
RAPHIA



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TROPICAL TREAT NEWS

SPECIAL!!

Tropical Treat is just around the corner —
October 2nd, 1999. Don't miss out on this
exciting fund-raising event. Order your
tickets now!

**Atrium, Toronto Zoo
October 2, 1999**

**Join us for a wonderful
Tropical Dinner!
Silent and Live Auctions!
Tombola!
Dancing!**

All this for only \$45.00 per person

**Contact the COTERC office NOW for
YOUR tickets!**

**(905) 831-8809 Fax (905) 831-4203
email coterc@interhop.net**

For those people who are unable to attend the
Tropical Treat, we have a special treat. On
certain selected items listed on Pages 7 & 8,
you can make an advance reserved bid, either by
phone, fax or e-mail. Check over the list, and
place your bid. We accept Visa, MasterCard or
Cheque. All messages will be picked up until one
hour before the event (i.e. 5:00 p.m.) on the
evening of October 2nd. All successful bidders
(present or absent) will be notified at the close
of bidding, and arrangements will be made to
deliver the item. Bidders must pay for the
delivery charges involved.

Look over the list of exciting items and place
your bid today!! Just call, fax or e-mail the
COTERC office.

Join us in our fund-raising efforts. This year's
proceeds will go towards the expansion and
renovation of Caño Palma Biological Station.

Canadian Organization for Tropical Education &
Rainforest Conservation
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Pickering, Ontario L1V 2R6
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MOTHS ON THE CERRO

by Jake Wickham, Fredonia University, New York

As the generator whirrs and hums to life, a white sheet is illuminated far above the canopy layer on the Cerro, Tortuguero. Standing alone, a presence in itself, the Cerro is an ancient remnant of a once active volcano. The Cerro is located just across the canal from Caño Palma Biological Station. Rumoured to be over 60 million years old, one can only imagine a once thriving island, or a mountain of fire and fury. Just thinking about its geological age gives you a sense of respect for the Cerro. For over fifty million years standing in its own right, long before Central America even rose from the ocean a mere seven million years ago. Recently annexed by silt and sediment deposits of Tortuguero's vast river system and weathered by the trades, the Cerro stands at 119 meters, but I'm sure it's shorter than that. Erosion has quickened its pace with the arrival of the booming tourist industry. Too many people, like me, have traversed the only path (or gash) ascending to the summit. The trail becomes a raging rapid during a rainstorm. I got the lucky opportunity to see this firsthand early one morning after a night of collecting as I staggered wearily down. I can only hope that someday the Cerro will be closed to tourists (yet open to researchers with appropriate permits). This may sound greedy and selfish, but the Cerro is ecologically an extraordinary place. Species of plants and animals found on the Cerro may not be found for miles in the surrounding forests. The Cerro is home to wind-pollinated trees, morpho butterflies found only in the mid-elevations and many other organisms which are not tolerant to the seasonal floods. I guess in some respects the Cerro is still an island.

The view from the top is spectacular. I could see the lights of Tortuguero five miles south. Shimmering in the distance and surrounded by pink, fading dusk light, the town took on a lonely, secluded look. It was beautiful. I took a picture even though it was dark. The sun had beat me this time, adding a challenge to my climb. Every

second counted since my flashlights were packed away. Sweat-soaked and basking in the light, I sat and waited, ready for anything.

The electric-like hum of the insects give the rainforest its mystical feel. Thousands of species, many still awaiting discovery fill the forest with soothing sounds, piercing rattles and whispering whirrs. I await for the night's first arrivals in front of my UV-light with a glowing sheet behind it. My camp is ready, but I know I won't be sleeping tonight. There are too many discoveries to be made. It's the big moths I'm after. Nocturnal by nature, some are rarely seen as they spend most of the day hiding in different ways. Deceived by my own eyes, it's amazing the way some moths resemble inanimate objects such as dead leaves, bark or brush. Ah ha! My first arrival! If it hadn't landed on a white sheet, I know I would never find this one in the forest by daylight. This moth looks exactly like a dead leaf, lining up the mock central vein on each of its four wings. I touch it and it falls just like a leaf! Amazing! Others still have a perfect blend of greens and browns, probably to fit a specific tree. Zooming by my ear is a giant sphinx moth *Psuesosphinx tetrio* — a female loaded with eggs. Over six inches in wingspan and thick, heavy bodies many of these sphinx moths are sighted by local boatmen at night over the canals. Spectacular fliers, these moths attain speeds of 30-4 kmph and can fly upside-down and backwards. They are often mistaken for hummingbirds while visiting flowers because of their hovering flight and their long tongues. I measured the proboscis (nose) of one specimen to be 8 inches (20 cm)! Look at this one!! It looks and behaves just like a praying mantis with its legs folded in front. I provoked it and it attacked me!! Harmless of course, but it had me fooled for a second.

By midnight the sheet is blanketed with moths. Looking out over the Rio Tortuguero I realize I'm attracting more than moths. Curious locals in boats armed with spotlights were making their five-mile journey to the mouth of the Rio Tortuguero towards me. Navigating

the canals at night is a dangerous matter. When the armada reached the base of the Cerro, the only thing I could do was smile and wave. I could imagine how weird the light seemed to them, with the white sheet and light blue tent illuminated on perhaps the most sacred of places. How and why would anyone in their right mind actually pass the night up there, let alone haul a generator and 250 watt light? (Word was around town the next week that aliens had landed on the Cerro).

At 3:00 a.m. the last boatman interested in me turned and headed back to the village. I had a beer ready for anyone who was brave enough to investigate. By morning all my collecting bags were full. As I disassembled my camp, the sun peaked over the Caribbean, bathing me in light, gradually working its way down the Cerro to the beach. Shortly thereafter, the morning charters arrived as I saw planes pass by at eye level. I collected my energy and made my way down the Cerro to a rendezvous point on Caño Palma where I was met by Ross, the station manager. Happy but exhausted, my night on the Cerro was over!

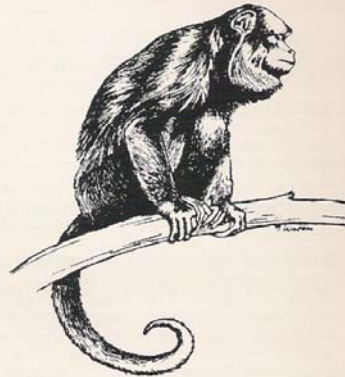
AN INTERESTING VENUE FOR A BBQ

By Fran Mason

We held an End-of-Summer barbecue at Wind Reach Farm in Ashburn, Ontario on August 31st. This was a great setting to meet local members and enjoy the surroundings. Wind Reach Farm has been specially designed to accommodate handicapped people to allow them a farm experience. We were able to provide a donation to their worthy cause.

The hay ride was a lot of fun, and the staff at the farm really went out of their way to help us. The turn-out was not as high as we would have liked, but it is a busy time of year and many people are away.

Thanks to everybody who were able to come, and especially to Bev McMullen who gave a funny and informative slide presentation.



Howler Monkey by Joan Watson

. RAFFLE TICKETS!

First prize - "Leopard and Thompson Gazelle Kill" signed limited edition print by renowned wildlife artist Robert Bateman

Second prize - "Silent Snowfall" signed limited edition print by Cyril Cox

Third prize - "King Fishers" signed limited edition print by American artist Barry Barnett

Only \$2.00 each or 3/\$5.00
 Available from COTERC office
 (905) 831-8809
 fax (905) 831-4203
 Draw to be held at Tropical Treat

COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT TURNS A BLIND EYE TO RAINFOREST ROAD

By Simon Tompsett and Daryl Loth

An illegal two kilometre road has been built through the Tortuguero National Park in Costa Rica and is being used as an unofficial transport route to Tortuguero village. Federal charges against the responsible parties (ex-municipal government officials) have been pending since heavy machinery was brought in while rangers of the under-funded park were on Christmas holidays in 1997.

Attempts by Tortuguero park rangers to close the road have been sabotaged and most recently a three metre trench dug to limit access to the park was filled in by an armed and angry mob made up mostly of people living outside the area who want to exploit the land closest to the environmentally sensitive area popular with tourists. Local villagers are divided on the issue as transport is difficult and expensive into and out of the zone, but most long time residents who have never depended on a road are concerned about issues such as increased crime, garbage, poaching, logging and squatting.

Tortuguero National Park is part of an important and beautiful lowland rainforest ecosystem in Costa Rica supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and is famous for its beaches where sea turtles come to lay their eggs. Because of its attractions there is pressure to expand the number of hotels and businesses in Tortuguero village which is surrounded by the park and has its primary access routes along the area's rivers. Such expansion would increase the volume of traffic on the park's sensitive waterways.

Supporters of the road claim it follows a historic 'right of way' into the Tortuguero area, and this has raised a legal issue that the National Park must challenge. If the supporters win, it could set a dangerous precedent for all the national parks in the country; not to mention the disaster it will wreak through over-development of the area which lacks a zoning plan. Already the road has spawned an unofficial boat service to Tortuguero village which not only mocks the difficult-to-control 'no wake' speed limit within the park, but also opens up the area to increased poaching and logging.



Despite boasting about protecting its national parks to attract tourism, the Costa Rican government seems to be turning a blind eye to the road and hasn't acted quickly enough on the legal issues. It doesn't offer support to the frustrated park guards who are finding they would be risking their lives to defend the borders against the hostile opportunists.

The road is undermining Costa Rica's credibility as a model for ecotourism and is an international embarrassment since funds to purchase much of the land in the immediate area of the road were donated by European countries to be protected by the national park system.



It may not look like much of a road, but this could open up Tortuguero village to considerable expansion

TROPICAL TREAT
ADVANCED BIDDING AUCTION ITEMS

Because many of our members do not live in the Toronto region, we are offering a special way for you all to participate in Tropical Treat. This year we are offering an opportunity to phone or fax or e-mail a bid to us on certain selected items. We will accept bids up until 5:00 p.m. October 2nd, 1999, and these will be used as reserve bids during the evening's event. Here is a list of the items being offered:

1. COSTA RICAN PACKAGE - For two people

Spend five nights at Caño Palma Biological Station to get a taste of the rain forest; Stay in the dormitory in bunk beds; meals at the station are included but extra meals and/or trips around Tortuguero are extra. **ALSO** includes accommodation at Cacts Hotel, San Jose on arrival; **PLUS** two-night visit with guided walk at Monteverde Cloud Forest. Includes round trip transportation San Jose-Monteverde, two nights lodging at Monteverde Lodge or alternative six meals, Reserve entrance fee and Monteverde Guide from the Reserve or Service Guide the morning of Day 2, hotel transfers. Airfare & meals in San Jose not included **Estimated cost of package - \$ 850 U.S.**

Donated by COTERC, Costa Rica Expeditions and Cacts Hotel

2. AUTOGRAPHED TOWEL. Signed by International tennis star Amanda Coetzer (ranked eighth in the world).

Donated by Amanda Coetzer

3. NIAGARA ON THE LAKE PACKAGE

Two VIP tickets to the Shaw Festival for the year 2000 program PLUS enjoy a relaxing two-night stay at the Turner House Bed and Breakfast, Niagara on the Lake. **Estimated cost of package - \$ 400**

Donated by Shaw Festival and Turner House Bed and Breakfast

4. DON'T DILLY-DALLY WITH DALI!

Here's an opportunity to own a masterpiece. One of Dali's interpretations of Dante's Inferno "Souls of Purgatory", Framed **Estimated appraised value - \$ 1,000**

Donated by In Kind Canada

5. AUTOGRAPHED CD'S

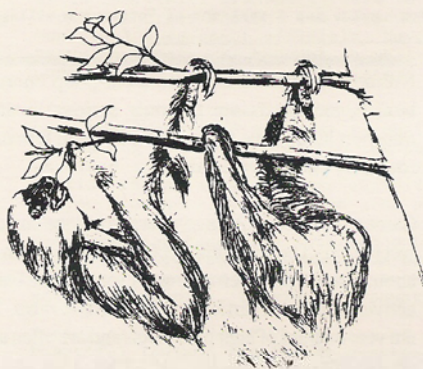
Sir Charles MacKerras is our Honorary Patron and one of the world's leading symphony orchestra conductors. He has autographed the following CD's:

Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68
Academic Festival Overture
Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Stravinsky - The Rite of Spring; Fireworks, Op. 4; Circus Polka; Greeting Prelude
London Philharmonic

animals. They are one of the darlings of neotropical biology. But for me they are as dull as dishwater.

Any well-rounded account of this gormless arboreal beast is sure to include even details of its disposal of digestive by-products, --its dunging habits, if you please -- so desperate are the sloth's biographers to find



pertinent and riveting information about it. They will tell you, these authors, that sloths (in keeping with the rest of their zestful existence), descend from the trees to defecate only about once a week! They are said to dig a hole into which they "make", and then re-ascend to safe haven.

The sloth at issue is Hoffmann's two-toed sloth *Choloepus hoffmanni*. This one is wet from swimming across the canal and is shivering as she hangs from a horizontal beam close to my face. I say she. Yes, she is a female sloth. I have checked her out. I don't get out much anymore.

She turns her bland face to me. She looks as innocent as Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. As opaque and inscrutable as a slice of cheddar. But I am not deceived! I have played poker in my time. Literature on sloths describes their faeces as hard dry pellets, a water conserving adaptation (in one of the wettest places on

earth ...hmmmm). That has not been my experience. This one has dropped out a loose, tar-black creation, an evil-smelling turd -- onto the back of one of the boats! An excretion that would have done justice to a creature five times her size! Perhaps she is having a bad day. I know I am. Perhaps I need to get out more.

HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS

By Fran Mason

On August 30th COTERC had a display table at an event called "Healthy Neighbourhoods" which was held at Nathan Phillips Square in downtown Toronto. There were displays from thirty non-profit organizations and the purpose was to show what charities were doing in the neighbourhood of Toronto.



Daniel & Debbie Mason

Our display looked great. Bev McMullen (COTERC Board member) and award-winning photographer, donated some of her prints of Caño Palma. These have been mounted and used on our display board. There was an opportunity for us to sell some raffle tickets, T-shirts and Costa Rican merchandise. There was a lot of interest from people as they visited the event during their lunch time; a BBQ lunch was available and a rock and roll band entertained.

I would like to thank President Derrick Fulton, Board member Malcolm Enright, Debbie and Daniel Mason for volunteering their time and helping out.