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Plant wax n-alkane biomarkers in the tropical Andes (Ecuador)

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Publication date

2020

Document Version

Other version

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Other

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Citation for published version (APA):

Teunissen van Manen, M. L. (2020). *Plant wax n-alkane biomarkers in the tropical Andes (Ecuador)*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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Acknowledgements

“Werken en feesten vormt schoone geesten” (loosely translated as “Working and partying¹ make beautiful souls”) was the life motto of prof. Hans Westerdijk. She was the first female professor of the Netherlands and she understood what many PhD students have yet to grasp when they start their project. It is perhaps one of the most important knowledge gaps (and definitely the hardest) to overcome during the four years: balance your hard work with partying². Turns out, mindfulness was already a thing in the in the early 20th century. Jokes aside, this means I have not only my supervisors, colleagues and collaborators to thank for the successful completion of the thesis -the beautification of my soul, if you will- but also my family, friends, and party peoples for keeping me dancing and sane. Obviously, by extension I should also thank the musicians for providing the beats; And the local brewers for the ales; And RuPaul for putting the sissy in our walk.

Two things make writing a thank you note at the end of a PhD thesis a terrifying endeavor: 1) this is the only section everyone reads and 2) you will inevitably forget to mention someone, especially when the list is so long³. Statistically, the chances of succeeding at this task approach zero in a way that is not unlike how deadlines approach you around the third year of a PhD project. Yet, having fully caveated away any opportunity to be held accountable for my inevitable failure, I must try.

I want to thank my fieldwork assistant and collaborators in Ecuador: Laurens, Gaby, Susana, Germán, Andrea, Andrés, the reserve owners, and everyone who joined us on the many days in the field and helped with the logistics paperwork⁴. I want to thank Pancho and Esteban in particular for your tremendous assistance and effort during fieldwork, for opening your homes to some weird Dutchies, and for your great company in Amsterdam. I also appreciate your contributions to my vocabulary with some much needed Quiteño. I hope to share many ‘bielas’ with you to celebrate the completion of the project!

I want to thank my supervisors, Will Gosling and Boris Jansen. Are there even words? It was SO great and fun to work with you. I feel blessed to have had two dedicated, compassionate

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- 1 20th century partying, meaning coming up with your own songs by the piano and a stiff drink.
 - 2 Whatever the 21st century definition of party you may have. As a full-fledged millennial my definition of a party is a brisk walk in nature, topped off with wining and dining which inadvertently morphs into an impromptu twerk session in the living room. Just an example, but dancing is a must.
 - 3 One could also argue that they are impossible to write without inevitably getting stuck in a swamp of terrible clichés. Then again, as a palaeoecologist, swampy bits are exactly where I want to be.
 - 4 The team’s accomplishments are only eclipsed by our dedication to repeatedly singing along to the only CD available in the many long car rides from and to the field.

and funny supervisors to help steer this ship. I really appreciated that we could effortlessly combine the topics of n -alkane science and the statistics of a zombie apocalypse in the same sitting. Thank you for believing in me, I could not have done this without you.

I want to thank the fellow PhD students of the ELD department, and those of the FAME department for inviting this lab rat to your lunches in the sun. Outside. Away from the hexane fumes. I thank you for the countless braincells you saved.

I want to thank my many colleagues at IBED for sharing their thoughts and coffee machine chats, while simultaneously testing the noise reduction capacity of our designer paper-thin walls. In particular I would like thank Adele, Nick, Crystal, Álvaro, Suzette, Marian, Huasheng, Xia, Caixa, Carina and Amber for providing a buzzing workspace. I will miss sharing daily life with you. I want to thank Yoshi especially for enriching all aspects of my life. You are my favorite ‘snacketje’⁵.

I want thank all my besties: Yanina, Yoshi, Myrte, Soesja, Felicja, Judith, Ana, and Faresia. Ya’llses are a fabulous bunch of weirdos (each in their own way) that celebrate my chaotic energy and make me laugh till it hurts.

I want to thank my amazing, unconventional, and creative family around the globe. Thank you for supporting me and expressing how proud you are. A special shout-out to my sister Alexandra and my mother Ans for your love and support, I feel it daily despite the geographical distance. I also want to thank my twin Meritt for being my twin⁶, for your insight, our sissy sessions, and for converting me to the gospel of critical alignment yoga.

I want to thank Meritt and Marian for being my paranympths. No worries, I’ll provide ample opportunities to fulfill your rightful paranympth duties once rona time is no more. I know the party will be amazing.

I want to thank my partner, Gijs, for being. I’m sure you still remember everything I said about the different multivariate analysis assumptions and the amplification of measurement error in descriptive statistics. You, and your loving family, are a wonderful source of lightheartedness.

To my dad, Mathijs, for engraving an inexhaustible curiosity in me and reminding us to keep dancing.

5 All credits to Will Gosling for this linguistic gem.

6 She didn’t choose this job but she really took to it. You could say she was really *born* to be a twin.

**Thank you.
Dankjewel.
Gracias.**

