Natural selection drives chemical resistance of *Datura stramonium*

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Plant resistance to herbivores involves physical and chemical plant traits that prevent/diminishes damage by herbivores and hence, may promote coevolutionary arm-races between interacting species. Although *Datura stramonium's* concentration of tropane alkaloids is under selection by leaf beetles, it is not known whether chemical defense reduces seed predation by the specialist weevil, *Trichobaris soror*, and if it is evolving by natural selection. We measured infestation by *T. soror* as well as the concentration of the plants' two main tropane alkaloids in 278 *D. stramonium* plants belonging to 31 populations in central Mexico. We assessed whether the seed predator exerted preferences on the levels of both alkaloids and whether they affect plant fitness. Results show great variation across populations in the concentration of scopolamine and atropine in both leaves and seeds of plants of *D. stramonium*, as well as in the intensity of infestation and the proportion of infested fruits by *T. soror*. The concentration of scopolamine in seeds and leaves are negatively associated across populations. We found that scopolamine concentration increases plant fitness. Our major finding was the detection of a positive relationship between the population average concentrations of scopolamine with the selection differentials of scopolamine. Such spatial variation in the direction and intensity of selection on scopolamine may represent a coevolutionary selective mosaic. Our results support the view that variation in the concentration of scopolamine among-populations of *D. stramonium* in central Mexico is being driven, in part, by selection exerted by *T. soror*, pointing an adaptive role of tropane alkaloids in this plant species.

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21 **Introduction**

22 The coevolutionary process involves reciprocal selection-adaptation between interacting

23 species through time (Dawkins & Krebs, 1979; Thompson, 1999; Thompson, 2005). This

24 adaptation and counter-adaptation p h e n o m e n o n could result in a coevolutionary arms

25 race, a process of offense-defense (Dawkins & Krebs, 1979). A coevolutionary relationship

26 between plants and herbivores may generate symmetrical or asymmetrical selective pressures

27 between interacting species. These selective pressures may be different spatially and could

28 produce a geographic structure of interactions (Forde, Thompson & Bohannan, 2004;

29 Gomulkiewicz *et al.*, 2002; Nuismer, Thompson & Gomulkiewicz, 2000; Thompson, 1999;

30 Thompson, 2005). In some locations the interacting species exert reciprocal selection pressures

31 to one another (coevolutionary hot spots), whereas in other locations reciprocal selection is

32 highly asymmetric (coevolutionary cold spots) (Gomulkiewicz *et al.*, 2002; Nuismer, Thompson

33 & Gomulkiewicz, 2000; Thompson, 1999; Thompson, 2005).

34   A coevolutionary arms race between herbivores and plants may be favored i n

35 specialized interactions as in the case of insects that detoxify specific compounds

36 (Janzen, 1969; Janzen, 1973; Schoonhoven, Van Loon & Dicke, 2005). For instance, the aphid

37 *Macrosiphum albifrons* is adapted to consume *Lupinus angustifolius* with a low content of

38 alkaloids (Philippi *et al.*, 2015); however, dietary specialist herbivore insects may also be

39 adapted to tolerate secondary metabolites of their host plants without switching to other

40 different host plants (Laukkanen *et al.*, 2012). In *Arabidopsis thaliana,* the abundance

41 of two aphid herbivore species is correlated to a genetic polymorphism of the plant´s resistance

42 locus. This polymorphism is under selection due to changes in population size of the two aphid

43 species (Züst *et al.*, 2012).

44   Host-parasite systems, that exert reciprocal selection pressures, offer the opportunity to

45   assess the asymmetry in selection pressures and the potential to produce adaptation (Greischar &

46   Koskella, 2007). Local adaptation may produce population differentiation as a by-product of

47   natural selection (Kawecki & Ebert, 2004). This process is well illustrated by the weevil

48   *Curculio camelliae* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) that parasitizes the fruits of *Camellia japonica*

49   (Theaceae) (Iseki, Sasaki & Toju, 2011; Toju, 2007; Toju, 2009; Toju & Sota, 2006). The fruits

50   of *C. japonica* are capsules with a thick pericarp, dehiscent, with three locules and one seed per

51   cavity (Okamoto, 1988). Females of *C. camelliae* perforate the thick pericarp with its long

52   *rostrum*, modified labial cavity in insects (Resh & Cardé, 2009), and oviposit on the seeds (Toju,

53   2007). A successful weevil infestation, or oviposition, depends on the phenotypic match between

54   the rostrum length and pericarp thickness. These two traits that mediate the interaction vary

55   geographically and are under selection (Toju, 2007; Toju, 2009; Toju & Sota, 2006). Some

56   evidence, however, indicates that these phenotypic characteristics may also vary according to

57   abiotic factors, i. e. the latitude (Iseki, Sasaki & Toju, 2011). Furthermore, infestation by the

58   weevil *C. camelliae* increases at higher-altitude localities and its obligated host plant decreases

59   its resistance (Toju 2009). In the *C. camelliae-C. japonica* system, natural selection acts on

60   pericarp thickness that is a physical barrier that prevents infestation by weevils (Toju, 2007;

61   Toju, 2009; Toju, 2011; Toju & Sota, 2006).

62   In the annual herb *Datura stramonium,* tropane alkaloids function either as resistance

63   characters preventing foliar damage by herbivores and/or as phagostimulants to them (Castillo *et*

64   *al*., 2013; Castillo *et al*., 2014; Shonle & Bergelson, 2000). Evidence shows that alkaloid

65   concentration in *D. stramonium* varies across populations (Castillo *et al*., 2014) and that such

66   differentiation in chemical defense could be adaptive (Castillo *et al*., 2015). In some populations,

67   dietary specialist and generalist folivores select against atropine concentration, whereas

68   scopolamine is positively selected selected by the dietary specialist folivore *Lema daturaphila*

69   and by the generalist grasshopper *Sphenarium purpurascens* (Castillo *et al*., 2014). Fruits of *D.*

70   *stramonium* are parasitized by *Trichobaris soror* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) that reduces plant

71   fitness by consuming the seeds (Cabrales-Vargas, 1991; Cruz, 2009; De-la-Mora, Piñero &

72   Núñez-Farfán, 2015). However, to what extent alkaloids of *D. stramonium* could affect

73   infestation by the seed predator is not known. Here, we analyzed the relationship between

74   tropane alkaloids produced by *D. stramonium* and infestation by the specialized seed predator *T.*

75   *soror* across multiple populations in central Mexico. We aimed to determine whether *D.*

76   *stramonium*'s tropane alkaloids prevent infestation by *T. soror*. Specifically, we addressed the

77   following questions. 1. Are alkaloids resistance characters that prevent/reduce infestation by

78   weevils? 2. Do seed predators exert natural selection upon plant´s alkaloids concentration? And

79   3. Do variation of both alkaloid concentration and infestation by weevils across populations is

80   correlated to the localities' environmental conditions? (*v. gr*., Toju, 2009).

81   **Materials and methods**

82

83   *Study system*

84   The weevil *Trichobaris soror* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) is intimately associated to the life

85   cycle of *D. stramonium* (Bello-Bedoy, Cruz & Núñez-Farfán 2011a, Borbolla, 2015;

86   Cabrales-Vargas, 1991). *Trichobaris soror* is distributed mainly in central Mexico (Barber,

87   1935; De-la-Mora, Piñero & Núñez-Farfán, 2015); adult weevils feed on leaves, calyx and

88   floral tissues of *D. stramonium*. After mating, females oviposit at the base of developing

89   fruits. Their larvae feed exclusively on immature seeds inside the developing fruit where

90   they build tunnels with their own feces. Larvae pupate in the fruit and sometimes are

91   parasitized by wasps. The weevils hibernate inside the fruit of *D. stramonium* until the

92   next rainy season (Bello-Bedoy, Cruz & Núñez-Farfán 2011a, Borbolla, 2015; Cabrales-

93   Vargas, 1991).

94   Besides the seed predator, *D. stramonium* (Solanaceae) is preyed upon by

95   specialist leaf-beetles (*Lema trilineata* and *Epitrix parvula*, Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae).

96   This weed species has been widely studied in relation to its resistance characters

97   (alkaloids, leaf trichomes) against these leaf herbivores (Bello-Bedoy & Núñez-

98   Farfán, 2011b; Cabrales-Vargas, 1991; Carmona & Fornoni, 2013; Castillo *et al*., 2013;

99   Castillo *et al*., 2014; Núñez-Farfán & Dirzo, 1994; Shonle & Bergelson, 2000; Valverde,

100   Fornoni & Núñez-Farfán, 2001). However, it is unknown if chemical defense of *D.*

101   *stramonium* prevents the infestation by the weevil *T. soror*.

102

103   *Sampled populations*

104   During the reproductive season of *D. stramonium* (September-November) in 2007, we

105   sampled different populations across Central Mexico. We collected an average of 30

106   plants from 31 populations (Fig. 1, Table S1). For each plant, all mature fruits were

107   collected and individually bagged and labeled. Before opening, the width and length of

108   each fruit was measured to calculate its volume with the equation:

109

110
$$V = \left(\frac{4}{3}\right)(\pi)(length)\left(\left(\frac{width}{2}\right)^2\right)$$

111

112   We estimated the number of expected seeds by multiplying the volume by 0.026

113   (Fornoni, Valverde & Núñez-Farfán, 2004). In the laboratory, we opened the fruits to

114   determine the infestation, by counting the weevils. Also, for each fruit we counted the

115   number of remaining, sound, seeds after predation.

116

117   *Seed predator´s infestation measures*

118   We measured the intensity of infestation by *T. soror* to *D. stramonium* as the number of

119   weevils divided by the number of fruits per plant (Greischar & Koskella, 2007). Also, we

120   measured the infestation as the proportion of infested fruits per plant.

121

122   *Alkaloid concentration*

123   We quantified the concentration of leaf atropine and scopolamine per plant (Boros et

124   al. 2010), by means of high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), following

125   Castillo et al. (2013). We obtained the average leaf alkaloid concentration from a

126   sample of 8-10 plants per population. In order to assess if leaf and seeds alkaloid

127   concentration are correlated, we measured alkaloids of mature seeds in a subsample of

128   119 plants of 14 populations (Table S2).

129

130   *Characterization of environmental variables*

131   In order to control for some concomitant environmental variation, the values of mean annual

132   temperature and precipitation for the 31 studied populations of the *D. stramonium* were obtained

133   from Worldclim (Hijmans & Graham, 2006). We characterized each population by calculating

134   the Lang´s aridity index (Rehman, 2010), as the ratio of population mean annual precipitation

135   and mean annual temperature. Values between 0-20 correspond to deserts, 20-40 arid habitats,

136   40-60 wet type steppes, 60-100 wet woodlands and 100-160 wet forests (Perry, 1986).

137

138   *Statistical analyses*

139   We assessed the among-population variation in the intensity of infestation, the proportion of

140   infested fruits by *T. soror*, and the concentration of atropine and scopolamine in seeds and in

141   leaves, using generalized linear model (GzLM), assuming a gamma distribution and a log link

142   function. Our hypothesis is that infestation by the seed predator does not vary among

143   populations of *D. stramonium*.

144   The relationship between the concentration of atropine and scopolamine in both leaves

145   and seeds was tested through generalized linear mixed models (GzLMM), with a gamma

146   distribution, a log link function and population as a random factor. Data were obtained from

147   individual plants from a subsample of 14 populations. In order to assess the effect of the seed

148   predator on plant fitness, we performed a GzLMM of the number of remaining sound seeds, as

149   estimator of fitness, as a function of the proportion of infested fruits per plant and population as a

150   random factor. Again, we assumed a gamma distribution and a log link function. Similarly, we

151   tested if the concentration of atropine and scopolamine in leaves increases plant individual

152   fitness. We assumed the population × proportion of infested fruits interaction as a random

153   factor.

154   Selection differentials (*S*) that account for direct and indirect selection acting on a trait

155   were calculated through Pearson correlation coefficient for each population (Lande &

156 Arnold, 1983). The concentration of atropine and scopolamine in seeds and leaves was

157 standardized ($x' = \dfrac{(x-\mu)^2}{\sigma}$). As a proxy of plant fitness we used the estimated number of seeds

158 per plant (other examples in Kingsolver *et al*., 2001). The relative fitness was defined as the

159 ratio between individual fitness and population average fitness. Selection differentials were

160 estimated for each population by correlating alkaloid concentration standardized

161 (atropine or scopolamine) with relative fitness (such in Sobral *et al*., 2013; Sobral

162 *et al*., 2015).

163   In order to explore the effect of selection exerted by the seed predation and environmental

164 variables on the concentrations of scopolamine and atropine in both leaves and seeds, across

165 populations of *D. stramonium*, we performed generalized linear models (GzLM) (such in

166 Herrera, Castellanos & Medrano, 2006; Sobral *et al*., 2015). In each model we included the

167 selection differential of the corresponding alkaloid, latitude, longitude, altitude, and Lang's index

168 of each population. We assumed a gamma distribution (log link function) for alkaloid

169 concentration in leaves, and a Gauss inverse (identity link function) for seeds. We selected the

170 models with lowest corrected AIC values, namely those that explain better the relationship

171 between the variables and consider the sample size (Akaike, 1974; SPSS, 2011). Statistical

172 analyzes were performed with SPSS v20.0 statistical package (SPSS, 2011).

173

174 **Results**

175 We detected wide variation in concentration of scopolamine and atropine in leaves (Fig. 2;

176 Table 1) and seeds (Fig. 3; Table 1) across populations of *D. stramonium*. The proportion of

177 infested fruits as well as the intensity of infestation by *T. soror* to plants of *D. stramonium*

178 varied significantly among populations (Fig. 4; Table 1). Variation in the average proportion

179 of infested fruits ranged from zero (populations Coatepec, Huitzuco and Jalapa) up to 90%

180 (populations Teotihuacan and Tlaxiaca; Fig. 4). The average intensity of infestation by *T.*

181 *soror* varies from populations without infestation up to those with 5 weevils per fruit, per

182 plant.

183   The concentration of atropine and scopolamine in leaves is positive and

184 significantly related (N = 117, *Estimate* = 0.289, *S.E.* = 0.055, t = 5.285, *P* < 0.0001, AICc

185 = 306), while the correlation of scopolamine in leaves and seeds is negative (N = 117,

186 *Estimate* = -1.29, *S.E.* = 0.484, t = -2.666, *P* = 0.009, AICc = 305.279). Similarly, the

187 concentration of scopolamine in leaves and atropine in seeds are negatively related (N = 117,

188 *Estimate* = -1.061, *S.E.* = 0.481, t = -2.206, *P* = 0.029, *AICc* = 307.407).

189   The number of sound remaining seeds per plant showed a negative relationship with

190 the proportion of infested fruits *T. soror* (N = 278; *Estimate* = -0.629, S.E. = 0.266; t = -

191 2.367; *P* = 0.019; AICc = 832.46). We found that the number of remaining sound seeds

192 shows a positive relationship with both scopolamine concentration in leaves (N = 278;

193 *Estimate* = 0.200, S.E. = 0.076; t = 2.639; *P* = 0.009; AICc = 886.85) and seeds (N = 119;

194 *Estimate* = 13.56, S.E. = 3.56; t = 3.81; *P* < 0.0001; AICc = 403.32).

195   A GzLM of the population average of scopolamine concentration in leaves is

196 positively related to the selection differential (*S*) of leaf scopolamine (Table 2, Fig. 5A). The

197 same result, although marginally significant, was detected for scopolamine in seeds.

198   In the case atropine concentration in seeds, the GzLM indicates a positive and highly

199 significant relationship with the Lang´s aridity index; atropine concentration in leaves is

200 marginally significant in its relationship with Lang´s aridity index (Table 2, Fig. 5B).

201

202 **Discussion**

203 Populations of *D. stramonium* vary in the concentration of alkaloids in leaves. This result is

204 in agreement with the study of Castillo *et al.* (2013). Here, we found that populations of *D.*

205 *stramonium* also vary in the concentration of alkaloids in seeds, in the intensity of

206 infestation, as well as in the proportion of infested fruits by *T. soror*. The concentration of

207 scopolamine in seeds and leaves is negatively associated across populations. Although such

208 a pattern was not detected for atropine, the concentration of scopolamine and atropine in

209 leaves, positively covary across populations. Remarkably, we detected that scopolamine

210 concentration in both leaves and seeds enhances individual plant fitness. Our major finding

211 was the detection of a positive relationship between the population average concentration of

212 scopolamine in both leaves and seeds with the selection differentials of scopolamine. This

213 implies that natural selection explains the among population variation in scopolamine

214 concentration. Thus, *T. soror* is driving, at least in part, the variation in chemical defense in

215 *D. stramonium* (Castillo *et al.*, 2015).

216   A previous study has reported that scopolamine plays a role in the interaction

217 between *D. stramonium* and its main folivore insects in central Mexico (Castillo *et al.*,

218 2014). Here, we found that among-populations of *D. stramonium*, plants with higher

219 concentration of scopolamine in leaves had a higher number of remaining sound seeds. This

220 suggests that scopolamine acts as a defense character against *T. soror*, resulting in fewer

221 consumed or damaged seeds. A similar trend has been found in the hemiparasitic plant

222 *Castilleja indivisa* (Adler, 2000), where the alkaloid lupanine, obtained from its host plant,

223 *Lupinus texensis*, reduces damage to its flowers by herbivores and increases visitation by

224 pollinators, thus enhancing plant fitness, measured as the number of seeds.

225 The fact that the concentration of scopolamine in leaves and seeds are negatively

226 correlated, probably pointing an allocation trade-off (Kariñho-Betancourt *et al.*, 2015), this does

227 not preclude that scopolamine concentration in leaves had a negative effect on the seed predator.

228 Adult females and males of *T. soror* courtship, mate, and feed on *D. stramonium* leaves (J.

229 Núñez-Farfán, *personal observation*). When feeding, adult weevils produce small holes on the

230 leaf blade, and sometimes damage can be severe (Cabrales-Vargas, 1991). Thus, it is likely

231 that *T. soror*'s females, while feeding, might "assess" the chemical resistance level of

232 a plant (i.e., atropine/scopolamine concentration in leaves) and select which plants are

233 suitable to oviposit. This would result in lower or null oviposition in those plants with

234 high concentration of scopolamine in leaves. Some evidence in this line shows a close

235 relationship between *Trichobaris* and *Datura*. For instance, *Trichobaris bridwelli*

236 oviposits preferentially on *D. stramonium* rather than on tobacco plants (*Nicotiana*

237 *tabacum*) (Cuda & Burke, 1991), since *T. bridwelli* does not tolerate the pyridine alkaloids

238 of tobacco (Cuda & Burke, 1991). On the other hand, Diezel *et al.* (2011) have

239 experimentally demonstrated that *T. mucorea*, a species that burrows into the stems of

240 *Nicotiana attenuata*, increases infestation on transgenic plants of *N. attenuata* where the

241 chemical defenses (jasmonic acid and nicotine) were silenced.

242 The role of scopolamine as defense against herbivory in *D. stramonium* is supported

243 by the findings of Castillo *et al.*, (2014). In such study, they detected positive selection on

244 scopolamine concentration in leaves in two populations of *D. stramonium,* one preyed upon

245 by the dietary specialist *Lema daturaphila*, and the other by the dietary generalist

246 *Sphenarium purpurascens*. However, also negative selection on scopolamine was detected in

247   a third population of *D. stramonium* preyed by *L. daturaphila*. Thus, the resistance role of

248   tropane alkaloids of *D. stramonium* varies according to the type of herbivore and the tissue

249   they consume, as well as the environmental conditions of populations (Castillo *et al*., 2014).

250   Further studies are needed to determine the independent and join selective effects of

251   folivores and seed predators on the concentration of scopolamine in seeds and leaves of *D.*

252   *stramonium*.

253   The GzLM shows that atropine in seeds covaries positively with the Lang´s index. That is

254   to say, populations of dry environments have less atropine concentration. It has been reported that

255   alkaloid production may be water limited, decreasing in concentration in dry environments

256   (Baricevic *et al*., 1999). In the interaction between *Curculio camelliae-Camellia japonica*, the

257   expression of defense is also affected by the habitat's environmental conditions; infestation by the

258   weevil was higher at high altitudes, where the fruits of *C. japonica* trees have thinner pericarps

259   (Toju, 2009). Thus, the evolution of chemical defense against herbivores in *D. stramonium* can

260   also be environmentally conditioned.

261   We found evidence of natural selection on chemical resistance of *D. stramonium* since

262   higher scopolamine concentration increases plant fitness. The GzLM analysis revealed a positive

263   relationship between the population average concentrations of scopolamine in both leaves and

264   seeds with their selection differential of scopolamine. This relationship suggests that the among-

265   population variation in chemical defense of *D. stramonium* is molded by *T. soror*. Thus,

266   populations of *D. stramonium* vary in the direction and strength of selection on chemical defense,

267   an expectation of the geographic mosaic of coevolution (i.e., hot spots and cold spots; Thompson,

268   2005). Previous evidence has demonstrated that leaf herbivores exert selection pressures over

269   physical and chemical defenses of *D. stramonium* (Valverde, Fornoni & Núñez-Farfán, 2001;

270 Castillo *et al*., 2014). This is the first evidence that seed predators also exert a significant selective

271 pressure on chemical defense of *D. stramonium*.

272 **Acknowledgements**

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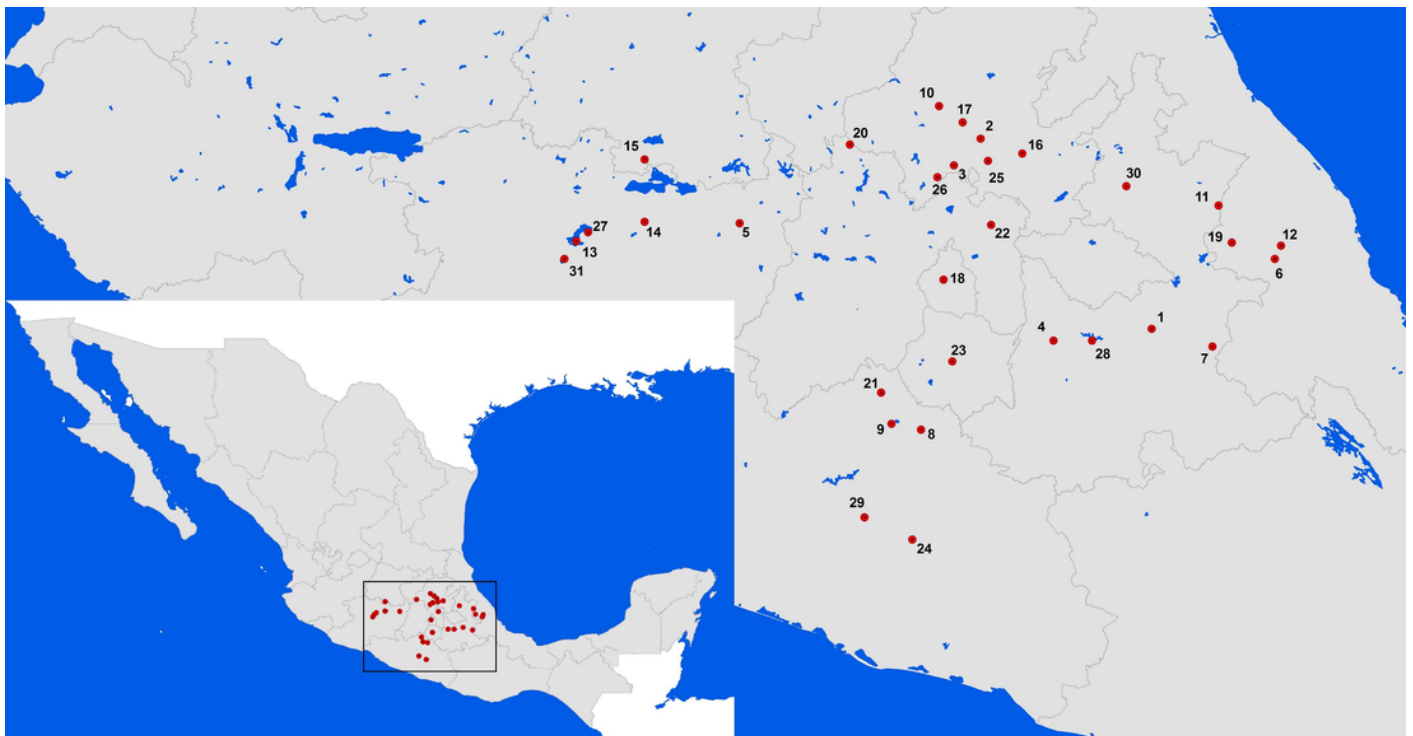355   *Phytologist* **206(2)**:796-806.

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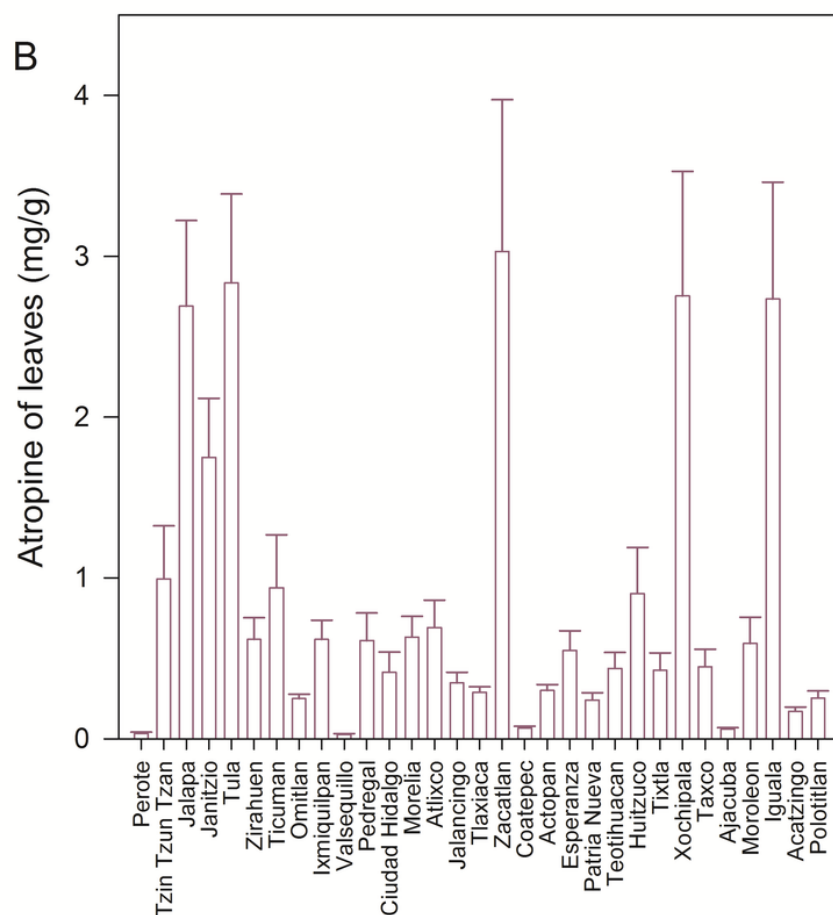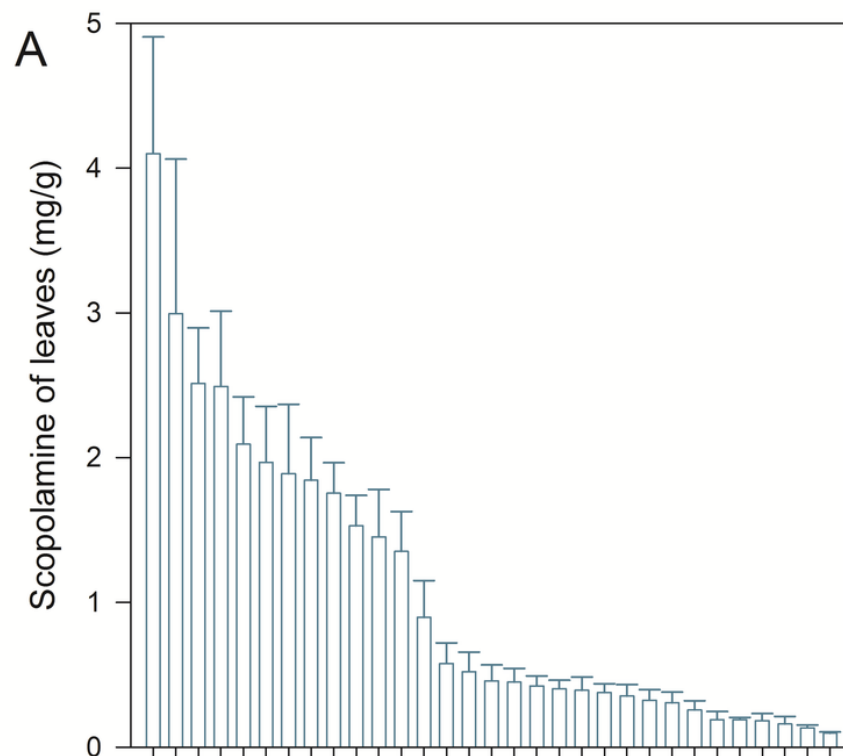
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1

Figure 1

Datura stramonium populations sampled in Central Mexico. The number each population corresponds to the locality given in Table S1.
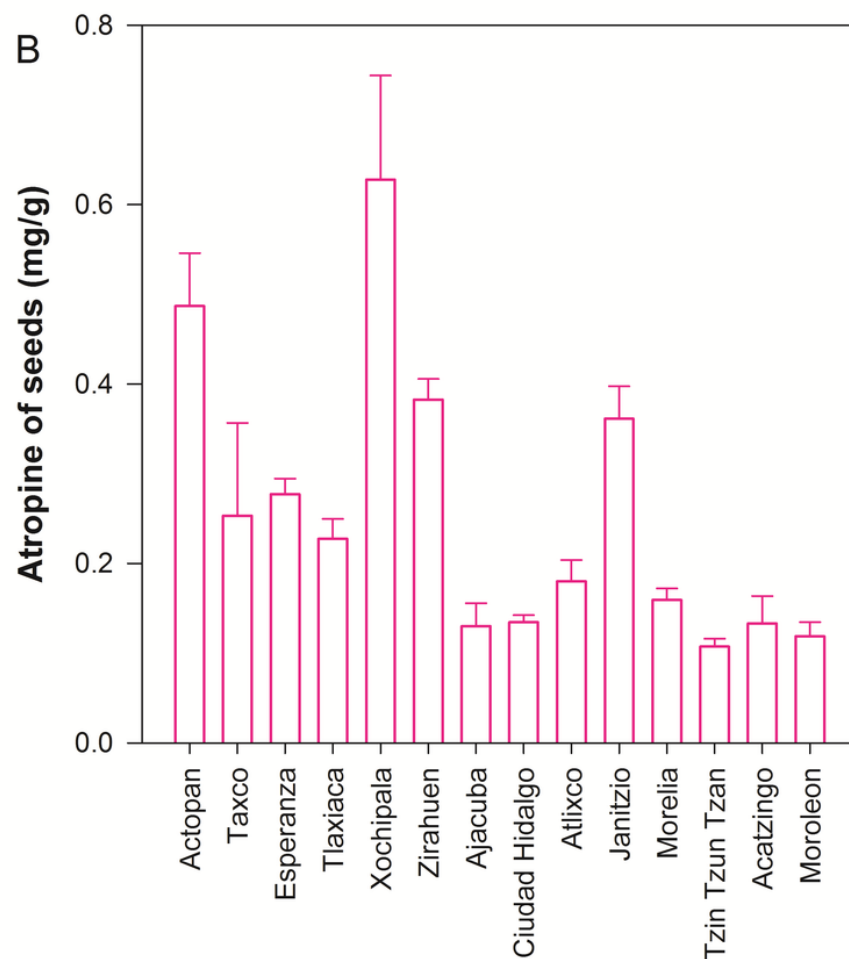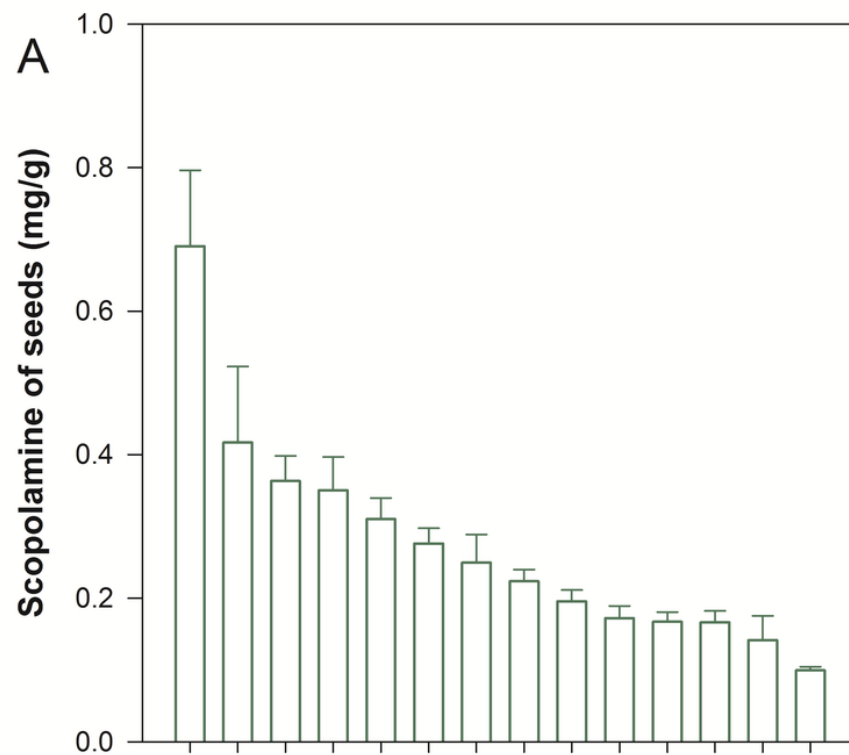
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Figure 2

Average (+1 *S.E.*) concentration of scopolamine (A) and atropine in leaves (B), in 31 populations of *Datura stramonium* from central Mexico.

3

Figure 3

Average (+1 *S.E.*) concentration of scopolamine (A) and atropine (B) in seeds, in 14 populations of *Datura stramonium* from central Mexico.

Table 1(on next page)

Table 1

Generalized linear models of the among population variation in the concentration of scopolamine and atropine in leaves and seeds, as well as the intensity of infestation (average number of weevils per fruit, per plant), and the proportion of infested fruits per plant in *Datura stramonium*.

1

2

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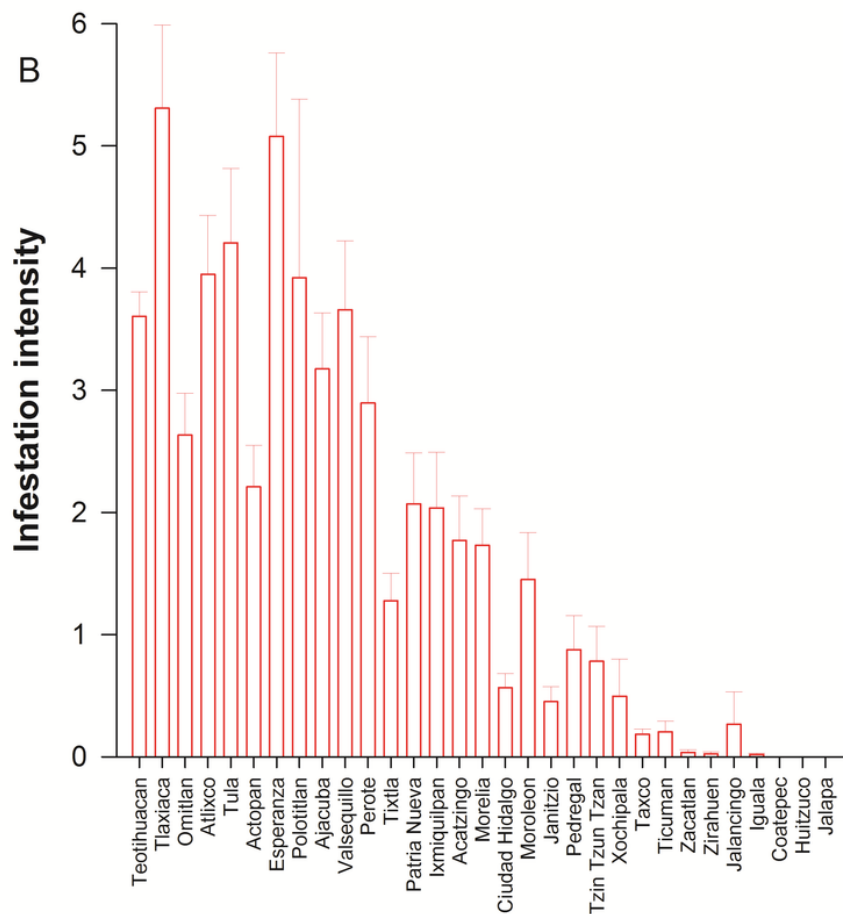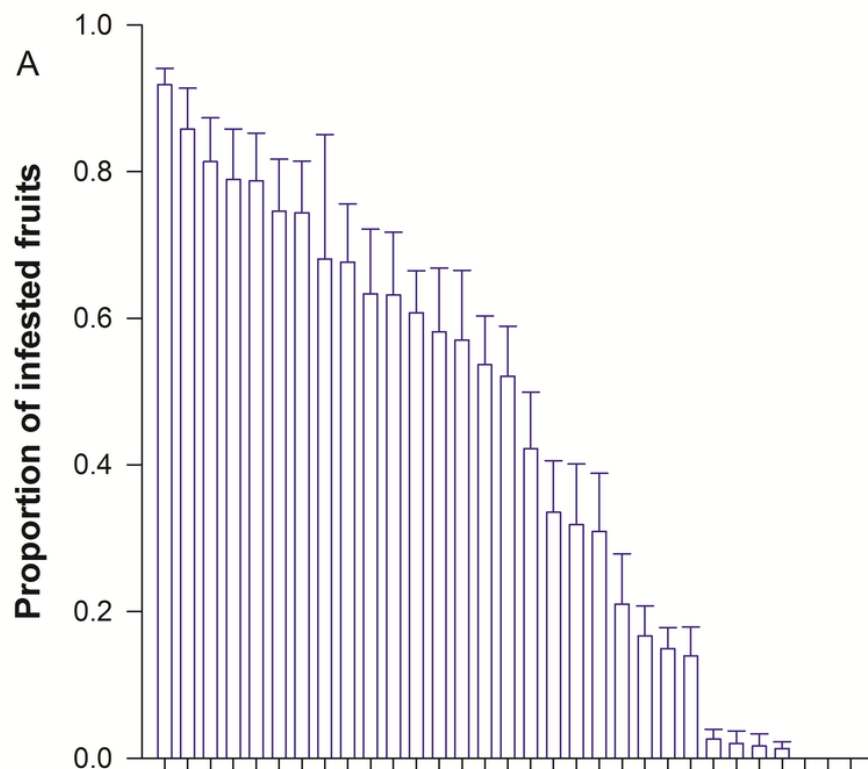| Response variable	N	d.f.	Wald´s Chi-square	P	AICc
Scopolamine of leaves	278	31	684.55	< 0.0001	345.19
Atropine of leaves	278	31	875.11	< 0.0001	212.17
Scopolamine of seeds	119	14	13 441.13	< 0.0001	817.18
Atropine of seeds	119	14	13 062.42	< 0.0001	777.75
Intensity of infestation	859	28	835.98	< 0.0001	74.73
Proportion of infested fruits	859	28	1 562.36	< 0.0001	1 732.56

Notes

AICc, The corrected Akaike information criterion, gives a measure of the relative quality of a statistical model, considering the sample size.

4

Figure 4

Average (+1 *S.E.*) proportion of infested fruits per plant (A) and intensity of infestation (the total number of weevils divided by the total number of fruits per plant) (B) by *Trichobaris soror*, in 31 populations of *Datura stramonium* from central Mexico.

Table 2(on next page)

Table 2

Generalized linear models of population average of the concentration of scopolamine and atropine in leaves and seeds of *Datura stramonium*, as a function of the selection differential (*S*) for the corresponding alkaloid, and environmental variables.

Response variable	Factors	N	d.f.	Wald´s Chi-square	P	AICc
Scopolamine of leaves	Lang´s aridity index	31	1	0.134	0.714	72.973
	Altitude		1	1.563	0.211	
	Latitude		1	0.552	0.458	
	Longitude		1	0.993	0.319	
	S Scopolamine		1	5.662	0.017	
Scopolamine of seeds	Lang´s aridity index	14	1	3.444	0.063	121.19
	Altitude		1	2.665	0.103	
	Latitude		1	0.579	0.447	
	Longitude		1	0.912	0.339	
	S Scopolamine		1	3.006	0.083	
Atropine of leaves	Lang´s aridity index	31	1	3.557	0.059	61.072
	Altitude		1	3.419	0.064	
	Latitude		1	0.004	0.95	
	Longitude		1	0.001	0.976	
	S Atropine		1	0.812	0.367	
Atropine of seeds	Lang´s aridity index	14	1	11.291	0.001	122.06
	Altitude		1	0.002	0.967	
	Latitude		1	1.666	0.197	
	Longitude		1	1.288	0.256	
	S Atropine		1	0.011	0.918	

Notes

AICc, The corrected Akaike information criterion, gives a measure of the relative quality of a statistical model, considering the sample size.

5

Figure 5

Relationships between (A) the population average of scopolamine concentration in leaves with S ~Scopolamine of leaves~ ($\rho = 0.3079$), and (B) the population average of atropine concentrations in seeds with the Lang´s index ($\rho = 0.6434$).

A

S Scopolamine of leaves

B

Lang´s aridity index