

Presentation of the 2024 Paleontological Society Pojeta Award to Jorge A. Santiago-Blay

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Award/Citation

Cite this article: Kight S. 2025. Presentation of the 2024 Paleontological Society Pojeta Award to Jorge A. Santiago-Blay. *Journal of Paleontology*, 1–2
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jpa.2025.10185>

Received: 12 September 2025

Revised: 12 September 2025

Accepted: 22 September 2025

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It is a great honor to recognize the many scholarly contributions of Dr. Jorge A. Santiago-Blay. Jorge has built an extraordinary career that bridges paleobiology, entomology, botany, plant-insect interactions, history of science, and science education, marked by breadth, creativity, and dedication to service.

Trained as an evolutionary biologist, Jorge investigates questions spanning fossil and modern systems, from the molecular to the ecosystem level. He is especially known for his work as both a coleopterist and paleobiologist, with pioneering contributions to the study of fossil resins with Joseph B. Lambert and the paleontology of leaf beetles. His research on amber and other plant exudates has positioned him as a leading figure, combining field collecting across the USA and Caribbean with advanced analytical techniques, including scanning electron microscopy, nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy, energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy, and, more recently, X-ray scattering with Dr. Yimin Mao.

His scholarly productivity is substantial: > 100 peer-reviewed publications, > 60 professional presentations, and influential volumes like *Novel Aspects of the Biology of Chrysomelidae* (1994) and its sequels (*Advances in Chrysomelidae Biology*, *New Developments in the Biology of Chrysomelidae*, and *Research in Chrysomelidae*, 1996–2016), co-edited with the late Pierre Jolivet and Michael Schmidt. These volumes remain milestones in coleopteran biology.

Jorge has also shaped the scholarly community through exceptional editorial leadership. He has served as editor or co-editor for journals including *Entomological News*, *Terrestrial Arthropod Reviews*, *ZooKeys*, and *Life: The Excitement of Biology*, which he founded. His colleagues frequently note his extraordinary generosity as an editor, investing considerable time and care to improve manuscripts and support authors at all career stages.

His broad intellectual curiosity drives a remarkable range of collaborations. He has published in diverse areas, from a historical paper with Robert Wozniak on the arrest of philosopher James Mark Baldwin to work on deaf entomologists with Harry Lang. He regularly involves students in research, including ecological studies at Poor House Run Creek near Penn State York and sociological studies of the poor and mentally ill residents of the York County (Pennsylvania) Almshouse, offering undergraduates authentic, discovery-based science.

Jorge's research collaborations include fossil plant-insect interactions with Conrad Labandeira, neutron imaging at Oak Ridge National Laboratory with Hassina Bilheux and Yuxuan Zhang, bee biology and conservation with Sam Droege, phenological research with Theresa Crimmins, and molecular biology with the late Cristián Orrego. These relationships have been central to his professional and personal development. His interest in the history of genetics before Gregor Mendel also led to a Fulbright Specialist position in Finland with Dr. Péter Poczai, scheduled for spring 2026.

His work has been supported by competitive grants from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, National Institutes of Health, Smithsonian Institution, and the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement. His publications have appeared in top-tier venues including *Science*, *Angewandte Chemie*, and the *Journal of Natural Products*, with several papers designated as 'Very Significant' by journal editors.

As an educator and mentor, Jorge has inspired generations of students. He has received teaching and research awards at several institutions where he has served. His courses are consistently among the highest rated in his department, praised for their rigor, innovation, and interdisciplinary breadth. Students highlight his use of concept maps, the depth of his biological knowledge, and his exceptional support. He has also provided distinctive research experiences through his long association with the National Museum of Natural History, where his students are noted for being unusually well-prepared, confident, and motivated. Many have called their experiences with him 'life changing.'

As a Puerto Rican scholar, Jorge has been a visible and active advocate for diversity and inclusion in science. He teaches and presents in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language, exemplifying a deep commitment to accessibility. His scholarship and mentorship have broadened participation in paleontology and entomology and brought diverse cultural and disciplinary perspectives into the field.

Jorge is quick to acknowledge professors and librarians whose quiet support left lasting marks throughout his education and career. Above all, he credits the students he has mentored, whose

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JOURNAL OF
PALEONTOLOGY
A PUBLICATION OF THE
Paleontological
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curiosity, questions, and perseverance inspire him to communicate science more clearly, widely, and effectively. He also extends deep gratitude to the many others not named here, whose contributions continue to shape his journey.

Colleagues describe Jorge as a trusted collaborator, an original thinker, and a scholar of the highest merit. His boundless curiosity,

energy, and generosity have left lasting marks on our understanding of paleobiology, the history of life, and the community of paleontologists.

For his decades of distinguished research, mentoring, editorial leadership, and service to the discipline, Dr. Jorge A. Santiago-Blay is richly deserving of the 2024 Pojeta Award.