sandra Brown.

Sandra Brown was a superb analytical scientist. Her notable contributions to the understanding of the global carbon cycle include the synthesis of ecological data from the tropics and the realization that those data were biased towards high biomass values. Her analysis of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) inventory data for the tropics led to a new biomass estimate for tropical forest that was considerably smaller than those used in global models that could not balance the carbon cycle. Dr. Brown also developed methods for estimating tropical forest biomass from inventory data, methods that were published by the FAO and are still used internationally by many researchers and government analysts. As a professor at the University of Illinois and later as Chief Scientist at Winrock International, she led and collaborated with staff to improve landscape-level visualization of carbon density data for the tropics, development of intensive inventory methods for more accurate estimates of carbon density, and use of remote sensing techniques to expand and plot carbon data to larger scales. Dr. Brown was also a wetlands scientist and contributed to the understanding of freshwater-forested wetlands functioning.

In 2014, the Institute bestowed on Dr. Brown its Conservation Award (Figure 1) in recognition of her scientific collaboration with Institute scientists and the results of such collaborations, which she summarized in her plenary talk entitled Trailblazing the Carbon Cycle of Tropical Forests from Puerto Rico, and as published in the article with the same title in this Special Issue entitled Tropical Forest Ecology and Management for the Anthropocene. The written article was her last publication after a distinguished career as a tropical ecologist. While we are saddened by her passing, we feel immensely fortunate to have had the opportunity to collaborate with her, a distinguished tropical ecologist, who shared her talents and time freely with us and with those who sought her advice.



Figure 1. Dr. Sandra Brown (center) at the 75th Anniversary of the USDA Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry. She received the Conservation Award from Dr. Jim Reeves, Deputy Chief for Research and Development (left), and Mary Wagner, Associate Chief of the USDA Forest Service (right). Also in the picture are Grizelle González (Project Leader) and Ariel E. Lugo (Director), International Institute of Tropical Forestry.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.



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