

Raphia



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Birth of a Tortuguero Landmark

by ROBIN JAMES

After an extended period of its own metamorphosis, La Crisalida Butterfly Farm has finally broken out of its pupa, entering the adult stage of its existence. First indicators point to a future that will be as bright and colourful as many of its inhabitants. The town of Tortuguero expressed a strong interest and many of the local guides are very enthusiastic about bringing groups to the garden. The combination of a very reasonable entrance fee (\$1) and the number of visitors who stroll past the garden on village tours is sure to generate a substantial income to the great benefit of the village.

During my short time working at Caño Palma Biological Station and at La Crisalida, I've been constantly impressed with the sense of community and family in Tortuguero. This was never more evident than the final push to open the garden for a scheduled tour at the beginning of April. With the help of Vicki Chow, a dedicated volunteer and Ultimate guru from Vancouver, we transplanted the required host plants, finished the displays in the education centre, constructed a walkway through the garden, and stocked it with populations of about 15 very interesting species from the Atlantic Rainforest region.

Very special mention must also be given to Sebastian Troeng, Research Coordinator at the Caribbean Conservation Corporation. Despite long nights searching for Leatherbacks, Sebastian and his Research Assistants came to the garden to help with everything including watering plants, weeding, putting some finishing touches on the education centre and building a double door to ensure our winged guests don't go astray. Thanks to the hard work put in by everyone, La Crisalida opened with an interesting and informative tour with plenty to see, and marked its first generated revenue!

My stay at Caño Palma will shortly come to an end and I shall become a resident of Tortuguero, managing La Crisalida full time and working to make the most of its tremendous potential. I look forward with a great deal of excitement and anticipation to the day when the first community development project comes to fruition as a direct result of the garden. At this point we will truly have realized a most important goal - teaching by example that a bright, humane, and sustainable life is possible in the short and long run, by preserving and caring for the beautiful ecosystems of Costa Rica.

Note from the Editor: La Crisalida is the official name of the long-anticipated butterfly farm that was planned six years ago. It has taken a good deal of time and effort to obtain all the necessary permits and permissions required in order to comply with Costa Rican regulations.

Started with a grant from Fondo Canada (Canadian International Development Agency, or CIDA), this was the first of what we hope will be several projects to create a different means of earning income within the local community. The idea is to encourage the local people of Tortuguero to look at alternatives to cutting down trees and poaching animals. All proceeds generated from admission fees and sales of pupae to North American butterfly exhibit houses will be given to the community of Tortuguero. COTERC is very proud to have initiated the first of several such projects in this economically depressed area of Costa Rica.

We particularly want to acknowledge the wonderful assistance of our former Station Manager Daryl Loth (whom many of you will know). Even after leaving the employ of the station, Daryl has continued to devote much of his spare time (unpaid) towards building the information centre and garden. Thanks, Daryl!!



**YOU ARE CORDIALLY
INVITED!!**

to

**COTERC'S ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING**

**COME AND MEET YOUR
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
AND FELLOW TORONTO-AREA
MEMBERS**

on

**TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 1998
7:30 P.M.**

**AT
CIVIC GARDEN CENTRE
777 LAWRENCE AVENUE WEST
TORONTO**

BUFFET WILL BE SERVED

****COME HEAR ABOUT OUR FUTURE
PLANS FOR COTERC****

*****CHILDREN FROM SIR ALEXANDER
MACKENZIE PUBLIC SCHOOL
WILL BE READING ORIGINAL POETRY
WITH A RAINFOREST THEME*****

EVENTS OF NOTE

PIGEON LAKE ENVIRONMENTAL DAY
May 2, 1998

We had a booth at this event, held in Cottage Country at the Buckhorn Community Centre in northeastern Ontario. It was a great opportunity to showcase COTERC and we handed out numerous brochures and also sold items imported from Costa Rica. Marilyn Cole gave a video presentation on Caño Palma Biological Station.

**COTERC ANNUAL BARBECUE
FUNDRAISER**

September 12, 1998
SuperCentre, Kingston Road and Liverpool
Road, Pickering, Ontario

We need volunteers to help with cooking, collecting money and cleaning up. If you can spare a couple of hours, please contact Marilyn (905) 683-2116, or COTERC@INTERHOP.NET

WANTED

Articles of t(r)opical interest for Raphia.
Send any items you'd like to see in the
newsletter to:
Marilyn Cole
COTERC@INTERHOP.NET

P.S. If you send images, please use jpeg format.



THINK TROPICAL !
THINK ... 'TROPICAL TREAT II'



Fellow members and supporters of COTERC – if you missed last year’s extravaganza, then you certainly missed a wonderful opportunity to have fun, to pick up a bargain, enjoy wonderful food and company, but perhaps most important of all, you missed an opportunity to help support COTERC in its fight to help conserve tropical rainforest and wildlife in Costa Rica.

Don’t miss out on this year! Once again, thanks to the support of the Toronto Zoo and its General Manager, Mr. Calvin White, COTERC’s “Tropical Treat II” will be held in the Atrium, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario on September 16, 1998.

Tickets will cost \$35.00 per person and will include a delicious tropical dinner, DJ dancing, a Silent Auction, and a Live Auction hosted by a celebrity Auctioneer. All proceeds from the event will help COTERC in its fight to save Costa Rican rainforest.

So don’t miss out. Tickets are limited. Come out to enjoy the evening and support a wonderful cause.

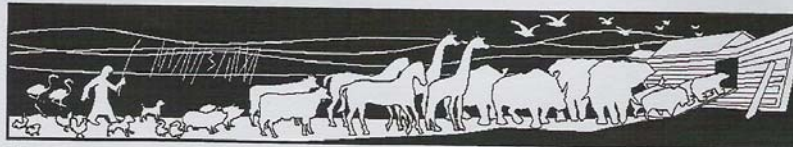
For ticket information contact:

Marilyn Cole (905) 683-2116

coterc@interhop.net

or

Malcolm Enright (905) 837-1118



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INTRODUCING ROBIN JAMES

Thanks to a grant from the International Environmental Youth Corps program of the Canadian Council for Human Resources, we are pleased to welcome Robin James as our new Butterfly Garden Coordinator.

Robin is a native of Bracebridge, Ontario and has an academic background in environmental studies from Trent University. Robin is a very versatile individual: he has taught English as a second language in South Korea, Physics and Economics to students in Jamaica! He has tree planting experience from British Columbia, and a wide range of practical skills such as carpentry, general construction, electrical wiring, plumbing, boating and canoeing and backpacking.

Since his arrival in February, 1998, Robin has been filling in as Project Manager of Caño Palma Biological Station (not an easy job to step into), and will shortly be moving to Tortuguero village in order to direct the operations of the butterfly farm.

We welcome Robin to our staff, and are certain that he will be a valuable asset to our work in Costa Rica.

NEW PROJECT MANAGER FOR CAÑO PALMA

We also would like to welcome Leonardo Garcia as our new Project Manager. Born in Costa Rica, Leonardo attended high school in Hamilton, Illinois and pursued graduate studies at the University of Costa Rica. He has had extensive managerial and practical experience, and has also conducted nature tours. Needless to say, he knows his way around the sometimes frustrating (to North Americans!) methods of doing business in Costa Rica, and we feel confident he will be an asset to COTERC

Welcome aboard, Leonardo!!



LOGGERS MENACE TORTUGUERO PARK

by Guillermo Escofet



SURREAL sight: Forest being felled, floated down canals, while guides tell tourists about C.R.'s conservation efforts.

Forested lands popularly thought to be protected by Tortuguero National Park could fall prey to the chainsaws of lumber-hungry loggers.

Local residents and business owners in this north Caribbean community, whose mainstay is eco-tourism, are outraged at legalized logging within what they believe to be National Park lands.

However, it appears that 5,500 hectares of forest along the area's famous tree-lined canals were left out of a National Park expansion a few years ago that linked it with Barra de Colorado National Wildlife Reserve to the north. (*Editor's note: Caño Palma Biological Station is situated within this Reserve*).

Coupled with this, changes in logging rules introduced by the new Forestry Law of 1996 are enabling landholders without property titles to obtain tree-cutting permits. "The old law allowed us to fight more effectively for conservation," said Carlos Calvo, manager of Protected Wildlife Areas in the Tortuguero Conservation Area, "With the new legislation, loggers are now waiting to pounce like bees around the honey pot."

Local community leaders are also concerned about the rapid loss of forest cover in conservation areas lying next to the road opened illegally through Tortuguero National Park two years ago (*Raphia, Volume 6, No. 1 Spring, 1997*), which is making it easier for loggers to reach the area.

Many people distrust local forestry officials. The fear is that Tortuguero could revert to the old days, bad when its wetland rainforests were used as a prime logging site for a variety of valuable woods.

"When a small farmer tries to get permission to chop down a couple of trees, he is met by a brick wall. But if you get the weight of (big logging companies such as) Plywood (Costarricense) behind you, permits are easy to obtain", said Enrique Obando, president of the Tortuguero Development Association and the community's most outspoken critic of logging activities in the area.

Maria Elena Herrera, head of the Tortuguero Conservation Area denied these allegations.

Normally accessible only by air or water, Tortuguero is famous for its jungle-clad waterways, sea turtle nesting grounds, and rich and varied wildlife, which have turned it into a magnet for eco-tourists. Yet recently, visitors have been shocked by the surreal sight of long trails of floating tree-trunks pulled downstream by tug boats bearing the emblem of Plywood Costarricense -- one of Costa Rica's leading lumber companies.

"Two weeks ago, a shipment came through dragging about 80 logs," said Herman Hay, a former park ranger who now works as a tourist guide for one of the local ecolodges.

Last week Tico Times reporters saw another shipment go through with about 40 to 60 logs in

tow, of an average girth of four to five feet. "As guides, we are constantly singing the praises of Costa Rica's conservation policies, so it's embarrassing when something like this happens," added Hay. "The tourists I was accompanying took pictures and asked questions, but what could I say?"



The lumber was extracted from 73 hectares 10 minutes by boat from Tortuguero town, next to a canal frequently transited by nature boat tours (*Editor's Note -- this is Caño Palma*). When locals heard that Environment Ministry officials had approved a forestry management plan to harvest timber from the area, they raised an outcry, believing the land belongs to Tortuguero National Park. Costa Rican law prohibits logging within parks.

However, according to local forestry authorities and conservation NGO Fundación Neotrópica (which funded the expansion of the National Park in 1994-95), the land was never incorporated into the park.

The land falls within the Protection Zone created in the late 1980's to form a biological corridor between Tortuguero National Park and Barra de Colorado Reserve, covering a total of 13,000 hectares.

Keen to strengthen its protection powers and halt logging, the Fundación Neotrópica started raising

funds in the early 1990's to buy the land from local owners and donate it to the state. This allowed expansion of the northern reaches of Tortuguero Par, formed in 1975 with an original surface area of 18,000 hectares. "The extension of the National Park was achieved through the direct purchase of lands, not through expropriations," explained Hugo Alvarez, head of Fundación Neotrópica's local conservation program. This was in contrast to the rest of Costa Rica's extensive network of National Parks, created through decrees expropriating privately-held land. Many landholders have yet to be paid, which is now causing serious legal difficulties to ensure parks do not break apart.

The funds to buy the Protection Zone lands came from the Danish government, and according to Calvo, the rumour spread among local landholders that foreign money was flowing in, lading many to jack up prices to unrealistic levels. Others simply refused to sell. Alvarez explained that between eight and ten properties are still in private hands within the Protection Zone, where timber can be harvested under regulatory plans. Calvo estimates it would cost 1.6 billion colones (approximately \$6,400,000 U.S.) to expropriate these lands.

Concerned about recent developments, the Tortuguero Development Association and prestigious tour operator Costa Rica Expeditions -- a pioneer in the area -- have created a foundation called "Rescate de Tortuguero", (Rescue of Tortuguero) to raise funds for the purchase of these lands. The foundation will be printing brochures to give to tourists, telling them of the problem and asking for contributions, according to Obando.

Michael Kaye, owner of Costa Rica Expeditions, contributed \$5,000 to help with start-up costs.

WORRIED
about
loopholes;
Obando
(left), Calvo
fear bad old
days may be
returning to
Tortuguero.



Recent logging has taken place on two properties belonging to local landholder Dídimo Cambronero, who, despite not being a titled owner, obtained a permit to cut down 147 trees within a 32-hectare area, explained Calvo. According to Obando, none of the landholders in the area has title. "If you look for these properties in the National Registry, you won't find any record of them", said Obando. "I doubt many of these people even have possession rights."

The work was carried out by veteran local logger Jose Bermúdez, known as "Macho Lalo", with equipment supplied by Plywood. The company, which has a large lumberyard in Moín Port, at the entrance point of the canal route to Tortuguero, is believed to be responsible for much of the past deforestation in the area.

During a visit to Cambronero's property, Tico Times reporters followed a wide swathe cut into the forest, with deep tractor marks, used to drag logs to the canal shoreline. Stretching approximately two kilometres towards the main logging site close to the National Park border, the path is littered with fallen tree trunks and large stumps.

According to Manual Torres, who was operating a bulldozer in Cambronero's property during The Tico Times' visit, the logging was completed last week, and a total of two shipments were made to Moín. He added that the work was interrupted for

about two months because of confusion over the permits.

Under Costa Rica's previous forestry legislation, only landholders with property titles could apply for permits to exploit lumber. Now, explained Calvo, one just needs a sworn testimony from witnesses to prove possession of the land.

The wood extracted was *caobilla* (the most common tree species in Tortuguero) and *kativo* -- both used for the manufacture of plywood.

Jose Luis Vásquez, manager of Plywood's facility in Moín, defended the logging, saying it was carried out with great care and following all legal requirements. He added that 3,000 saplings were planted in the logged sites. "We didn't go there to destroy. We went there to build," said Vasquez, who added the property would be ripe to log again after seven to ten years.

Alvarez of Fundación Neotrópica said he could count with the fingers of one hand the number of examples in Costa Rica of logging operations that have faithfully followed the parameters set out in timber harvesting management plans. "What is defined in the technical study is very different from what is applied in reality" he said, adding that much of the damage is done when extracting lumber from a site.



Calvo said forestry officials were reluctant to give Cambronero the permit, but had no choice because he met all legal requirements. What they were hoping, though, is that the Atlantic Port Authority (JAPDEVA), which has jurisdiction over traffic movements in the canals, would not issue him a lumber transport permit, which would make the logging permit worthless.

JAPDEVA assistant manager Aron Ash scoffed at this, saying that the Port Authority (JAPDEVA) could not refuse the permit if the Environment Ministry had already allowed the trees to be chopped down. "They are just trying to pass the buck" said Ash.

The confusion over Cambronero's land was fuelled by contradictions in what forestry officials themselves were saying. The logging permit was issued late last year, but after a formal complaint filed by local community members, it was suspended and an inspection ordered. Inspectors concluded that the area to be logged fell within the National Park's border. However, the loggers appealed, and a second inspection was performed using Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment, which overruled the first report.

A total of 7,750 hectares were bought by Fundación Neotrópica, handed over in two lots. The second, comprising 2,250 hectares, which was

transferred to the state in December, 1996, has yet to be officially declared National Park lands, explained Alvarez.

Only 150 hectares of the original National Park area are still in private hands, said Conservation Area director Herrera.

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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP, PLEASE WRITE A POLITE LETTER TO:

Sra. Elizabeth Odio
Vice Presidente y Ministerio del Ambiente
10104-6000
San Jose
Costa Rica

Sr. Guillermo Castro
350 Sur
Carretera 4 Reina
Plywood Costaricense S.A.
Colimbra, Trebol
Costa Rica

In Canada:
Mr. Manfred de Sasso
Consul General Remunerado
Embajada de Costa Rica
135 York St., Suite 208
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5T4

In the United States:
Mr. Jose Thompson
Consul
Embajada de Costa Rica
2112 S Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.
20008

INTERESTING STATISTICS

Rainforests currently cover about 5% of the Earth's surface, but are home to 50% of the known animals.



Costa Rica covers 50,895 square kilometers
Population is Three Million

It is the only democracy in Central America and is located between Nicaragua and Panama
Costa Rica is a tropical country which contains several distinct climatic zones. There is no winter or summer as such and most regions have a rainy season from May to November, and a dry season from December to April. Annual rainfall averages 100 inches nationwide, with some mountainous regions getting as much as 25 feet on exposed eastern slopes. Temperature is more a matter of elevation than location, with a mean of around 72 degrees in the Central Valley, 82 degrees on the Atlantic coast and 89 degrees on the Pacific Coast.

THE CAÑO PALMA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

by

Victoria Y. Chow, volunteer from Vancouver,
B.C.

Sometimes, the truly delightful things are lost between the hustle and bustle of life. One of the most memorable things I will take with me from Caño Palma is the simple pleasure of listening.

Some say they escape from the city to the country for a little peace and quiet, but in the wildness of the rainforest peace and quiet is synonymous with noise. Playing from dawn until dusk and through the night, let me introduce the Caño Palma Philharmonic Orchestra.

As with any orchestra, life's constraints make complete rehearsals difficult; different musicians ply their talents throughout the day and night after their work is done, or sometimes even while they are working. In the morning, a cacophony of bellows echo through the canopy as howler monkeys voice their pleasure during their feeding frenzy. In the afternoon, the liquid-velvet voice of the Montezuma's Oropendola flows across the banks of the canal and into the station; I know this bird only by its lovely voice.

In the evening and deep into the moon-streaked night, the luring mating calls of the myriad of frogs inhabiting the canal sing me to sleep. Between these solos are the whirring wings of the tiny hummingbirds, the chatter of the numerous small tanagers, swifts and swallows,

and the simple yet resounding clack of the gecko -- each one celebrating life in its own distinct way. Through it all, as it has been over the ages, is the constant chirruping of the cicadas keeping time until the dawn breaks. Occasionally, if I am truly lucky, I hear the splash of long webbed toes skipping over the water -- two pairs even, as the male and female green basilisk lizard go about their daily routine.

There are some pieces that only a Caño Palma music lover can discern-- the rustle of a fer-de-lance slithering through the grass into the bushes, or the smooth water *splooosh* of a caiman diving in the night. The scratch of an iguana clawing up to its favourite branch to bask in the midday sun, or the soft flutter from a family of bats moving to their favourite roosting place. And for true devotees? They are rewarded with the powerful roar of the endangered jaguar; a musician so beautiful and so rare that they are coveted nearly to extinction. Without a doubt, these subtle nuances are always lost to the uninitiated, the dispassionate guest of the natural world.

Some come to the tropics to get away from the rains and to spend some time in the sun. The curtains of rain at Caño Palma are simply an interlude, an intermission if you will. It is as if our world, our theatre, has been changed after the rains. The dark obsidian waters reflect a thousand shades of new emeralds glittering under a sky so blue as the clouds wisp away with the winds. A richness, a lushness of leaves unfurled to drink in life-giving rains now soak in warmth for growth. And even now, a new musician has emerged. The softly syncopating drip of waters slipping off the grassy reeds to

ripple the smooth canal as tiny fish dart beneath the depths beneath. A sound deceptively innocuous, yet the power of innumerable drops have shaped the form of so many things in this world.

Our world is composed of simple pleasures. Sometimes it is just a matter of sitting back, taking a moment and listening to the splendour of nature. Ask the patrons of Caño Palma, those who have stayed longer than they **perhaps intended, or those who have simply stayed, and they will say there is undeniably no better orchestra in the world.**

ONLINE RESOURCES

For those members hooked up to the Internet, here are some interesting websites:

COTERC <http://home.interhop.net/~coterc>
 CONSLINK (listserv@sivm.si.edu) - run by the Smithsonian Insitutions's Conservation and Research Center
 ELECTRONIC ZOO
 (<http://netvet.wustl.edu/e-zoo.html>) - this is probably the most comprehensive list of animal-related computer resources
 U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
<http://www.fws.gov/>

