



RAPHIA

Fall 2008 Volume 17, Issue 4

**RAPHIA IS THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE
CANADIAN ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL EDUCATION
AND RAINFOREST CONSERVATION**



COTERC Fiesta Verde

PROJECT FROG

Saturday, October 25
Toronto Zoo 6:30 pm
Featuring:

- Live Entertainment
- Dinner
- Silent & Live Auction
- Educational Speakers

For tickets or more information, call 905-831-8809 or email info@coterc.org

**Tickets are still only \$75 each
Get Yours Today!!**

Jonathan Willans
Station Manager

GREETINGS FROM CAÑO PALMA

It has been a very busy time around the station over the past month or so. It is nearly the end of the Green turtle season here, and there has been a lot of turtle activity on North Beach. There have been a few nights this past week where over 60 tracks have been recorded by our patrols on the small 5km stretch of beach. As well as adult females coming to nest, we have seen a large number of hatchling tracks heading off to see.

There were 8 nests that emptied their precious contents onto the sand just last night. It is a very incredible time to be here patrolling. Our "Little Summer" is in full swing bringing sunny days and clear skies at night. The Milky Way is a constant companion as we are walking at night and the shooting star counts have reached over 20 in a single patrol. Add in the fact that you generally will encounter 4-5 nesting turtles in a night and one can see why

this is a special time to be here.

All is not perfect on our small nesting beach though. There are still adult Greens that have been taken. It is a very disappointing feeling to encounter a track coming up from the sea and to follow it up the beach and find that someone has beaten you to the turtle. The drag marks leading into the vegetation and the footmarks are reminders that we are not the only ones patrolling the beaches at night. The single turtle track found the next day by the morning patrol marks the site where instead of new life beginning, we find that a life has ended.

Hope is not lost though. While there are a small number of turtles being taken from our beach, there are far more turtles nesting and trying to make sure the next generation will continue. We have to be positive. For me, I find positive signs with almost every exca-

vated nest. When hatchling tracks confirm that a nest has hatched, we later excavate to see the results of the nest.

This week alone, we have excavated over 10 hatched nests and seen hatchling success of over 90%. Also, there were 15 live hatchlings that were encountered and released into the sea. Although these 15 hatchlings will not replace the invaluable adult females taken from the population, when you watch these little turtles head into the sea and make their way over the breakers, you feel that hope is not lost and you block out the fact that there are people working against us in the struggle to keep these amazing creatures alive. At that moment in time, all is right with the world.

All the best from Costa Rica,

Jonathan

WANTED: AUCTION ITEMS FOR FIESTA VERDE

On October 25th, 2008, we will be holding our fall fundraiser, COTERC Fiesta Verde: Project Frog. 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. There will be a silent and live auction, dinner, and educational presentations.

We would like to offer you the opportunity to donate items for the silent and live auction. These auction items are a large contributor to the success at this event. Likewise, any monetary donations that would aid in the funding of the evening's events would also be greatly appreciated. With your support, COTERC will be able to continue providing leadership in education, research and conservation and the educated use of natural resources in the tropics. By donating auction or monetary items, you would help to save the world's rainforests and benefit from:*

- Your name appearing in Raphia
- Your name listed among contributors on our official website
- Exposure to all those who attend the event, which strengthens your reputation among key players in the environmental community
- A charitable tax donation receipt

For those who would like to become a sponsor with a monetary donation of \$1,000 or more, we would also place your logo/name on the event's publicity materials and program, mention your organization as a sponsoring partner in all communications, and provide two tickets to the event.*

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

We thank you in advance for your participation and support!

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Well the summer that wasn't finally showed itself this week. It's the first week in September and July just showed up. COTERC has had a very busy summer.

We have been working on two big projects. We are on the final stages of developing an educational program on the rainforest for high schools. The program follows the curriculum and should be available very soon. Directors have also been working on a package for approaching corporate supporters. Both these tasks are huge and hopefully will help us move ahead in Canada.

In Costa Rica, we are moving as well. The sea turtle program has been a great success and we have a PhD student interested in going down and doing work on the project. This is in part a result of the grant from the Donner Foundation. As always we are looking for volunteers for the interim periods when GVI is between volunteers. If you want to help and would enjoy walking a tropical beach into the wee hours, then please call us. We can use your help. The nesting bird program has also done extremely well. This season has us looking towards the 200 species level in the program. It is volunteer efforts that have made this successful.

Tom Mason, Chair

Jonathan Willans was also able to get back to Ontario for his first visit home in a year and a half. It was great seeing him and we thank him for being so dedicated. Jonathan returned to the station to resume his duties. He will be joined shortly with some other Canadians. Sami Abdelmalik, an MES student from York has headed down to set up an environmental program for the school in San Francisco. Sami will be there for several months working with the school to help make a change. Joining Jonathan and Sami will be one of our past directors, Josh Feltham. Josh and his family are going down for a year. He will be helping out at the station while working on projects of his own. Good luck to Sami, Josh and family.

Finally I'd like to thank a couple of people. The first is Dr. Bruce Gill for his wonderful contribution. This great donation has added a substantial amount to our Adopt an Acre program. The second person I wish to thank is Marilyn Cole, who has just returned from her trip around most of the US and Canada. She has taken over the role of editor of *Raphia* and we are very thankful that she has agreed to do this.

Remember to buy a raffle ticket if you want to take a trip to Costa Rica. We will be going down in March and one lucky person will be getting a free trip. It won't be you if you don't buy a ticket.

COTERC AT REPTILE EXPO

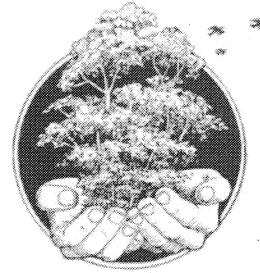
COTERC was once again present at the Reptile Expo held in Mississauga on September 21, 2008 and represented by Malcolm and June Enright along with Caroline Greenland. Special thanks to Grant Crossman who has been organizing the event and not only providing COTERC with space but who has also put up the backing for the lottery to win a trip to Costa Rica. Ticket sales were brisk as this is an exciting trip with a limit of only 1,000 tickets being issued. The draw is scheduled to be held January 1, 2009. See a COTERC representative and learn how you can get there or call the office to ensure you have your tickets on hand. Tickets are \$5.00 each or 5 for \$20.00!

June Enright, Executive Director



COTERC Director of Education Caroline Greenland manning the booth at Reptile Expo

COTERC



CANADIAN ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL
EDUCATION AND RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

HERP TOURS TO COSTA RICA

***SEE THEM**
***SUPPORT**
THEM
***CONSERVE**
THEM

Take a guided tour through one of the most diverse reptile and amphibian regions of Central America,

Travel with a recognized expert to regions in Limon Province visited by some of the most famous herpetologists in the world.

Come face to face with species you thought you'd only see in cages.

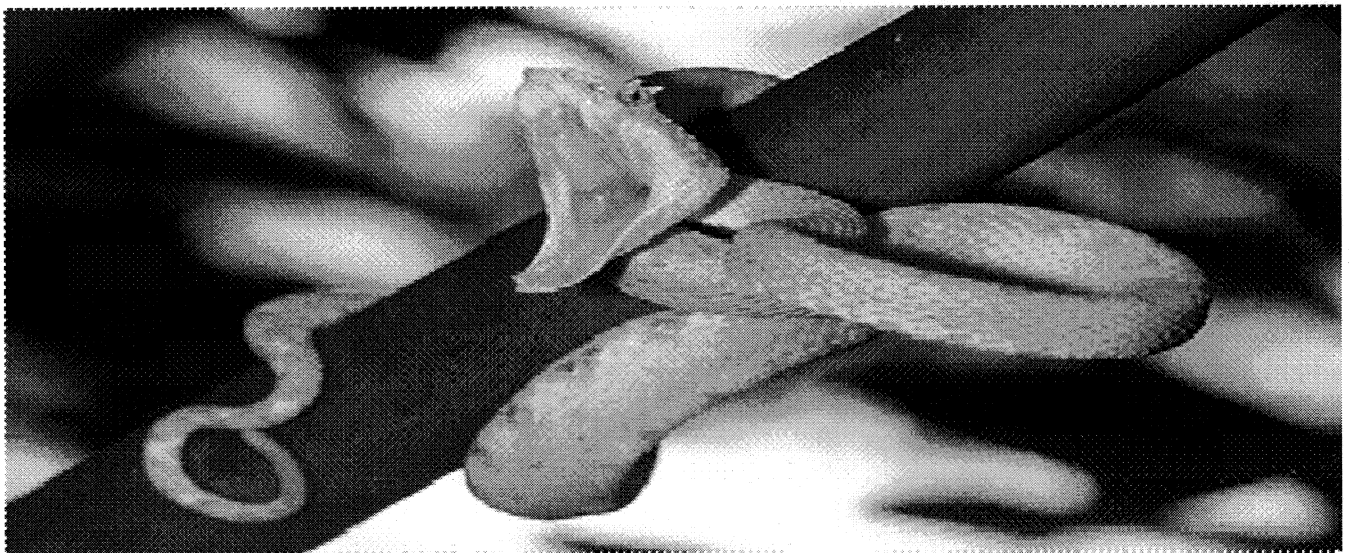
ASK FOR ITINERARY

CONTACT

COTERC office— (905) 831 8809
Tom & Fran Mason— (905) 839-6764

WHEN: End of March, 2009

COST: \$2,800—\$3,000 all inclusive
(alcohol & souvenirs excluded)



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.

COTERC is 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 Caño 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 destroying the natural 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 the planet! Each acre costs \$1,000. You will receive an Acreage Certificate acknowledging your participation in the land trust.

Contact Information: COTERC - mail: Office Box 335, Pickering, Ontario L1V 2R6, Canada
Email: info@coterc.org Website: www.coterc.org

**BECOME A MEMBER IN A CANADIAN
CONSERVATION GROUP THAT IS
MAKING A DIFFERENCE.**

Please fill out this form and mail to:

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Pickering, ON
L1V 2R6

Please print clearly

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code/Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Select the appropriate membership category:

Senior/Student \$15.00

Individual \$25.00

Classroom \$25.00

Family \$35.00

International \$50.00

Corporate \$100.00

Cheque Visa Mastercard

Card # _____ Expiry _____

Will you assist us in our conservation efforts and
receive your quarterly newsletter, *Raphia*,
electronically?

Yes No

Please let us know if you wish to volunteer:
I would like to help with efforts here in Canada
Yes No

I would like to volunteer in Costa Rica at Cano Palma.
Yes No

***Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and
Research Conservation***

Charitable Number: 890096183 RR0001

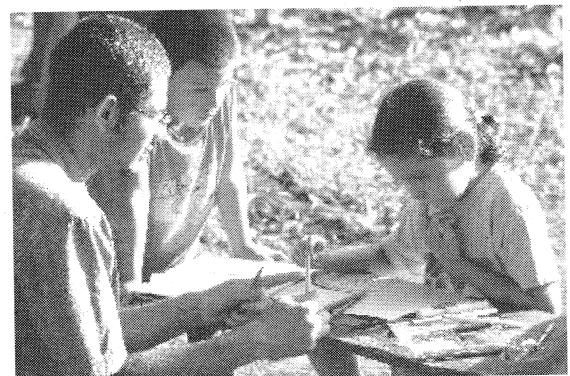
COTERC BBQ

Courtesy of Greg Mayne and his wife Tracey Farmer, a large majority of the Board of Directors and their families were able to catch up and, in some instances, finally meet our Station Manager, Jonathan Willans. Greg and Tracey graciously held a barbecue at their home in Hamilton, Ontario on August 24, 2008. Jonathan was home visiting family and friends before heading back to Caño Palma Biological Station in Costa Rica.

Sami Abdelmalik was also able to drop by. Both are headed back to Costa Rica and picked up items to help them continue their important work with COTERC. Jonathan was obviously excited to have received a new laptop courtesy of Greg and Tracey and a new digital camera courtesy of the recent grant from the Canadian Donner Foundation. Sami is off to work with the residents of San Francisco and has great plans to present a new conservation educational program. We look forward to hearing back from both of them with their updates on work progressing at the station.



Jonathan Willans



Sami Abdelmalik with children from San Francisco

FACT SHEETS NOW AVAILABLE

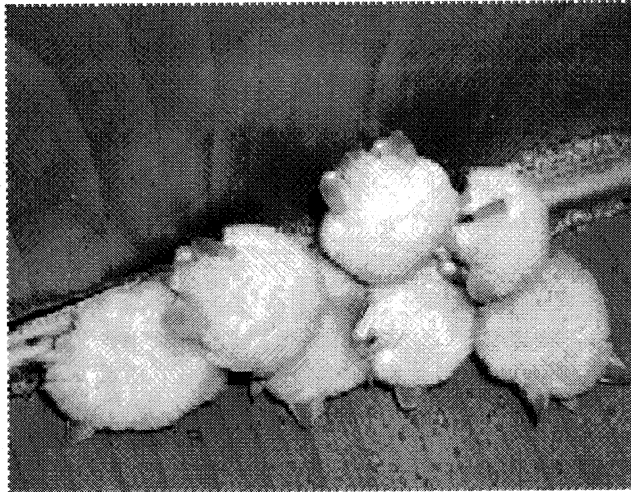
Caroline Greenland, Director of Education, and Annette Sims have been diligently working on preparing Fact Sheets on the wildlife found at Caño Palma Biological Station. These will soon be available on our website. Below is a sample and we hope that you will find them informative.

HONDURAN WHITE BAT

Murciélago Blanco
(Spanish)

Ectophylla alba

Class: Mammalia
Order: Chiroptera
Family: Phyllostomidae
Genus: Ectophylla



Distribution

Central America

Habitat

Lowland tropical rainforests

Food

Frugivore

Reproduction

Reproduction cycles are timed so that most births occur in April during the dry season. Each mother gives birth to a single baby.

Honduran white bats live in the lowland rainforests of eastern Honduras, northern and eastern Nicaragua, eastern Costa Rica and western Panama.

They live mainly in rainforests that have a population of Heliconia plant species. They occupy the lower canopy and inhabit dense thickets. They are also known to live in abandoned banana groves.

The diet of white bats like many leaf-nosed bats is primarily fruit. Figs are a favourite. This is the smallest fruit-eating bat in the New World. They also eat pollen, flowers, and occasionally small insects.

Males will form harems and defend their females and roosting positions from other challenging males. Mothers hang right side up to give birth, catching newborns with their knees. Roosting mothers hold onto their babies providing them with warmth and protection. Babies cling to mother's fur as they feed.

Continued on Page 11

ANOTHER GREAT EUCHRE NIGHT

June Enright, Executive Director

Another great Euchre Tournament night was held on October 4, 2008. COTERC was able to claim an income from the event of \$687.72 after expenses, to help us continue our important work with projects here and in Costa Rica. A special thanks once again to the Toronto Zoo for providing the Atrium and the BBQ for the night's food. Thanks to Amy Lathrop for providing great potato and Caesar salads, Blue Enright for being our chef, Fran Mason for taking on the roll of bartender, Karen Louden for helping out with the front desk, June Enright for baking and all who helped with set up and clean up. Congratulations to Keith Woods for winning the Share the Wealth prize. Award Certificates were presented to Matt Vernhout for "Highest Score Male"; Rocky Manserna for "Most honest Male"; Carol Taylor for "Highest Score Female" and Barbara Wade for "Most Honest Female". Beautiful floral bouquets were awarded to the ladies, courtesy of Reddyblooms. Thanks to all who attended and we look forward to hosting another event soon.



*Winners Carol Taylor, Matt Vernhout
and Rocky Manserna*

EDUCATION MANUAL UPDATE

Christina Phillips

The COTERC educational manual designed to stimulate thought, discussion and hopefully some activism is almost completed. This project really jumped out at me when I was surfing through a few job postings on-line. I was looking for a project that would allow me to use some of the skills I had honed during my master's degree in forest conservation at the University of Toronto. I had been teaching senior science courses over the last few years and was looking for something that would really challenge both my teaching skills and my desire to become more active in the conservation community. Fortunately, this project has allowed me to accomplish both goals.

I thoroughly enjoyed putting together the various activities in the manual and test-driving a few of the lessons in my own classroom. My grade 10 students especially enjoyed the ecosystem connectivity demonstration that incorporates various photographs of wildlife species found in the proximity of the field station. Joanna Romani and Cat Braun provided invaluable insights and reflections on all development aspects of the manual. I really appreciated all of their help and feedback during this project.

I hope that anyone who uses the manual will gain a greater appreciation of all the amazing life-forms and resources that tropical ecosystems sustain. Happy implementing!!

*"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
Nothing is going to get better. It's not"*

Dr. Seuss, from The Lorax

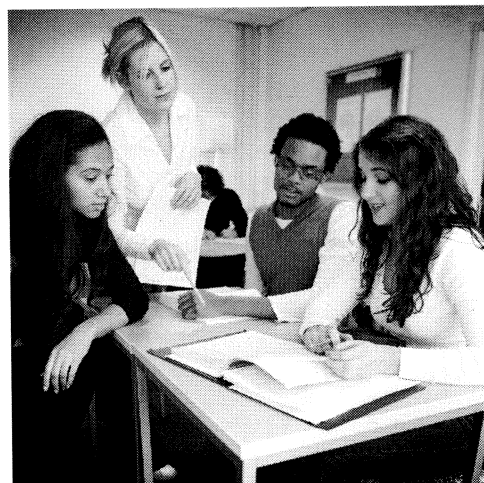
COTERC's EDUCATION MANUAL... COMING SOON!

Joanna Romani, Director of Education

Christina Phillips is the author of COTERC's newly developed Education manual. The manual includes lesson plans tied to the Ontario curriculum expectations, for grade 9 to grade 11 Geography and Science classes.

Thanks to Christina's talents, hard work and commitment, the manual is in its final stages.

We are excited to share these wonderful resources with interested members of the public, teachers and students and will soon be posting the manual on our website!



Field Diaries is a series of logs that provide an insight into the daily life of Sami Abdelmalik, a 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 13: Of Jaguar Tales and Turtle Tracks

In conjunction with the Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), a jaguar survey has been established along a 14½ mile stretch of beach as part of a new research project launched by Global Vision International (GVI). This project, which is intended to be implemented by GVI expedition members, investigates jaguar (*Panthera onca*) predation rates on nesting sea turtles.

The predation behaviour observed along the beach is unusual since jaguars, notably the largest and most powerful feline in the Western Hemisphere, normally stay within the protection of the adjacent rainforest. It is hypothesized that the natural prey of the jaguar may be dwindling in numbers (perhaps due to over hunting); hence the peculiar behaviour. Therefore, the data gathered is crucial not only in understanding behavioural activity but it could also indicate the health of the ecosystem.

As part of the initial phase of the project, I was invited to partake in the first ever collaborative 14½ mile survey. The protocol consisted of walking along the beach and taking detailed notes on observed jaguar presence, such as tracks and turtle kills. Joining me were three GVI staff, a volunteer, and Jonathan Willans, the field station manager. We rose at dawn and started the walk at about 5:00 am. Sunrise was at 5:30 and the beating rays inten-

sified by the hour. The unshaded infinite beachfront proved to be a test of endurance and willpower. It was truly a challenging walk for everyone.

The Southside beach, in contrast to the Northside beach where I was conducting a sea turtle feasibility study, was littered with turtle nesting activity due to the years of conservation efforts carried out by the Caribbean Conservation Corporation (CCC). In fact, this season the CCC documented the greatest number of nesting green sea turtles in 50 years of monitoring. The beach looked like a freeway during rush hour with only tracks left behind by the monitored sea turtles. With keen eyes reading the sand, we spotted fresh



Photo by Sami Abdelmalik

jaguar tracks soon after commencing. It was extraordinary! I felt like an African Bushman on a National Geographic documentary who is feeling the movement of his subject. I was flabbergasted.

Here I am, "out there", participating in events that I used to watch only on the

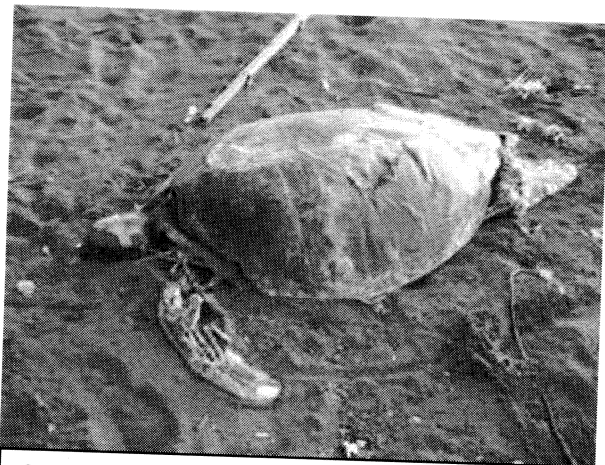
screen. With the rapid African drumming rhythm in my imaginative mind, we followed the tracks. Which way did the elusive predator go? Where did he come from? How old are the tracks? Could he be watching us from a distance? BABABOM–BABABOM–BABABOM! The anticipation drenched the dry sea breeze that flowed inland. "LOOK, what's that", one of us shrieked. A turtle kill! with only the shell and skeleton left behind. Gosh, what an awful stench of death that was. Vultures dot the landscape, hover, and await to scavenge the remains.

There was always a possibility of a surprise just around the corner. Sure enough, SURPRISE! From a distance it looked like a very fresh turtle carcass that was surrounded by waiting vultures. Upon closer examination, we discovered that the turtle was indeed alive. She was in perfect shape, except for the fact that she was on her back and unable to flip herself over. We decided to save her from a gruesome death. She needed at least four people to be able to lift her massive weight and flip her over. She quickly oriented herself towards the sea and scurried back with unusual turtle alacrity. That was only my second turtle sighting ever, and a rewarding incentive to continue to the end of the study range. What a challenging adventure! We noted 15 dead turtles in total throughout the walk that took us an exhausting nine and a half hours to finish in the blazing sun

*For the only world we've got,
Sami Abdelmalik*

REPORT ON FIRST YEAR OF LARGE MAMMAL MONITORING PROGRAM

Dr. Kimberley Snarr, COTERC Director of Conservation & Research, initiated a Large Mammal Monitoring Program at Caño Palma Biological Station one year ago. Stay tuned for the next issue of *Raphia* to see her report on this important study.



Sea turtle predated by jaguar.
Photo by SAMI ABDELMALIK

COTERC RECEIVES GRANT FROM GREYGATES FOUNDATION

COTERC has recently received a grant in the amount of \$2,000 from the Vancouver-based Greygates Foundation, on the recommendation of Rev. Ron and Beverley Gibbs and their son Ron. The grant is to be applied to the Save An Acre land trust fund.

We would like to thank the Gibbs family for thinking of us

CAT IS LEAVING FOR CALGARY—VACANCY FOR COTERC DIRECTOR

COTERC Director at Large Catherine Braun Rodriguez is leaving Ontario for the greener pastures of Calgary, Alberta, to take up a job with an environmental engineering company. We will miss her smiling presence and the contribution she has made, and wish her all the best of luck for her future. Her resignation leaves a vacancy on the Board and **we invite anyone who is interested in joining to please contact the COTERC office at info@coterc.org.**

COTERC AT JOB FAIR

COTERC attended the Youth Employment Fair, hosted by Durham Service Canada Centres for Youth on Friday August 15th 2008. Held at Cullen Park in Whitby, Ontario, it attracted many looking for jobs and volunteering opportunities. Asked by a local Oshawa reporter why job candidates might be interested in volunteering, June Enright, our Executive Director discussed some of the many benefits of volunteering. "You should be adding these volunteering experiences to your resume. It allows you to develop many

June Enright, Executive Director

skills that are employer - recognized and transferable to the work place. Students must supply 40 work hours of community service before being eligible to graduate. COTERC is able to provide these hours while utilizing the skills of students to help us achieve our goals." Discussions were held with attending Day Care providers about the educational services available through COTERC's educational programs.

DESTINATION CONSERVATION.CA

Josh Feltham, COTERC Station Management Committee, has embarked on a wonderful adventure with his wife Karen and sons Liam and James. After spending several years as the manager of Reptilia just north of Toronto, he became disenchanted with the long commute, long hours and the lack of quality time he was spending with his family. He decided it was time for a dramatic change in lifestyle.

Josh and Karen have sold their house and car and many of their belongings and moved their two sons to live primarily at Caño Palma Biological Station while they experience the wonderful flora and fauna of the Tortuguero region.

Josh has set up a website with blog and photos to describe their adventures and he states "To some, it may seem dangerous with the venomous snakes, poisonous plants, tarantulas and scorpions. But to us, it's an amazing way to reconnect with each other and nature; to live simply, away from the pressures and distractions of life in a North American city, and to make a difference by doing something worthwhile, something bigger than ourselves, something for conservation." You can follow the family's life at

www.DestinationConservation.ca. We look forward to hearing from Josh once they have had an opportunity to settle in, and wish them the best of luck on this exciting journey.

Development

Babies are nursed for thirty days. As they become too heavy for the mother to carry while flying, they are left in the tent. They learn to fly and begin foraging with their mothers at about twenty days old. They reach adult size by the thirty-seventh day. Juveniles and adults share roosts.

Characteristics

This is a tiny species of bat. Average length is 3.7 to 4.7 cm. They weigh 3 to 6 g. The nose is very pronounced and triangular, a characteristic of leaf-nosed bats (*Phyllostomids*).

They have a fluffy white coat. Ears, ace, nose and parts of their legs and wings are bright orange.

Adaptations

Echolocation is used at night to judge size and distance of objects. Like other fruit eating bats these have keen eyesight and a powerful sense of smell, used to find ripening fruit.

The wing membrane between the second and third finger is translucent. These bats can fold their wings over their body and still watch for predators.

Bats wings are modified hands.

Status/Threats

IUCN Red Book lists these as Near Threatened.

Rainforest destruction is a serious threat. Natural predators include carnivores and snakes.

Sightings at Caño Palma

Along the trails.

This species belongs to a group of bats referred to as tent bats. They modify leaves to form tents. They roost in these tents in small groups. A roost may contain from one to six individuals. Adults who have not mated roost in smaller colonies of two to four, males and females together. Males have been observed sharing a tent with females until the young are born. Tents are used to roost in during the day. They forage for food at night. A colony of bats consists of several tents scattered within the forest.

Leaf-nosed bats have several folds of skin on the nose. White bats differ from other leaf-nosed bats by having white fur tipped with grey. When they settle on plants, their coats reflect the shades of green or grey. Almost no hair grows on their dark wings. There is a thin, black membrane covering the skull that might provide protection from ultraviolet radiation – a natural form of sunscreen. The skin on the limbs and ears is often yellow or pink. The forearm length, a common measurement given for bats, ranges from 2.5 to 3 cm. Bats feet grip automatically so they can easily groom and sleep upside down. Knees and feet face backward to facilitate roosting.

By cutting along the veins of heliconia leaves, these bats force the leaves to collapse into upside-down V-shaped tents. These tents help protect them during the daytime from heavy rain, the hot sun, and predators. They are built two m above the forest floor out of reach to most terrestrial predators. The bats are well camouflaged while inside their tents. Sunlight filtering through the leaf turns the white fur a pale green, making them difficult to distinguish from the leaf itself. In Costa Rica they only take flight when the main stem of their tent is disturbed.

A double layer of thin skin stretched across their "fingers" and between their front and hind legs transforms bats' hands to wings. To fly, bats move their wings in a rowing motion, spreading and closing their fingers. Their small thumbs are separate from their wings and are used for climbing and other activities requiring dexterity. Bats are the only mammals that fly.

Due to dependence on heliconia and other plants for shelter, as well as fig trees for fruit, deforestation is a constant threat. These bats play an important role as propagators, especially of figs. Twenty minutes or so after feasting on figs these bats defecate while in flight, thus spreading fig seeds throughout the forest. This is a symbiotic relationship referred to as "mutualism". They rely on each other.

At Caño Palma these are seen mainly around the Cerro but also at nearby Turtle Beach Lodge. It is such a popular bat to see that trails have been cut to Heliconia patches just to find them. This is actually causing a problem and driving the bats away.

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Ellis, E. J. *Ectophylla alba* white bat. Retrieved April 12th, 2008 from http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Ectophylla_alba.html





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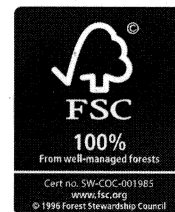
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HELP US TO BE MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY!

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.

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