

RAPHIA

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 3 SUMMER, 2007

Greetings from the Chair

I am truly amazed at how much activity is going on within COTERC. I have been off the Board for two years and it is wonderful to see so many new people taking on tasks to advance our mission. The 2007 – 08 year will definitely be full.

Before I start listing activities we are involved in, I'd like to mention the debt of gratitude that we owe to our past chair. Marilyn Cole is the founder of COTERC and has spent much of the past 16 years dedicating her spare time to the survival of COTERC. I know there have been many challenges and it has been the unflagging efforts of Marilyn that pulled us through on many occasions. Marilyn is taking some well-earned time to travel Canada and beyond. I know she will return to support us with new ideas to face the challenges ahead of us. Thank you, Marilyn, for all you have done - and enjoy your travels.

I would also like to thank Peter Klose for setting up our new website and supplying animals to our "Spring Fling" event held in March. Peter has had to resign from the Board this year due to the endless number of commitments he has. I am sure that he will be keeping his hands in as much as he can.

So what is COTERC doing?

Activities have increased in Canada and in Costa Rica. Our education director, Joanna Romani, is working on a new upgraded program that will get children actively working on saving rainforests,

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Report from our Caño Palma Station Manager

Greetings from Caño Palma! How happy I am to be here in Costa Rica writing this from deep in the jungle. My name is Jonathan Willans and I have been the station manager here since the end of March. It has only been three months since I arrived and was warmly welcomed at the dock by Mario "Tortugo" and the station's dogs Maggie and Jack, but it seems like I have been here for ages. Much has happened here over this time and my old life back in Canada seems a lifetime away. While earning my undergraduate degree in biology at the University of Windsor, I always hoped that it would help me get an opportunity such as the one that I have here in Costa Rica working for COTERC. I never

thought that it would have given me the chance to have my very own howler monkey alarm clocks – which go off at 5am whether you want them to or not!

I also never thought that it would give me the chance to have the eggs of a critically endangered Leatherback turtle fall gently into my hands as I lay on my stomach on the beach. I was lucky enough to have this moving experience happen to me last month while on a night census for the COTERC Marine Turtle Monitoring Project.

It is almost July so that means only one

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Greetings from the Chair cont'd

through the Save an Acre program. The Director of Special Events, Rachel Atkins, and her team have brought an exciting new look to our fall fundraiser "Fiesta Verde" that is a step up from the Tropical Treat of the past. Our Director of Finance, Barry McKee, is busy ensuring our contract with Global Vision International is running smoothly and is taking on the task of budget planning for the coming years. Greg Mayne, the Director of Site Services seems tireless while maintaining constant communication with Caño Palma and ensuring that the upgrading of the station continues. Kym Snarr and Ian Wheldon, two newcomers to the Board, are bringing new ideas to the organization. Kym and Greg travel to Costa Rica in June to look at developing a mammal monitoring program. Further changes will also be seen in our website. And of course, we must thank Jennifer Corris for editing and producing Raphia.

We are looking at stepping into a closer relationship with the community of San Francisco. San Francisco emerged from the forest around 7 years ago, approximately two kilometers from Cano Palma. In Costa Rica, our new manager Jonathan Willans is working tirelessly on improving the site, keeping an eye on changing legal issues, integrating into the community and finding ways to improve the station overall. We have two York University Interns working on the sea turtle monitoring and meeting with the people in San Francisco to see where we can make positive changes. And of course, our partnership with the conservation group Global Vision International is beginning to expand to include sustainable management strategies. All this is on top of the bird nesting study, the ongoing migratory bird program and biological monitoring of the site.

For myself, I was lucky enough to lead a group to the station in the end of March. Highlights included finding over 180 bird species across Costa Rica and for me, finding a species of snake at the base of the Cerro that I had never caught before. This brings our total number to 103 species of reptiles and amphibians identified from the area—a very impressive number indeed. Of even more significance is the very generous donations given by the group of six that I led around the countryside. Influenced by a trip to the Ventanas Butterfly farm in the Osa Peninsula, the group has donated the cash to build a police station in the community of San Francisco. The community had asked for this but did not have the funds to build one. A member of COTERC had already donated enough cash to complete their school two years ago and now through this generous donation, we can again improve the community's infrastructure. Thanks to: Sara Yeomans, Brent King, Karen Dunne-Carter, Susan Kunanec, Andrea Beatson, Annette (the ringleader) Simms and her husband Peter for making this happen.

Well, I promise not to make the next message as long. There is so much to tell and so little space. I know I have forgotten others that I should be thanking. I didn't even mention our great volunteers. I'll end by thanking you all for your support and invite you all to contact us with your questions and ideas.

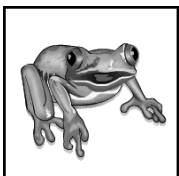
Tom Mason

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 info@coterc.org or contact the COTERC office at 905-831-8809.

You will need Adobe Reader to open the document.



Report from our Caño Palma Station Manager cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

thing down here....green sea turtle season! The season is just getting started and we got our first green turtle nest on North Beach last week. There have been more this week and many half moons as well. We are expecting to be very busy in the coming weeks. Leatherback season is just slowing down and in all accounts was rather successful. There were over 50 nests seen and the poaching rate has dropped to less than 10%. This is great news. There are nests hatching quite regularly and there have been many hatchling sightings and tracks found leading to the sea. We also recently received our nest relocation permit and relocated our first leatherback nest. This was done because the nest was dug too close to the tide line and it was going to flood. It is helpful because it means that we can help to rescue these nests that would otherwise be destroyed, and we all know that every Leatherback nest is precious.

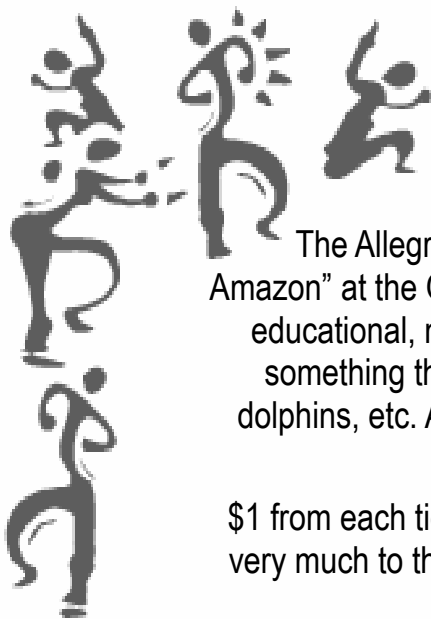
As for the other species of turtles on North Beach, there have been less than 10 Hawksbill nests this year and unfortunately no Loggerhead nests to date so far, however there was one recorded Loggerhead half moon and we are looking forward to seeing one soon.

The interns from York University, Christina and Anne, arrived in May and together "Team CO-

TERC" have been very busy. We are doing the turtle monitoring both day and night, giving weekly environmental education classes to the children of San Francisco and generally trying to interact with the people of the village any way we can. Christina and Anne are in San Francisco almost daily and we all have been welcomed with open arms.

As for the station, there have been some upgrades over the last 3 months. There is now a concrete walkway that runs from the existing kitchen path and goes to the dorms and rancho. This is a welcome addition as it means that there is a safe and generally dry path to get to and from the dorms. The composting toilets that arrived from Canada are up and running. This is great news for us as it will help us to reduce our environmental footprint here in Caño Palma. There have been lots of tins of paint and varnish used in the last few months and the station has received somewhat of a makeover. There are more projects expected soon, including the addition of a new bedroom, a bodega expansion and hopefully an upgrade to our trail system. There is a need for an accessible trail system here (as much fun as it is being up to your thighs in mud!) in order to do research. The goal is to have a boardwalk set up in order to elevate people out of the mud and water, to

(Continued on page 4)



The Allegro School of Dance Raises Money for the Rainforest!

The Allegro School of Dance performed its year-end recital "Dances from the Amazon" at the Oakville Centre for Performing Arts on Sunday, June 24th. It was an educational, narrated show about the Amazon Rainforest. Each dance depicted something that one might see in the Amazon—jaguars, orchids, raindrops, pink dolphins, etc. A short introduction preceded each dance, briefing the audience on various fascinating rainforest facts.

\$1 from each ticket was donated to COTERC, and \$1,100 was raised! Thank you very much to the Allegro School of Dance, and to Greg Sands for helping to make this happen.

Welcome Back Dr. William Rapley

WILLIAM A. RAPLEY, D.V.M., M.Sc.



We are pleased to welcome back Dr. William Rapley to the position of Director of Conservation and Research on COTERC's board.

Dr. Rapley was born in Hamilton, Ontario and has had a lifelong interest in nature and conservation, which led to his pursuit of a career combining veterinary medicine, biology, and conservation. He is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), University of Guelph, Zoology and Veterinary Science, 1971; served his Internship in Zoo Medicine and Pathology at San Diego Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park, (1971-1972); and achieved his Master

of Science, Pharmacology at the University of Western Ontario, (Environmental Toxicology), 1988.

Dr. Rapley is presently Executive Director of Conservation, Education and Research at Toronto Zoo. He is also an Adjunct professor at the University of Guelph Ontario Veterinary College. Dr. Rapley is a member of the Graduate Faculty of the Biology Department at York University, and also of Adjunct Faculty, Biology, Division of Life Sciences at University of Toronto.

Dr. Rapley is a member of the Conservation Council of Ontario; President, Canadian Committee for The World Conservation Union (IUCN) 1998-2004; Captive Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) of Species Survival Commission (IUCN); Giant Panda Action Plan; Trumpeter Swan Advisory Committee, Recovery Program; Bald Eagle Recovery Team; Spotted Owl Recovery program and on the Board of Directors, Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and Rainforest Conservation (COTERC).

Dr. Rapley was made an Honorary Member of the Toronto Academy of Veterinary Medicine in 2007.

We are very happy to have you continue your work with us, Bill!

Report from our Caño Palma Station Manager cont'd

keep the trail from expanding and to prevent people from trampling the area. This will hopefully occur in the coming months. This would open the trails to new researchers and projects and help keep the area from degrading.

I am very pleased and fortunate to be working here at Caño Palma and to be part of the COTERC team. It is truly a magical place down here. From the monkeys in the trees playing down the canal, the beautiful and diverse bird species filling the sky, the turtles emerging from the Caribbean to lay their precious cargo on the beach, the endless wildlife on the trail system and the lush, green vegetation as far as the eye can see, this truly is a great place to be.

MEET THE BOARD MEMBERS and VOLUNTEERS

Board Member, Director at Large, Catherine Braun Rodríguez

COTERC's recently elected Director at Large, Catherine Braun Rodríguez, comes to us with a background in community-based development as a recent graduate from the Masters of Environmental Studies program at York University. Catherine possesses years of experience in the international development field, having worked on projects in Asia and Latin America promoting the expansion of self-reliant participatory community initiatives. Upon her return from living in Costa Rica, Catherine became interested in joining the COTERC board of directors as a means to continually improve the living standards of underprivileged communities in Costa Rica. Catherine is excited at the prospect of working with COTERC to expand education programs, examine potential opportunities with the community of San Francisco, and reinforce conservation efforts in the region.

Board Member, Director at Large, Dr. Kimberley Snarr

Dr. Kimberley Snarr has recently joined the board as a Director at Large. She is an Environmental Anthropologist with interests in developing research projects and baseline data to attract other researchers to the station and to implement a large mammal monitoring program. Currently, she is an instructor at the University of Toronto, Centre for Environment in the area of Environmental Management. Having originally visited the station in 1992 in its early years, she returns now with over 15 years of experience in field work, mainly on primates, carried out in mainland China, the Caribbean, and Honduras. Her interests lie in understanding the importance of the station to the surrounding area, as it lies sandwiched between two larger protected areas and appears to be an important conduct for wildlife—providing essential lowland wet forest habitat and acting as a biological corridor for mammals with large ranges (such as tapirs, jaguars, and Central American spider monkeys). Establishing baseline data on the flora and fauna is critical to aid in understanding fluctuations in populations which can result from climate and habitat change, ecosystem degradation due to human influences, and local hunting practices. Dr. Snarr is excited to be part of the COTERC team and will be visiting the station during the summer of 2007 to begin work on the research programs.



Volunteer, Membership Secretary, Elizabeth McLean

We are pleased to announce the new Membership Secretary for COTERC, Elizabeth McLean. Elizabeth became involved with the organization last September when she volunteered for Tropical Treat. She was very impressed with the work that the organization is doing and the research coming out of the station in Costa Rica. In her new role Elizabeth will be taking care of the membership database and ensuring that everything is up to date, along with other clerical duties. She is thoroughly looking forward to this position and continued involvement with the organization.

Tropical Treat Gets a New Name



On September 29th at 6:30, we will be holding our fall fundraiser, COTERC Fiesta Verde (previously named Tropical Treat). The re-branding of our annual event and the name reflects the new direction that this fundraiser will take. Each year we will focus on a different area, and this year it is “Project Rainforest”! This event will bring together 120-150 of COTERC’s valued members, family, friends and members of the community who share in our concerns and goals.

Our aim this year is to revitalize this much-loved event—bringing new energy, fantastic food and entertainment in the process. Don’t miss what will prove to be a magical evening!

Tickets are \$75—hurry to get yours before it’s sold out! For more information and for advance tickets, please email info@coterc.org.

Two ways you can help:

Donations

The evening will feature both a silent and live auction, and donations of items for the auctions would be greatly appreciated. We would also welcome any monetary donations that would aid in the funding of the evening’s events. Remember all items are tax deductible and we will gladly issue a receipt.

Aside from helping to save the world’s rainforests, you will also benefit from:

- Your Name appearing on the event’s program (\$100 gift or less)
- Your logo appearing on the event’s publicity materials, the program, our internationally distributed newsletter, and our website (\$100 gift or more)
- Showing the world that you care about the environment
- A charitable tax donation receipt upon request

Contributions can be forwarded to our head office. Alternatively, you can call us directly to arrange pick-up.

Volunteering

Events like this are only as good as our volunteers – we need you! Without help, none of this would be possible. There is still a need for help in multiple areas, such as volunteer recruitment and organization, marketing, entertainment, and setting up for the evening. Please contact Rachel at info@coterc.org if you would like to help out. We would appreciate any help in the planning stages and/or the day of the event.



Message from Marilyn

Dear COTERC Members:

As I have now attained the status of "Senior Citizen", I have decided to step down as Chair of COTERC and embark on a new adventure. I will shortly be going on a road trip in my RV, which I anticipate will last about one year (more or less).

I leave with mixed feelings because COTERC has been such a part of my life for so many years, and no doubt will be again in the future. I know that the organization is in good hands and am eagerly anticipating hearing news of great developments in the future.

I want to thank all the Board members, past and present, who have done so much to make COTERC a success. The early years were a great struggle and there are still many challenges, but I am confident that they are up to it.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers and members who have believed in COTERC and who have assisted over the years in one way or another to keep the organization functioning. It would not have been possible without you!

If you would like to keep in touch with me, my traveling email address will be meerkatmarilyn@gmail.com.

So long for now.

Marilyn Cole

Euchre Tournament Results

Our last Euchre tournament held on April 28, 2007 in the Atrium of the Toronto Zoo was another success. While the 24 players enjoyed dinner, prizes and a dozen games of Euchre, they all raised \$485.04 to help us provide leadership in education, research, conservation, and the educated use of natural resources in the tropics.

Congratulations to Gary Muraeami who had the highest male score, and to John Lynagh for winning the most honest male player. The ladies highest score went to Bonnie Upton and the most honest female player was won by Meghan Whitfield.

A special thank you goes to Amy Lathrop and Brad Hubley for all their work in helping to prepare for the event and handling the cooking for the evening.

I hope you will all join us for the next event planned for the fall, it promises to be a great time once again!



GLOBAL VISION INTERNATIONAL PHASE 6 UPDATE

GVI Costa Rica, Phase 6

October to December 2006

Greetings/Hola from Caño Palma!

Another phase draws to a close and it's time to reflect on what's been going on here at Caño Palma.

The phase began with EMs from America, Britain, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, Mexico and Singapore joining the expedition. Add to this mixture a couple drops of rain (actually at one point we had 12 cm in 5 hours!!), a handful of great weekends, a generous amount of surveys, and a top quality jaguar sighting, and you have a great 10 week expedition.

The fantastic mixture of people that Caño Palma draws brought the inevitable mix of mannerisms, sayings and accents, all of which were recorded in the camp diary. It provided a quick reference guide to all those who became lost and found themselves asking "What did he just say?".

Many new improvements to base were made before and during the phase. Local workmen and EMs alike were busy sawing, hammering and generally looking very busy around camp. The kitchen was extended and now has a new seating area (great for relaxing after a hard day of surveying). A new office was constructed inside the rancho (which has proved to be a very popular new coffee shop for some members of staff) and a new recycling system was built behind the kitchen, which includes bins for separating all base rubbish.

This phase saw the return of a Caño Palma legend in the form of Julie Jackson. Having been both a volunteer and an intern in previous phases at Caño Palma, she fitted right back into the swing of things as a staff member and wasted no time by diving head first into a Jag walk.

A jaguar finally decided to give something back to the project in repayment for all those jag walks which previous EMs have completed, and allowed a group of three very excited EMs, and an ecstatic Expedition Manager, to photograph it. The evidence can be seen in the left of the photo and is now the desktop background for every computer on the expedition! The team that witnessed this special event enjoyed the occasion even more by keeping it secret until the brief that evening, when James flipped his laptop around to show the rest of the group the picture. Suffice to say there was much gasping and "really...did you?"

The jaguar project demanded a lot of time and resources and sent a lot of EMs out on the Tortuguero beach to put up our new "Jag cams". This involved scoping out potential spots where evidence of jaguars had been found, such as tracks or locations of dead turtles. Then the new cameras were fitted to a sturdy tree or branch and tested. Testing the cameras involved EMs crawling on their hands and knees, pretending to be jaguars and trying to set the cameras off. It was especially funny to see Rebecca, the GVI Country Director, doing the same! Once the cameras had been fine-tuned it was a "mission impossible"-style operation to get away from the camera before it detected you and took your picture! More excitement was had by returning teams checking each camera to see how many pictures had been taken. A total of five rolls of film were removed from cameras and were quickly rushed off to Cariari to be developed. So far the cameras have

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YOUR SUPPORT IS OUR STRENGTH

Your Support and Commitment to COTERC helps us to carry on our conservation work in Costa Rica. Caño Palma Biological Station is a proudly Canadian-operated field station located near Tortuguero, Costa Rica, and is accessible only by boat. Please help us to continue our environmental education programs with the local children and tourists, as well as to continue to provide facilities for visiting students and researchers who come here to add to the world's knowledge of the flora and fauna of the lowland tropical rainforest. It is only with YOUR help that we can continue to maintain the field station. Money is needed to carry out repairs to the buildings and to replace old and worn-out equipment. COTERC relies upon support from individuals and corporations to fund our programs. Every financial, in-kind and volunteer commitment to COTERC is very much appreciated! Tax receipts are available for donations.

Please join COTERC and you will continue to receive our newsletter Raphia, to keep you up to date on the happenings of the organization, in both Canada and in Costa Rica

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|---|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student | \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25.00 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Donation | \$ _____ | Charitable # 890096 183 RR001 | |

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GLOBAL VISION INTERNATIONAL PHASE 6 UPDATE CONT'D

(Continued from page 8)

recorded some great shots of vultures and EM's legs, but alas, no jaguars. It seems that maybe they have done all their posing for this phase. However, as the project progresses and we continuously improve our placement strategy, we hope to discover the routes that the jaguars are taking and get a real idea as to how many are using the beach.

Just as we have seen the developments of the new jaguar project, we have also waved good-bye to the turtles, with this phase completing the last turtle surveys of the year. However, in this phase there has still been ample opportunity to spot some interesting wildlife such as Fer-de-lances, Coral snakes, Eyelash Vipers, Tarantulas, Great Green Macaws, Green Ibis and Agami Herons, as well as all the usual suspects.

Perhaps the most exciting and interesting sighting of this phase (apart from the Jaguar of course) has been the arrival of a Grey Capped Cuckoo here on base. This species has never before been seen in Costa Rica, let alone Caño Palma itself! On announcement of its arrival everyone rushed outside to try and catch a glimpse, and most people were lucky enough to see it.

A number of night walks into the Raphia trail were organized, which led to EMs creeping through the forest with torches looking for a whole range of creatures. After some tips from James, the group managed to get the hang of "looking for eye shine" and were soon spotting snakes, spiders and other creepy-crawlies.

Howler and spider monkeys continued to swing their way past base. Howlers especially took delight in attempting to wake us all up with their version of a dawn chorus. Some monkeys were so commonly spotted that they have been given names!

The weekend breaks provided some rest and relaxation from all the work happening at the station. The weekends involved swanky hotels in Arenal, parties in Puerto Viejo, and for some, aquatic

adventures in Turriabla.

The whole expedition, plus Mario and his friend Vinny, all travelled up to Iria for a day trip to Barra Colorado. This trip has been turned into the stuff of legends after hearing stories from a previous phase, but for all the wrong reasons. Last time it rained a lot, so it was a slightly nervous and apprehensive crew that stepped aboard the boat. We needn't have worried, as the trip turned out to be great fun and very educational, with only the occasional rain shower. After a great lunch and two very interesting talks from the park rangers (thanks to Mario and Ulla for translating) we took a walk on the beach before jumping back onboard the boat and heading home.

This phase saw the whole expedition heading into San Francisco to have a day of fun and games with the kids. EMs organised games such as "throw the welly", baseball, football and wheel barrow races, all resulting in much hilarity. As can be seen from the picture, it was difficult to tell who had more fun!

Throughout the phase, EMs also helped to plant trees in the village (again with the help of the kids). These included rare and endangered species as well as cocoa trees for chocolate production.

The second half of this phase saw the arrival of the rains. With half the base under water we were almost able to paddle the kayaks into the Raphia, and bird surveyors had to wear full body waders. At one point EMs were able to canoe up onto the boat dock, and it was looking likely that we would be able to canoe straight up to the kitchen door! But aside from the rain we fortunately also had some sunny days, and on days off the group headed to the beach or the pool at Don Edgar's, with the more energetic EMs partaking in games of football and Frisbee.

And finally, the last night everyone headed into Tortuguero for a superb meal and drinks. Then it was back to Don Edgar's bar to sit back, drink and reminisce about what has proven to be a fantastic 10 weeks.

SAVE AN ACRE

Support a unique strategy to establish a wildlife reserve. You can Save an Acre by buying an acre. Habitat destruction is the greatest threat to wildlife today.

We are a registered Canadian non-profit charitable organization (#890096183 RR0001) which is establishing a wildlife reserve in the Atlantic Lowland Tropical Rainforest of Costa Rica. We currently own 100 acres on which the Cano Palma Biological Station is located. The properties nearby are being bought up for use as lodges and farms; trees are being cut down to clear the way to build cabins and other buildings, thus destroying the habitat of many species of animals.

The Save an Acre Project is very special, dedicated to promoting conservation through the acquisition, protection and sustainable use of threatened habitat.

One hundred percent of your contribution goes directly to the land trust to buy land for the wildlife reserve. The money is held in trust until we reach our goal of \$450,000 to purchase land presently available



Help us to save this precious piece of our planet!
Each acre costs \$450.
You will receive an Acreage Certificate acknowledging your participation in the land trust

YES, I want to Save an Acre by contributing towards the cost of _____ acre(s) at \$450, for a total of \$ _____ OR 1/2 acre at \$225 _____ OR 1/4 acre at \$120 _____
Other amount \$ _____

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ Province/State _____

Postal Code _____ Phone _____

Email (optional) _____

Tax receipts are available on request. Please mail to COTERC office Box 335, Pickering, Ontario L1V 2R6, Canada info@coterc.org www.coterc.org

YORK INTERNS UPDATE JUNE 20, 2007

A big hello from Caño Palma Biological Station! The rainy season seems to have finally begun here and I'm holed up in the meal hall listening to the rain pound on the tin roof.

Anne Thompson and I (Christina Macdonald) are the COTERC interns from York University working at the Biological Station for the summer of 2007. Our internships consist of two parts: turtle monitoring and community capacity building.

Anne and I have been on numerous beach walks and now have enough training and experience working with turtles to start leading nightly walks. We have been fortunate enough to see Leatherback, Hawksbill and Green turtles nesting and are both completely under the spell of these creatures and their ancient ritual. We are currently at the start of the Global Vision International (GVI) interphase when there are no GVI volunteers and most of the GVI staff take their vacation. During this three week period, COTERC staff and interns will be in charge of running the turtle monitoring program, a responsibility we are looking forward to even if our leg muscles are not!

Anne and I are really enjoying getting to know the community members of San Francisco and every day brings new gestures of friendship from different people, whether it be the loan of bicycles (without brakes!) so that we could zip up and down the main path and get our errands done, or spon-

taneous offers of cooking lessons – Anne and I are now expert empanada and churro makers. Building on the livelihood analysis of COTERC's previous intern, Frederik van Oudenhoven, Anne and I have been collaborating with a group of women from San Francisco who are interested in producing handicrafts for sale to tourists. While still in the preliminary brainstorming stages, we have had an encouraging and energetic group meeting and have talked with a number of individuals about their interests, skills and long-term goals.

We have also been working towards the goal of having a police station in San Francisco. We are now at the cost-analysis stage and it looks as though the station may be a reality in the near future (keeping Tico time in mind!). Another idea that has generated interest among community members is that of a vegetable garden at the school. This would reduce food costs and increase environmental education and awareness among the youth of San Francisco. We will be talking to people on the school community to determine the viability of this project.

This opportunity to work on a conservation project and with the people of San Francisco is proving to be a very rewarding experience for the both of us. We are looking forward to the next couple of months.

Pura Vida!

Christina Macdonald and Anne Thompson

GRAN FIESTA NEWSLETTER BY TIFFANIE RAINVILLE

To cap off the end of phase 8, a "Gran Fiesta" was organized in order to meet and enjoy the company of the women and families in the San Francisco community. After all of the hard work done by teachers and students during 10 weeks of class, a day of fun and games was deemed necessary on the afternoon of June 14th, 2007.

Everyone eagerly contributed to planning, cooking and spreading the word about the event, which made a huge difference and accounted for one of the largest turnouts of any community event thus far. COTERC also contributed by attending a town meeting the week before and informing San Francisco residents about the fiesta and asking for their participation. Not only did nearly 50 kids show up, but many of their family members as well, especially the women in the community. Approximately 60-70 people could be seen juggling, in obstacle races, limbo, skipping rope, wheelbarrow racing, drawing, playing bingo, pin the tail on the turtle, or simply sitting around chatting. The Jell-O, pancakes, and juice went over well and music could be heard throughout. The kids' enthusiasm was palpable which made for an exciting day where everyone, including many of the women, excitedly joined in the rotation of different "juegos"!

It was important to get the adults involved as much as possible, especially with the infrequency of the English classes during this phase. The women are also less likely to attend other social events such as soccer games or nights at the local bar and are paramount to the kids' attendance to classes (especially our new Environmental Education program). During this event, many of the local families joined the Caño Palma team for the fiesta, demonstrating that not only has a bond between the children and EMS/interns formed, but that our presence in the community is becoming more and more significant!

We are all looking forward to more activities like this one!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

The 8th Annual International Migratory Bird Day event at the Toronto Zoo took place on May 12th. The Toronto Field Naturalists, Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and Rainforest Conservation (COTERC), and Cats in Kennels Program set up displays around the Conservation Connection Centre to help celebrate the day. Bird watching tours were led into the Rouge Valley, leaving every hour on the hour from 8 am to 2 pm. A total of eighty-three people took part in the bird watching tours. The highest number we have ever had, by about double! A total of 71 species of birds were sighted, which is the highest since 2000, when 73 species were sighted. Please email info@coterc.org for a full list.

Thanks to Eric Lopez, Kym Snarr, Art, Greg Mayne and Marilyn Cole for manning the COTERC booth. It is through events like this that we promote our conservation programs and let the public know what we are all about.

The International Migratory Bird Day was followed by the COTERC Annual General Meeting in the Atrium of the Toronto Zoo.

As a special treat, members were invited to go behind the scenes of the Toronto Zoo and visit the Animal Care Centre, where Dr. Chris Dutton took us on a tour of the facilities. The participants were quite amazed at the high-tech equipment and the procedures involved in treating the animals. Dr. Dutton demonstrated how the animals are tranquilized using darts and described how they are transported for surgery to the Animal Care Centre.

We then moved on to the “Bug Room” where Lydia Attard, Curatorial Assistant, talked at length about the insects in her care, and took out a few for the more intrepid members to hold. It was very clear that Lydia is passionate about her job and spent some time talking about the creatures in her charge. From there we moved to the Reptile and Amphibian Room where the animals are kept that are either sick or not on display. We were especially interested in seeing a Komodo dragon – a very large lizard found on islands in Indonesia.

We would like to thank Dr. Bill Rapley, Executive Director of Conservation and Biology at the Toronto Zoo, for arranging this special tour for our members.

The tour was followed by the Annual General Meeting, and chaired by Marilyn Cole, the outgoing Chair. The Board members each presented a report on activities over the past year in their respective portfolios. The Chair indicated that there were board members who had served their two-year term of office and invited nominations to fill these positions. The following were elected:

Director of Membership Services & Volunteer Development:	John McLoughlin
Director, Conservation & Research:	Dr. Bill Rapley
Director of Archives:	Jim Taylor
Director of Special Events:	Rachel Atkins
Chair:	Tom Mason
Director at Large:	Catherine Rodriguez

Field Diaries

Field Diaries is a series of logs to provide an insight into the daily life of Sami Abdelmalik, a former researcher at Caño Palma Biological Station who worked on the ongoing Sea Turtle Conservation project. This personable series allows readers to get a sense of what it is like to venture out into the depths of the Costa Rican coastal rainforest with the intent to enlighten and even inspire participation in the collaborative conservation effort.

Log 4: First Days of Work



Sea turtle tracks along the surveyed beach

The couple of days I was given to assimilate into my new environment were just perfect and an easy incline at the beginning of the uphill battle to save the endangered sea turtles of Tortuguero. During those preliminary days, I was briefed on the extent of the situation. I also conducted literature review to bring me up to par on sea turtle biology. Before I knew it, I was uttering: La Tortuga Verde, La Baula, La Carey, La Cabezona, and other Spanish vernacular along with a mishmash of facts and figures relating to the project. I was a walking encyclopedia! This came in handy for the workdays that followed.

One of the essential elements to the conservation project is gathering the raw data. This is conducted through field surveys along a 3 ½ mile stretch of unprotected beach to determine the number of nesting sea turtles and how many nests are being poached. This information is needed to implement a sustainable protection plan (e.g. having park guards monitor the beach). The beach is adjacent to the station but to get there one must first cross a 20m fresh water canal that isolates the station. The crossing is made by a canoe since the deep murky canal waters hide opportunistic predators such as the Spectacled Caiman. Once safely across, a tourist lodge establishment, which stands between the field station and the nesting beach, is the final leg of the journey.

Some of the main beach walk duties include: **(a)** locating sea turtle tracks; **(b)** ensuring the tracks include one going up the beach and another returning back to the sea (otherwise it was classified as a poached turtle); **(c)** identifying the species of sea turtle that made the tracks (Leatherback, Green or Hawksbill); **(d)** noting if the turtle had laid eggs or if a nest was made; and **(e)** identifying whether the eggs had been poached. Footprints, dog prints that accompany the poachers, poaching holes that are made with a stick to locate the egg cavity, a visibly apparent dug out nest, and egg shells left around the nest all point to a disturbed nest that would have obviously been poached. The fate of the sea turtles nesting along this stretch of beach is unsettling—one more reason why conservation matters.

Log 5: Into the Rhythm

It has been two weeks since I arrived at the station and I have just about assimilated into a rhythm that sets off my days. At present, since we are entering the peak of the green sea turtle nesting season, the main focus of the project lies in conducting a systematic field survey of the nesting population. I awake at dawn in order to carry out the survey. Luckily, since the dorm rooms are situated in the midst of the Costa Rican rainforest, howler monkeys are always there to provide motivational alarm calls, and they don't come with a SNOOZE button! Within minutes of gearing for unpredictable weather conditions (usually WET, hence the term *rainforest*), breakfast is served. It is a

Field Diaries cont'd



The canal for which the research station is named

hearty serving of BEANS and RICE, which is no surprise since it is the national staple diet. Once on the beach, it takes roughly 2 to 8 hours to survey the 3 ½ mile study site depending on the number of tracks sighted and whether I'm working alone or with another volunteer(s). The non-stop walk back takes 1 hour. One should note that sighting a nesting turtle at this time is very unlikely, as sea turtles nest only under the cover of the night. The early start in the mornings ensures that the tracks remain as fresh as possible, while at the same time it is a precaution against the sweltering sun along the un-shaded beach.

Log 6: My First Sighting

Today was like any other day, and I went out with a new volunteer who is assisting with the field survey. The station itself is open to the public, which means researchers and volunteers who are interested in conservation can come and join-in the tropical experience. Visitors tend to stay only for a few days and help-out with maintenance as well as with the research projects. This was a great chance for me to convey my knowledge, conduct training, and meet new people who share the same passion.

On this particular day, it was cloudy with light showers—just another day in the rainforest. At this point in the project, I had noted many turtle tracks but hadn't seen any actual turtles. However, today was different. The sand was at the perfect consistency: not too hard, not too dry. This is perfect for spotting the light-footed hatchlings that leave tracks resembling tiny bicycle tires. The weather also plays a noticeable role since hatchlings emerge under cool and dark conditions. Sure enough, I spotted the tiny tracks, which could easily be confused with crab tracks that meander all along the beach. One – two – three – four – five. I counted FIVE hatchling tracks zipping from the beach to the sea. We followed them up the beach and to a commencement point. It was just a small depression in the sand, which was a huge contrast to the gaping pit the mother sea turtle excavated about 60 days earlier. On closer examination to the point of exodus, I noticed a small head. It was motionless with eyes that seemed anything but lively. "Great, it is my first turtle sighting. Too bad it's a dead one," I bleakly thought. I decided to pull it out of its sandy grave and proceeded to rinse the sand out of its eyes. Simultaneously, the hatchling came back to life as if awakening from a dormant slumber. I was heart-drenched with parental emotions as I held the hatchling in the palm of my hand, while witnessing the instant it opened its eyes to the world. My emotions heightened as the hatchling's energy excelled and it started to make its dash towards the sea. I knew what awaited out at sea: pollution, predators, and poachers. There is nothing I can do, however, as instinct drives the turtle to the open ocean. I can only continue my study in hopes for a better management plan so that one day the hatchling may return as an adult to start the cycle once again.



FACT: This leatherback hatchling may grow up to 9 feet (2.7m) in length and exceeding 2,000 pounds (907kg).

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SAVE THE DATE
COTERC Fiesta Verde
PROJECT RAINFOREST
WHEN & WHERE:
Saturday, September 29th
6:30pm Toronto Zoo Atrium
FEATURING:

- ◆ Live Entertainment
- ◆ Silent & Live Auctions
- ◆ Speakers
- ◆ A Great Deal of Fun!

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