

RAPHIA

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2 FALL, 2006

SAVE THIS DATE – OCTOBER 28TH

ANNOUNCING THE TENTH ANNUAL

TROPICAL TREAT

TORONTO ZOO ATRIUM

MEET AND GREET – 6:30 P.M.

We've added some new things this year – including a Roast Succulent Pig dinner with all the trimmings! Vegetarians – we have food for you too.

*Live and Silent Auctions * Tombola * Entertainment*

We hope that you can join us for a fun-filled evening and raise some funds for Caño Palma Biological Station in Costa Rica.

Tickets are still only \$65 per person

Get your tickets today. Contact the COTERC office at 905-831-8809

Or info@coterc.org

HELP US TO BE MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY!



We are now able to offer an electronic version of Raphia, and we'd like to encourage as many of our readers as possible to receive our newsletter in PDF format.

If you are interested in receiving Raphia electronically, please forward your name and email address to mstone@sympatico.ca, or contact the COTERC office at 905-831-8809. You will need Adobe Reader to open the document.

THANK YOU

To those who responded to our recent letter of appeal, we would like to send you a huge THANK YOU. Over \$800 was raised from this campaign, which will be used to advance our work at Caño Palma Biological Station.

A LETTER FROM CAÑO PALMA

Hello.

How's life?

That's the first, only and rather stupid thing I was able to mutter to the few people in hammocks when arriving at the Caño Palma boat dock two months ago. I was rather perplexed by the sight of my new home for the summer...I liked it. And I still do, minus the frijoles (although that's getting better too).

I am not really sure how to write this piece. It is always hard to write about oneself and since I was unable to convince Jana of the fact that I am in reality a dog (I knew she wrote the Raphia piece for Jack), she refused to write it for me and now I'm stuck behind my computer.

My first attempt went like this:

I'm Frederik. Frederik van Oudenhoven

I'm Dutch. I'm tall. Very tall, according to some. I'm cute too (according to some).

Tall, red-haired, cute...all that. And available.

But that was a joke.

More seriously: I am 25 years old, born and raised in The Netherlands (where I did my undergraduate degree in environmental sciences) and, partly, in Gabon, on the West coast of Africa (where I saw my first leatherbacks). I am now studying for my master's degree at York's faculty of Environmental Studies in Toronto. I find it difficult to say what exactly I am doing, but being almost halfway through my masters I've found a great many terms that apply to what others think I'm doing: ecodevelopment, sustainable livelihoods, ecology in third world development, rural development, etc. 'Conservation' should probably be somewhere in there as well and it is certainly the focus of what I am doing and learning about here at Caño Palma.

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LOGGERHEAD TURTLE ARRIVES AT THE BEACHES OF CAÑO PALMA!

It is with great enthusiasm that we announce that a Loggerhead sea turtle (*Carretta carretta*) has been spotted on the beach where COTERC teams are conducting the sea turtle monitoring program. The first Loggerhead was spotted on the 26th of May by Andres & Frederik (University of York). The Loggerhead was 100.4 cm in length and 89.4 cm in width.

She now bears the tags forever identifying her as one of those from Caño Palma!

Loggerheads have not been spotted since 2004 in the town of Tortuguero and the news was met with much enthusiasm from the CCC (Caribbean Conservation Corp.).

Hopefully she won't be the last....



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

As a requirement of our bylaws, Coterc held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, June 10 at the Toronto Zoo. Marilyn Cole, Chair of COTERC, presided at the meeting and the directors and executive in attendance were Blue Enright, June Enright, Erika Babiuk, Greg Mayne, Rachel Atkins, Peter Klose and Dr. Bill Rapley.

The main highlights are:

Year-end reports from various directors and executive;

The term of office of some of the director positions were up, and the following people were voted in for a term of two years:

Director of Education - Josh Feltham

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A LETTER FROM CAÑO PALMA CONT'D

(Continued from page 2)

I came here to work on the turtle project that COTERC and York started on the North beach three years ago. The first two years of that project consisted of walking the beach in the mornings to gather information on the turtle night activity by counting the number of tracks and nests. This year is the first time that the beach is patrolled during the nights as well (usually from 8 pm until 4 am), allowing us to get to know the turtles a bit better, to conduct measurements and to contribute to a regional tagging program. So yes, half of my time is indeed spent walking and working on the beach at night together with Andrés or some of the volunteers present at the station. The other half is divided between working on the feasibility study for the protection of the beach, playing soccer (or an attempt thereat) with the Caño Palma team against the San Francisco veterans (and losing hopelessly, although even that is changing), teaching Emiliano that he should eat grass and leaves (but not the toxic ones—his father knows infinitely more about this subject than me), cooking frijoles (beans), and many, many other things.

Perhaps a few more words on the feasibility study: some of the primary objectives of the turtle monitoring programme were to establish whether the turtle population nesting on the North beach is significant, and whether there exists the high poaching rate people thought there was and, if yes, how to offer better protection to the turtles. Since most of

the poaching is done by people from the nearby village of San Francisco, my job, besides trying to answer those first few questions is to try and find a way to incorporate at least some of the villagers (preferably the poachers) into the turtle project. Unfortunately, none of these questions are very easily answered: how do you decide, after working with turtles for a few months and seeing what amazing animals they are, that a population of a few hundred turtles is or isn't worth being protected...? And, similarly, do I (or we) have the right to decide on a resource that we are not dependent on, but that constitutes the main livelihood base of some of the poorest people in the village?

I hope to find some answers though, and will let you know more once the study is done and I'm back in Canada. For now...time for football (or do Canadians call it soccer?).

Frederik van Oudenhoven



ANDRES, KEVIN, FREDERIK, AND MARIO

VISITORS TO CAÑO PALMA FROM MEXICAN TURTLE PROJECT!

It was a pleasure to be able to host Graciela Tiburcio Pinto and her 2 year old daughter at the station during the month of June and to share some of the stories of working with the community and building a successful turtle project.



We were also able to share the great work that GVI (Global Vision International) are doing with their volunteers on the site.

Graciela was able to give a small talk to the volunteers of GVI on the work that they are currently conducting in Bahai California in Mexico.

The turtle project Graciela is working with has been established for the past 30 years over a large stretch of beach, much like that of the town of Tortuguero. There is much community involvement from the hotels along the beach and the locals, all sharing the work in protecting the sea turtles. The project has made huge advancements by having the hotels protecting the beaches in front of their property, so now Graciela and staff have fewer beaches to worry about.

The project also involves moving nests, something Graciela hopes they'll be decreasing in the near future.

Graciela came to Costa Rica with the hopes of promoting her project but also to launch a new ad campaign developed to reduce the amount of turtle eggs that are being eaten in the local community. The campaign consists of photos of models (one being an ex-playboy bunny) stating that 'real men don't eat turtle eggs' (in Latin America it is believed they are an aphrodisiac). Another ad shows a big Mexican soccer star asking young kids to help stop illegal harvesting of eggs. The campaign seems to have been well received in Costa Rica.



Graciela also gave some of her time to the local community by giving a talk to the grade 5 & 6 students of Tortuguero and San Francisco. The day came to an end with Graciela taking a visit to the canals of Tortuguero, courtesy of her local guides, Mario, Jana, Andres and Frederik.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Meade

Schools in Tortuguero Start New Fundraising

Our new fundraising has been going on for a few months now and the project has seen much success! The campaign is called "Eco Bookmarks" and it is helping to raise money for the new high school that will be built in Tortuguero.

This project was started with Antoinette Guterrez (The Jungle Shop) and Jenny (La Casona) to help raise much needed funds for the new building. The students are working on the project, providing them with a chance to get creative and artistic.

The bookmarks have been made by hand from recycled paper and painted by hand by the

high school students of Tortuguero. They all have various animals, amphibians and insects from the area painted on them, and are done in bright attractive colours.

Each bookmark costs \$1 US or the colon equivalent, and is sold in different places around town: The Jungle Shop, Laguna Lodge and COTERC's Cano Palma Biological Station.

We are hoping to distribute the bookmarks in San Jose and to divide the funds between the elementary school and high school in Tortuguero as well as the elementary school in San Francisco.

If ever you find yourself in Tortuguero keep an eye out for these colourful book marks. They are a great keepsake from the area.



COTERC ENTERS INTRAMURALS!

Soccer fever has hit Caño Palma Biological Station. With all of the World Cup activities over the past few months, soccer fever has hit the communities of Tortuguero and San Francisco!



We have formed teams and there will be a small match every Sunday throughout the year. San Francisco also hopes that these matches reduce social problems in the community.

COTERC has entered as an individual team with the help from some of the workers from Vista Al Mar Lodge, also known as Don Edgar's. For those that have never visited the station, Vista Al Mar Lodge is located diagonally across from the station.

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Seven Nests of Rufescent Tiger-Heron (*Tigrisoma lineatum*)

Steven Furino and Mario Garcia Quesada

Little is known about the nesting or breeding behaviour of Rufescent Tiger-Heron (*Tigrisoma lineatum*). Observations or records of seven nests near the research station Estacion Biologica Cano Palma in Tortuguero National Park, Limon Province, Costa Rica are documented here.

Known Nest Information

Haverschmidt [3] provides the first description of nesting behaviour of Rufescent Tiger-Heron in his "Birds of Surinam" where he refers to three different nests. Hancock and Kushlan [2] describe a nest found in Corrientes, Argentina and refer to two nests in zoos. A nest in Panama is described by Dyrzc [1]. The first Costa Rica record is from the late 1990's from Tortuguero NP. The nest was collected by Julio Sanchez of the Dept of Natural History of the National Museum. Unfortunately, details of this nest have never been published. The following text is taken from the Handbook of the Birds of the World (Volume I) [4] and is consistent with the literature.

"Breeding. Little known. Nests quite high up in trees, although ground-nest recorded in captive birds; nest in large platform of sticks. In captivity: 3 eggs; incubation 31–34 days, by female only; chicks have white down. ... No information available on overall status and population size. Said to be a common breeder in parts of Nicaragua; estimated 15 pairs at R Canas in Costa Rica. Thinly spread over much of Colombia, but commoner in llanos; locally common too in llanos of Venezuela, and 64 individuals seen at Hato el Frio in 1984; uncommon in Peru."

Location

Estacion Biologica Cano Palma (EBCP) is located at 10 35' 33" N and 83 31' 40" W in Limon Province, Costa Rica. The station is located on a small blackwater canal named Cano Palma, The immediately adjacent forest is largely secondary evergreen swamp forest dominated by palms and subject to seasonal flooding. Nearby, at slightly higher elevations, terra firme forests predominate. The canal is regularly travelled and traffic is increasing. Sustained drought or heavy rains within the catchment area can lead to one metre changes in the depth of the canal.

Summary

All of the nests were observed within a roughly one kilometre length of Cano Palma centred on EBCP. Cano Palma was searched repeatedly in Spring 2005 for another 4 km upstream and 1 km downstream but no additional nests of Rufescent Tiger-Heron were found. Additional searches along the larger canals and some smaller canals, and questioning of local knowledgeable guides, did not turn up any additional nests.

Nest placement and structure was very consistent. Large stick nests were constructed three metres or more directly over water on branches or fronds. Three different nests are illustrated in the Photographs. In all cases the nests were solitary. Except for the instances in zoos, where one nest was built on the ground, this is consistent with the known nests. Because of the location of the nests, it was impossible to observe the number of eggs present. In five cases, only one young was observed. In one case, two young were observed. In the remaining case, it seemed that no birds had yet hatched. There was no evidence of predation. The three nests reported by Haverschmidt had a clutch size of 1. The nest from Corriente had at least two eggs. Two captive pairs of the subspecies *marmoratum* laid 14 clutches always of three eggs.

Nesting in the four most recently observed nests began in March. In the three prior records, nesting took place much later in the year. In Surinam eggs were reported in May and June, and an almost fully fledged nestling in September. The nest found in Corrientes contained a single nestling and an addled egg in January. The one chick observed was covered in white down (see Photo 3). However, all young birds showed substantial amounts of white which diminished over time.

The majority of observations were made during daylight hours in 2004 and 2005. In daylight hours almost no ac-

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tivity was observed. No nest building was observed, no feeding of young was observed, no adult pairs at nest were observed. Birds were silent during the day. Young were left unattended for very extended periods of time. Nest 3, described below, was visited on more than 20 separate occasions after sunset or before sunrise. In almost all cases, there was some notable activity. This included a second adult visiting the nest and communicating with the adult already there, though it was not clear which of the two left shortly afterwards. Most frequently this included the young bird vocalizing and an adult bird feeding the nestling. This pattern of day-time quiet and night-time activity is consistent with the published reports.

The herons seem undisturbed by boat traffic though they clearly recognize the sound of motors. In one instance, a young heron approached within one metre of observers on the opposite shore.

Nest Records

Each nest observed by the first author is described below.

1. This nest was closely observed on 18 occasions between 2004 April 24 and 2004 June 4 covering 25 daylight hours including both early morning and late afternoon visits. The nest was occupied in early April but the exact date is not known. A single young bird was in the nest over the entire observation period. An adult bird was present during daylight hours on only two occasions. In no instance were there two adults present, or was the young bird ever fed by an adult during daylight observations.

2. This nest was visited on twelve occasions between 2005 March 24 and 2005 April 30. A single young bird was the only bird ever seen in the nest (see Photo 2). The nest was vacant on four visits between April 8 and April 30.

3. This nest was observed 53 times between 2005 March 31 and 2005 August 1. A single adult was on the nest between March 31 and April 17. A single young was observed on April 18. No other young were observed. The nestling was heard vocalizing on May 4, at night. The nestling was observed out of the nest on May 20. The bird was able to fly by June 13 and remained near the nest until July 27. No herons were seen at the nest site on July 29 or August 1.

4. This nest was observed three times between 2005 Mar 31 and 2005 April 11. A single adult was apparently brooding at all times. (See Photo 1)

The following nests were either observed by the second author or reported to the second author by local guides.

5. A nest was built by two adults in Sept or Oct 2003. One nestling was attended by one adult.

6. A nest was built by two adults in Aug 2003. Two nestlings were observed, both more developed than the nestling in Nest 5.

7. A nest was built late in the year, possibly November, by two adults in 2001. One nestling was attended by one adult. The branch supporting the nest collapsed and fell into the canal, leading presumably to the death of the nestling.

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Photographs

1. Nest 4 with adult, 2005 Mar 26, Cano Palma near EBCP

2. Nest 2 with young bird, 2005 Mar 31, Cano Palma near EBCP

3. Nest 3 with chick, 2005 Apr 18, Cano Palma near EBCP

COTERC ENTERS INTRAMURALS cont'd

(Continued from page 5)

Go team Go! Go team Go! Go team Go!

The team consists of Mario García (station manager), Andres Brenes (intern), Frederik (York intern), Kevin Middleton (COTERC volunteer), and from Vista Al Mar Lodge we have David, Chiquí, and Cesar.

The team has played only a couple of friendly games but seems to be doing well. Mario and Andres just need to get some soccer shoes, because one of the main rules is that there is no playing in bare feet!



Rufescent Tiger-Heron Cont'd

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Thanks

The authors would like to thank the many volunteers and visitors at the station who carefully recorded their observations.

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Steven Furino

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290 Westmount Rd N, Waterloo, ON , Canada, N2L 3G3

Mario Garcia Quesada, Station Manager, Estacion Biologica Cano Palma, c/o

Seattle Schools Donate to Ethnobotany!

The Ethnobotany project gets a boost now that Megan Vogel (head teacher) has given her class the opportunity to share with COTERC and with the Cano Palma Biological Station.

Megan and her students visited the station in April and participated on a 3 day intense study of the plants and wildlife around the station.

The first day the group arrived at Vista Al Mar Lodge (located across the canal from the station), they came to the station in the evening to do a sort of treasure hunt. The station staff (Mario, Jana & Andres), researcher Paul Grant, and our intern Katie Field joined in. They had the chance to see what it was like to locate all the mysteries of the night at the station. Each group had to make a list of everything that could be found under each log, stone and around all the plants.

The students were lucky, finding tree frogs and tarantulas to sleeping butterflies and crabs. There was much to be found and the students were keen. There were also lessons on identifying skulls with use of the objects from the Rancho / Kiosk.

The next day was spent in a early morning canal tour given by Tropical Wind, a tour company from Limon, and after returning and a hardy breakfast it was into the forest! Everyone went on a walk to the Tortuguero Hill with Mario and learned some of the ethnobotany that many of the locals have shared with him over the past year. In the night the group of students divided into two and helped with a patrol of the beach and work with the sea turtles.

It was obvious that the best part of the trip for the students was spent in the forest and many hope to return when they can to volunteer and participate in this very important ethnobotany project.

The information that is being gathered has never been collected before and is most valuable for the community and for COTERC.



COTERC CELEBRATES 15 YEARS

Can you believe that COTERC celebrated its fifteenth anniversary this year? It seems as though it was just a few short years ago that it all began!

We have seen many successes and some failures since 1990 when the idea was conceived to establish a research facility in the lowland tropical rainforest of Costa Rica. It seemed like a crazy idea – impossible to achieve; difficult to maintain – but we are still here in 2006, and it seemed appropriate to celebrate our achievements with a party. And what a party it was, thanks to Peter Klose, COTERC Director At Large, who took on the task of organizing the event.



WILLIAM JAMIESON

As the Director of Safari Zoo Camp at Jungle Cat World Wildlife Park, Peter has connections everywhere, one of whom is William Jamieson, owner of Jamieson Tribal Art (www.jamiesontribalart.com). Bill very graciously opened his fabulous home to us on June 22. Located in a loft on two levels in downtown Toronto, his apartment resembles (no is!) a museum; everywhere you looked there was some amazing artefact to view – shrunken heads, Art Deco objects; stuffed animals; collections of old

photographs; mummified oddities – the list goes on and on.

Bill Jamieson is not only a highly respected ethnologist, musicologist, antique tribal art collector and dealer and owner of the Niagara Falls Museum, but is also a member of the world-famous Explorers Club. He invited some of his fellow members to join us; for many they were learning of COTERC for the first time, and a few have since joined our membership. We hope to see



Marilyn Cole, chair of COTERC, presenting award to Toronto Zoo's Dr. Bill Rapley, Director of Conservation & Biology, Paul Harpley, Manager of Exhibit Design, Tom Mason, Curator of Invertebrates & Birds, as thanks for their continued support.

them at future events and perhaps even pay a visit to Cano Palma Biological Station.

Fortified with various hors d'œuvres and liquid refreshment, guests had the opportunity to meet some live creatures up close and personal. For many this was the opportunity of a lifetime to have a snake around their shoulders, to touch a spider, to commune with a parrot. The evening was packed with lively discussions, Latin American music and a minimum of speeches!

Marilyn Cole, co-founder and chair of COTERC,

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GVI Volunteer Donates to San Francisco

It is with a huge thank you that we place this article in the Raphia newsletter!



Benjamin Dickey, also known around camp as 'Dickey', was able to donate \$250 US to the elementary school in San Francisco.

Dickey was a GVI volunteer during the first phase at the station. Because he had done previous work in schools in Costa Rica and could understand a little Spanish, he was able to participate on two occasions in the Environmental Education program that COTERC has at the school of San Francisco in Tortuguero.

He has since returned to the United States (he was only in the program for 5 weeks) but was very much inspired by the work being done and aware of the needs the school has for materials and equipment.

COTERC CELEBRATES 15 YEARS

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reminisced about some of the highlights that have occurred over the past fifteen years, and emphasized that everyone who has been a member or volunteer has contributed to the success of the organization.

We owe a huge THANK YOU to Bill Jamieson for being a gracious host and also to the following people who brought their animals to share with our guests:

Jeff Hathaway and Jenny Pearce from Sciensational Ssnakes

Amanda Heaton, Dan Sokolowski & Krista Gooderham from the Reptile Store

Danielle and Mark Sciara (the "parrot" people)

Gerry, Donnell & Anastasia Gasbarrini from Safari Zoo Camp



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

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Director of Finance - Barry McKee

Director of Marketing - David Hennessey

Chair - Marilyn Cole

Vice-Chair - Malcolm Enright

Director of Site Services - Greg Mayne

All positions except Director of Site Services Greg Mayne are returning for another term. Greg's name may be familiar to some of you who knew him as our very first Station Manager at Cano Palma Biological Station.

A copy of proposed changes to the bylaws was presented and adopted. Included in the changes was the addition of two more directors' positions. The following were voted in to these two new positions:

Director At Large - Rachel Atkins

Director of Archives - Jim Taylor

Rachel is a Project Manager at Deloitte Touche, and Jim Taylor has visited the station a few times, and is a wonderful photographer. We would like to welcome our three rookies Greg, Rachel and Jim and look forward to working with them in the future.

If you would like to see a complete copy of the minutes, we would be more than happy to forward this to any member if you contact the COTERC office.