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I am a graduate student through the Department of Integrative Biology, under the supervision of Dr. Sean Schoville and I started my studies at UW-Madison on the Fall of 2020. For my dissertation, I am working to understand the genomic processes behind gigantism in an earthworm group endemic to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. With the IRIS grant I was able to complete two full field seasons in the Caribbean Islands for my Dissertation research. The IRIS grant was used to cover airfare, ferry trips, shipping of samples, and housing for part of my fieldwork and allowed me to have flexibility during the Covid19 pandemic. I traveled to St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John in the Virgin Islands, the island of Puerto Rico and its municipal island of Culebra. During these trips, I was able to collect earthworms on over 255 different sites and times, becoming the most comprehensive earthworm sampling on the natural ecosystems of the archipelago. This allowed me to find multiple sites for my focal species, *Trigaster longissima*. It also aided me in finding over 30 species of earthworms, including the rediscoveries of multiple species known only from a single site (like *Estherella stuarti*, *E. toronegrensis*, *E. caudoferruginea*, *Borgesias wegei*, *B. sedecimseae*, and *T. lankesteri*, for a few examples).

In addition to finding rare native species, this award allowed me to discover at least three species of earthworms and at least seven new records of native and exotic species throughout the islands, while more samples are still being processed. The new records include native species found for the first time in St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, and new records of non-native species in all islands visited. My work includes the first earthworm sampling efforts in Culebra, PR. Thanks to the IRIS grant, I am now able to contribute to the biodiversity knowledge in this region of the Caribbean, where frequent extreme climatic events are expected to become more common due to climate change. This grant also allowed me to interact with several local community organizations in a collaborative manner, with the common goal of generating biodiversity data for their region.