

RAPHIA



Spring 2001

Volume 10 Issue 2

NEWS FROM CAÑO PALMA BIOLOGICAL STATION

Craig Cameron, Interim Manager, has now returned to Canada, but sent in this short report before he left.

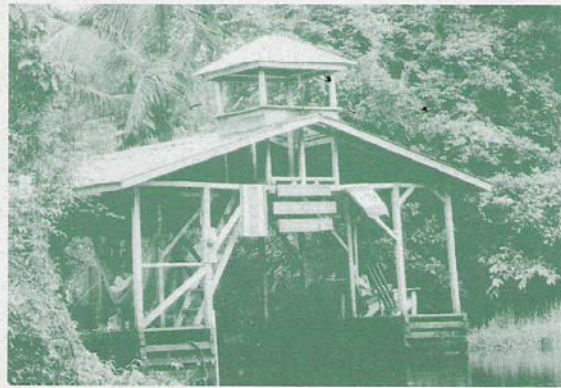
"To start things off, Mario (our guard/gardener) had some luck in seeing a tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*) behind his cabin at the beginning of March.

We had Dr. Michael Dixon from Texas Wesleyan University down for two nights with a group of fifteen school teachers. He was giving a course on bat identification and capture tactics.

Two weeks later we had Mike Burger from the Dallas Zoo, who was given funding from the Chicago Herpetological Society, to survey the reptiles and amphibians of the station's property. During his trip we discovered two new species for the station (see Mike's report).

We have just completed building new showers including new changerooms. We have received our new shipment of wood this week for our final project, which will be re-doing the boat dock.

It has been a pretty busy three months for us down here with the many renovations and building projects. It will keep everything running for a good while to come until again the Tortuguero weather takes its toll!"



The dock at Caño Palma Biological Station

SOME RECENT SIGHTINGS AT CAÑO PALMA

by Michael Burger, Dallas Zoo

The dry season in Tortuguero is really a misnomer. Yes, I had been here before in April when it actually rained very little. And no, we didn't have to wade through half a meter of water

this time to get to our rooms. But it did rain almost every day and it actually didn't quit for a day and a

half stretch at one point. Going out every evening on the trail brought back memories of previous hikes at Caño Palma — I could still pinpoint specific areas where a terciopelo or coral snake was found. This was the first time that my wife Veronica had travelled to Costa Rica, but she quickly proved quite adept in field ability. On just our first evening hike for instance, she spotted a small terciopelo (*Bothrops asper*) as well as a neonate blunt-headed vine snake (*Imantodes cenchoa*). Another

Some Recent Sightings from Caño Palma

(continued)

hike proved quite exciting when we both were startled by a loud crashing sound approximately 20 feet away. All of a sudden a small red brocket deer darted around a tree closely followed by an agitated peccary in hot pursuit!

On the second or third evening, we discovered a species not yet found at Caño Palma. Immediately behind the kitchen area in a patch of dense undergrowth, my flashlight picked up the shine of a small neotropical salamander foraging on a branch approximately 3 feet above the ground. Known as *Bolitoglossa striatula*, this 4-inch tan salamander has a series of striations or lines on its body — markings that aid in camouflaging this species.

Towards the end of the week another evening foray on to the trails led us upon a magnificent 6-foot long terciopelo. It was obviously very nervous by our presence and proceeded to rattle its tail and thrash rather violently about. As we proceeded down the trail, we came across a beautiful bromeliad (or banana) boa (*Ungaliophis panamensis*) - another new species for Caño Palma. The following day Craig, the Interim Manager, found yet

another bromeliad boa while exercising on the dock.

The week went all too quickly though. We decided to hike the Cerro on our last day for a glimpse of the surrounding territory from the summit of the 119-meter "mountain". On the way back down I spotted an annulated boa (*Corallus annulata*) that appeared comfortably seated on epiphytic growth on the side of a large tree. That made the perfect "trifecta" for a reptile enthusiast, as all three species of boids had been found during our short stay

A small red brocket deer darted around a tree closely followed by an agitated peccary in hot pursuit!

— a boa constrictor, a bromeliad boa and an annulated boa. Who said it was the dry season?

TROPICAL TREAT DATE SET

Be sure to mark *October 20, 2001* on your calendars for the next exciting Tropical Treat. This has proven to be a very popular event with Great Food, Live and Silent Auctions followed by dancing to the wee small hours.

Tickets will again be \$45.00 per person and can be obtained from the COTERC office.



CANADIAN ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL EDUCATION AND RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

MONARCH BUTTERFLY MASSACRE

According to reliable sources, loggers have deliberately sprayed pesticides, possibly DDT, on the trunks and branches of the oyamel trees, causing the death of millions of monarch butterflies in the Cerro San Andres sanctuary, located in Michoacan state, Mexico recently. The sanctuary is one of thirteen where the monarch butterflies hibernate from November to March each year, after flying south from Canada. Witnesses stated that the wings of the butterflies had an unusual brilliance and smelled of petroleum or pesticide. Where millions of butterflies had previously been seen, only dead bodies now litter the ground — *in the millions!* Quotes from witnesses stated that "every hole in the ground was full of butterflies, between rocks, in the dust, everywhere". Please write to President Ernesto Zedillo, asking him to prosecute the offenders (a strong-armed group of loggers) vigorously for this shameless act.

Notice of COTERC Annual General Meeting

Please take note that the Annual General Meeting of Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and Rainforest Conservation will take place on:

Saturday, June 9, 2001
at
Toronto Zoo
in the Atrium
361A Old Finch Avenue
Scarborough, Ontario
at
10:00 a.m.

Drive north on Meadowvale Ave. from the 401, past the main zoo entrance to Old Finch Avenue. Turn left and take the next left into the zoo grounds.

The AGM features Craig Cameron (who has just returned from Caño Palma), election of Board for the coming year, plus reports on COTERC business.

After the AGM, there will be free admission to the zoo, so bring your family. The date occurs during Environment Week, and there will be special displays throughout the zoo grounds, commemorating this important event. Hope to see you there!

Sharing the Wonders of the Rainforest with Students - What the Students Taught Me!

by Josh Feltham

On January 31st and February 2nd I had the pleasure of speaking to students about rainforest ecology and conservation. Both experiences were fantastic, and I found the interaction with these students motivated me and challenged me in many ways.

focus on different issues. In 1999 the focus was on world hunger and poverty, and in 2000 students learned about the world's religions. This year the title of the conference was "What in the World Are We Doing?" and the focus was the environment. The entire school participated in the event and more than thirty organizations ranging from Evergreen to the Royal Ontario Museum were represented by speakers during the two-day conference.

How do we make them feel it's not too late?

The first group I spoke to was a group of 16 high school students from the Toronto District Christian High School. This

My experience with this group was challenging and very revealing. The challenge was motivating the group to discuss

EUCHRE NIGHT FUNDRAISER

COTERC will be holding a Euchre Night Fundraiser on

Thursday, May 31st
7:30 p.m.

at Dapp's Restaurant
1755 Pickering Parkway, Pickering, Ontario

Only \$15.00 per person - includes buffet dinner, munchies, door prizes

Silent Auction!

Grab your card partner, and come out to support us!

some issues around rainforest conservation and the effect they can have. Initially questions came slowly but each comment that was made was a valuable addition to the discussion. The revealing thing about my experience was the way the students felt about their ability to effect change. We often wonder why some teens don't seem to be motivated to take control. Why are they not concerned about the way things are? However, we are not looking through their eyes. They are very concerned. These students have been raised on news about pollution, deforestation, disease and violence. They feel there is nothing left for them. This is the biggest challenge we face when trying to motivate young people to get involved and make a difference. How do we make them feel that it's not too late?

An important part of the solution came to me through the wisdom of a student at the second presentation I made. On February 2nd I spoke at an "Earth Summit" conference hosted by the Toronto District School Board. I spoke to a group of grade 4-8 students from schools throughout the Greater Toronto Area. They were amazed to learn about the intricate nature of the rainforest ecosystem from the perspective of the not-so-popular organisms such as insects, arachnids (spiders), amphibians and reptiles. However, the same message came through as with the high school students. I was speaking to one student, Mike, before we started. He was a

grade eight student from a school in downtown Toronto. I asked him what he thought of the state of the environment and what he felt he could do. He answered with a

I think it is essential to get young people motivated.....It's more important to show them by taking action ourselves.

question "Why are the older people telling him (and his peers) that he can make a difference? Why is it being left up to us?" His challenge to us - I'm including myself with the "older people" even though I am a mere babe of 29 - was why don't people in the older generation do something instead of asking children to handle it. Mike was also very aware of the fact that people like myself

and others have heard the same speech that he has. He's wise. We have all heard it. When we were young we were told that we were the future and now we are telling them, but what have we done? Mike challenges you to do something. Don't heap these problems on their shoulders. He'll take action when he sees everyone taking action - including the "older people"!

I think this is essential to get young people motivated. After all is it fair to tell them that we expect them to fix our problems? It's important to teach people at an early age that the environment needs our help. It's more important to show them by taking action ourselves.

RAPHIA STAFF

Editor Marilyn Cole
 Contributors Craig Cameron, Michael Burger, Fran Mason
 Josh Feltham, Caroline McKee

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New Membership Secretary

Welcome to Hilary Lee, our new Membership Secretary!

Hilary is a volunteer with the Toronto Zoo and was part of the group that visited Caño Palma Biological Station in December, 1999.

In her business life, Hilary was a Senior Project Manager for University Health Network (Toronto General Hospital, Toronto Western Hospital and Peel Memorial Hospital). After the birth of her third child, she has chosen to stay home and has some time to devote to other activities.

We are very pleased that Hilary has agreed to take over the duties of Membership Secretary from Amanda Stone, who has resigned after several years of tireless duty. Thanks very much to Amanda!. And welcome aboard Hilary!



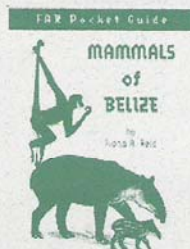
New Pocket Guide

MAMMALS OF BELIZE — a new pocket guide has recently been published by COTERC director Dr. Fiona Reid. This is one in a planned series which will include Mammals of Costa Rica in 2002. Mammals of Belize is a bargain at \$6.00 U.S. or \$8.00 Canadian funds and she

will pay the mailing costs for COTERC members, if you order from her directly via her e-mail fionar@globalserve.net or fax (905) 873-9383.

Fiona is a talented artist and writer and has several books for sale on her website at www.hopscotch.ca/fionareid/

Handy, pocket-sized (4.25 x 5.5 inch) field guides in full colour throughout, featuring species accounts, a map, a checklist, and tips on where and how to see mammals.



Mammals of Belize
Fiona A. Reid
Spring 2001, Hopscotch Interactive
ISBN: 1-894754-00-X
28 pages, \$6.00

A handy pocketsize introduction to 64 of the common and large mammals of Belize illustrated in colour, with a map and checklist, and tips on how and where to see mammals in Belize. This guide includes all the larger mammals and also the more easily seen small mammals.

HOW TO SAVE RAINFOREST AND BIG CATS THE EASY WAY

Computers are powerful tools, and can be used for many purposes. Wildlife Conservaton Society and The Nature Conservancy are utilizing this tool to promote habitat preservation. You can do your part by going to one of these two sites and clicking on the button to make a free donation:

To save Rainforest, go to:

<http://rainforest.care2.com/welcome?w=983437109>

To protect the habitat of tigers, jaguars or snow leopards visit

<http://bigcats.care2.com/>

“Gap Girl” Hits the Rainforest

by Caroline McKee

My trip began in San Jose, accompanied by a group comprised of half “fishies” and half “herpies”, as well as some undecided (myself included). We landed at Caño Palma Biological Station in mid-afternoon and discovered the Golden-orb weaver spider had taken over everywhere - in the kitchen, library, dining hall and showers.

So, the first few hours were a little bit nerve-racking, until we were all sitting around the dining hall, and somebody yelled “Snake!”. Being the group that we were, the majority of the people ran towards the snake in question (not away like normal people!). There, lying in the shrub was a Fer de Lance. I had heard about these guys but never had I seen one in real life before. Knowing that Tom Mason had announced that this snake could kill you, I felt quite nervous and anxious to get as far away from this creature as possible.

Soon after this encounter, the “fishies” (myself included) ventured off onto the other side of the canal to our humble abode. But, underneath our cabin we came across a coral snake, yet another creature that that kill you. At this point I was a complete nervous wreck. Tucked into my mosquito net, all I could think about was the potential of scorpions biting me in my sleep or a tarantula crawling into my bed. Coupled with these potential threats was the knowledge that the howler monkeys would begin waking people up at 5:00 a.m. So I lay awake, counting the hours until morning.

As the morning arrived, we were shuttled across the canal for breakfast, which turned out to be excellent, and not at all what I was expecting. Flora is a great cook and gave us good variety. After not sleeping at all that first evening, I decided to return to our cabin along with a few others for a nap. It had been raining since

we’d arrived and I hadn’t really felt the effects of the humidity and therefore was not too concerned about drinking lots of water. When I awoke from my nap I was feeling a little uneasy. I thought that maybe I was just really tired, but the feeling persisted. I soon realized it was the result of not drinking enough liquids. After filling up on Gator-Aid (no sales pitch intended), I felt fine and learned a valuable lesson.

Days passed and it kept raining. It is not called the rainforest for nothing! Eventually we all had to move to the “fishies” side on higher ground because of the elevation of the waterlevel on the Station grounds.

Near the end of our stay we ventured to Tortuguero National Park in the company of guide Ray Brown, who was extremely knowledgeable and added a lot to the trip.

We parked our canoes and set on shore to look for none other than the Eyelash Viper — yet another snake that can kill - and this guy was arboreal! I must admit I wasn’t too thrilled about trudging through

waist-high flooded trails, but my brother Andrew admonished me to “suck it up, Caroline”. We didn’t actually see any Eyelash vipers, but we did encounter a white bat.

So, night after night the “herpies” went out hiking through the flooded trails to come back with red-eyed tree frogs, spiders, geckos, caimen, moths, butterflies and various other insects. Everyone had their turn taking photos with the red-eye tree frog on their face (except me, of course!).

All and all this was an amazing and interesting experience. Not many people can say that they’ve been to the rainforest in the rainy season.

Costa Rica is something that everyone who has the chance should experience. This trip made be realize and appreciate the importance of insects and their role in the ecosystems. Now, if there is a spider in my room, I don’t kill it. I let it roam around!

New Amazon Tribe Recently Discovered

It would seem impossible that in this modern era there are still as yet undiscovered groups of people living in our world, but in April, 2001 it was reported that a Brazilian government team had met with members of an isolated Amazon Indian tribe. These people have never before been exposed to Western culture, according to a local news agency.

The Tsohon-dhjapa tribe live between two Amazon river tributaries in an area known as the Vale do Javari, and is home to about a dozen tribes that have had little or no exposure to modern society. One can only hope that the government officials will proceed cautiously, in order to preserve these tribes in their current form, rather than encourage them to change.

Logging Reported in Reserve

by Marilyn Cole

Costa Rica has a worldwide reputation for preserving its natural heritage in the form of a system of national parks and reserves that are dotted throughout this tiny country.

One such park is the famous Corcovado National Park located on the southern Pacific coast in the Osa Peninsula. Until recently, this was a protected, well preserved area where wildlife was seen in abundance. Recently, however aerial photographs reveal that illegal logging has been rampant within the Park boundaries. Loggers have been actively building illegal roads and staging areas on property owned by the cooperative called Coopemadereros based in the Southern Zone city of San Isidro de El General.

Officials have confiscated more than 260 trunks in one staging area alone, and have suspended the permit of Coopemadereros. However, the heavy equipment used to cut the lumber was not confiscated, and no arrests have been made. Investigators are said to be looking into whether in fact the wood was cut inside the park boundaries and whether the terms of the extraction permit were violated.

Mangrove Area Declared A Refuge

Recently 3,500 square kilometers in Costa Rica have been officially added to the designated preserved areas.

Cipanci National Wildlife Refuge was created to protect the mangroves and aquatic life of the Tempisque River, located in the Nicoya Peninsula area, on the western coast. Adjacent to the Palo Verde National Park, this new addition will allow protection of this sensitive ecosystem. Filled with mangroves, swamps and wetlands, this area is home to a large variety of birds, fish and mammals.

Travel Hint

The next time you plan to travel within Costa Rica, check out the availability of planes at www.costaricacharters.com or call 257-0766 and ask for Paula

They offer flights around Costa Rica for as little as \$29 one way. Some restrictions apply



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