

Summer 2009 Volume 18, Issue 3

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



Sami Abdelmalik (former COTERC intern) teaching children in San Francisco
(See Story on Page 4)



CANADIAN ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL
EDUCATION AND RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

Caño Palma Biological Station
Barra Colorado Wildlife Refuge
Tortuguero, Costa Rica

What is COTERC?

The Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and Rainforest Conservation (COTERC) is a registered Canadian non-profit charitable organization (#890096183 RR0001) based in Pickering, Ontario, Canada. Founded in 1991, COTERC operates in both Canada and Costa Rica. In Canada, our Board of Directors are biologists, accountants, educators, environmentalists, zoo professionals, media professionals -- all committed and working actively to protect tropical rainforests. In Costa Rica, we are based at the Caño Palma Biological Station, which is situated approximately 8 kilometers (5 miles) north of the village of Tortuguero on Costa Rica's north-eastern coast. The Tortuguero area is an ancient flood plain covered by lowland Atlantic tropical wet forest and is biologically the richest ecosystem in Costa Rica. Average daily temperature is about 26 degrees Celsius and rainfall may exceed 6,000 mm per annum.



CANADIAN ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL
EDUCATION AND RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

CLIMATE CHANGE & COSTA RICAN SEA TURTLES

Sea turtles face various threats from a vast number of natural predators, however it is the impact of human activities which have threatened their survival the most. By-catch from the industrial fishing fleets, loss of nesting habitat due to beach development and poaching for their products (i.e. tortoise-shell) or direct human consumption, have threatened all sea turtle populations, pushing some to the brink of extinction. Many conservation programs, governments, scientists and concerned citizens alike have been working to help save these animals by developing stewardship programs, new technologies (i.e. Turtle Excluding Devices which prevent trawling by-catch) and protective laws. However a new threat has arisen which could counteract these successful efforts – global warming.

As reptiles, sea turtles are more susceptible to changes in their thermal surroundings since they regulate their body temperature environmentally rather than metabolically. Furthermore, sea turtles exhibit tempera-

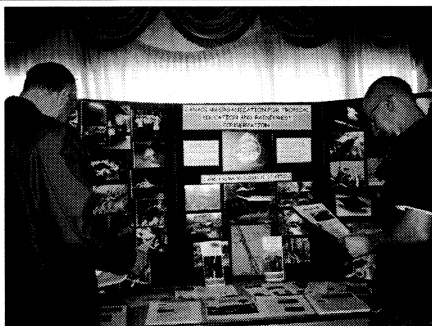
ture-sex-determination (TSD). That is, the sex of the hatchling is determined from the temperature it experiences as a developing egg in the nest. Warmer temperatures produce females and cooler temperatures produce males with intermediary temperatures producing mixed ratios of both sexes. Incubating sea turtle eggs also have upper lethal limits - if sand temperatures become too hot, embryogenesis will not succeed. Thus, with increasing climatic temperatures beaches face either feminization – all hatchlings produced are female, or ultimately - fatality due to lethal temperatures.

Another problem from climate change that sea turtles face is rising sea level from glacial melting due to increasing temperatures. If the beach has nowhere to progress landwards, significant nesting habitat may be lost completely. This is of particular concern in the Caribbean as most beaches are at low-lying elevations and human development prevents inward progression. As sea turtles nest on the beach they were born on, high nest productiv-

by April Stevens

ity is the major source of recruitment for a population. In other words, little to no recruitment results from individuals migrating from other populations. Thus, loss of suitable nesting ground in addition to beach feminization, could lead to complete population failure in localized areas.

Costa Rican beaches are not exempt from these potential problems. So what can we do to help prevent these potential problems from affecting these magnificent animals in Costa Rica? COTERC, in partnership with McMaster University, will begin a three year research project starting in Feb. 2009 to address these issues. Investigations into the current sex ratios being produced and mapping potential nesting habitat loss using GIS technology will begin. This research will allow for conservation policies and strategies to be developed and implemented before the problems arise, helping us to continue to protect these magnificent animals.



Visitors to Reptile Expo held on June 14
checking out the COTERC display

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

by Tom Mason

So, the winner of the COTERC draw went to the station in March with a group. It was the first time that people went to the Guayacan Forest before heading to the station. It was also the first trip that I had arranged but had not gone on. It appears that people got more than they bargained for, but they also got to see species of animals that I haven't seen in 16 years of going there. Animals included an ocelot, frogs and two snakes that I had not seen yet. They were even able to see the elusive bushmaster. I believe everyone had a great time and I look forward to seeing photos and hearing of their adventures. The one comment I heard that was a negative was that the time was too short to really see the station and its surrounding ecosystem.

One of the reasons the trip seemed short is that the airport in Tortuguero has been closed for renovations. The tarmac has been ripped up and the runway must be resurfaced before planes can land. This has forced our visitors to leave the station a day earlier to return to San Jose. I recently learned that the Tortuguero Region is now attracting over 100,000 people annually as a focal point of ecotourism. The absence of the airport must be playing havoc on the transport of so many people. Hopefully it is

back in operation soon.

Plans have been submitted to Costa Rica to have a large tourist hotel placed on the beach side of Cano Palma. This hotel will be able to hold hundreds of people all traveling up the canal to the hotel. The increase in boat traffic may cause tremendous damage to the canal or may force Costa Rica to re-dredge the canal. Who knows how this increased traffic will affect the wildlife of the area? Talking to the owners and attempting to minimize the impact on the wildlife will be another major task that staff at Caño Palma Biological Station will have to address. It is very possible that the decline in the global economy will slow the progress of the hotel. We can only hope and try to prepare.

In the meantime, work continues on our projects. The bird breeding study continues; the large mammal monitoring study is into its second year and of course the sea turtle work continues.

However the biggest news is that our manager, Jonathan Willans has decided to move on. Jon has spent two years at the station and accomplished a tremendous amount of work. The showers and laundry room have recently been replaced; the Colibri Trail is now predomi-

nantly a board walk so the habitat will have minimal disturbance, composting toilets are now installed and concrete trails are now in the compound so muddy puddles are greatly reduced. Jonathan's energy and cooperative nature will be sorely missed. Jonathan is planning on spending some time at the Caribbean Conservation Corporation working on sea turtles before he returns to Ontario.

I personally feel that the Board and COTERC as a whole owe a lot to Jonathan and I thank him very much for the effort and time he has spent on conservation and upgrading that he has done over the past two years. We wish him the best in whatever he decides to do.

So, in the next period we will be searching for a new manager. We hope to have Josh Feltham of Destination Conservation to cover the position until someone is found, so that our programs will continue.

May ends my second year as Chairman of the Board. It has been a pleasure serving COTERC over this time and whether I continue in this position in the next year or not, I plan on continuing to help COTERC move forward in the coming year. *(Editor's note: Tom is still the Chair as of June 30th).*

COTERC WISH LIST

- * Binoculars and Spotting Scope
- * Biology and Ecology Technical books
- * Butterfly nets and mist nets
- * Night vision binoculars and scope

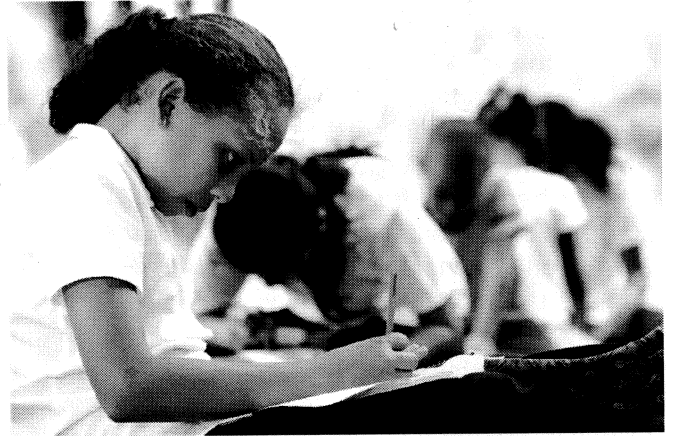
- * Portable Gasoline Generator
- * Power Tools
- * Digital Movie Camera
- * Dissecting microscopes
- * HP Ink cartridges #'s 27, 28, 56, 57
- * Motion Sensitive Cameras

A TROPICAL GARDEN OF PARADISE

by *Sami Abdelmalik*

In an effort to extend learning far beyond the classroom walls, a school garden project was developed as part of COTERC's environmental education program, being implemented here in the northeast Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, bringing together all of the features of hands-on science to the primary school students of the nearby San Francisco village.

With garden-based curricula, students can learn about Decomposition and Soil Composition, The Water Cycle, The Effects of Pesticides, Medicinal Plants, Habitat Diversity, Plant Succession, and The Role of Pollinators and Seed Dispersal. As a facilitator and project coordinator, I noted how much my students enjoyed having classes outdoors and engaging in activities that allowed them to utilize all their senses. The idea to create the garden came naturally, seeing how it would enhance the esthetics of the school grounds and inspire inclusive-green-based curriculum. Equipped with the knowledge gained from past experiences with community development projects, I was prepared and aware of the organization, planning, and collaboration required for ensuring the success of such a project. Thus, the project took on several phases of development.



The initial step was to identify a need and then gain the support of the teachers and students. It was then critical to create conditions and avenues for participation along every planned phase, which provides an opportunity for individuals to work together and gain pride in the establishment and creation of the project. The support gained also ensures the long-term sustainability of the garden, which would need ongoing care and maintenance long after construction. After rallying support from teachers and students, I held a meeting with the teachers and an 8 by 16 meter (26 x 52 feet) plot of land was allocated for the project. Work started immediately, as the chosen plot was the existing school litter-dumping site and a clean up was required before any construction could take place.



Simultaneously, I was seeking project funding and collaborating with Caroline Greenland who is the Manager of Education at the Toronto Zoo. From the inception, Caroline has been a phenomenal supporter of this project and a solid cornerstone that linked our fieldwork needs in Costa Rica with the resources offered in Canada. Thanks to COTERC supporters, we managed to raise the needed funds and we were able to purchase the required building materials. Soon after, posts were erected, a fence was raised, a drainage ditch was trenched, and planting beds were constructed. Research volunteers who reside at Caño Palma Biological Station devoted a lot of heart and sweat in ensuring the completion of the project. To boot, they also utilized their artistic talents by creating colorful wildlife plaques and a trellis, which were placed to adorn the garden perimeter.

With the construction phase near completion, we informed the local community members, many of which

showed their support for the project by donating plants to propagate the garden. In an effort to increase participation, we also held a school-wide competition for the naming of the garden. Approaching the final phase, we then held an official opening event, packed with environmental education activities. The activities varied from planting, to role-playing, to painting – all of which had a garden-based theme. With each activity, an information session was given in order to reinforce the topics, which included the Basics of Compost, the Water Cycle, Basic Plant Necessities, Impacts Of Pollution, just to name a few.

The final treat came when the selected name for the garden was revealed. “GARDEN OF PARADISE” was the winning entry from Martha, a twelve-year-old student. This marked the end of the event and the successful completion of the garden. I can honestly say that this has been a great privilege and rewarding experience and I hope it has a lasting impact on all who were involved. I’ve learned that it takes a community to raise a garden and the support of caring individuals is really what makes it bloom.



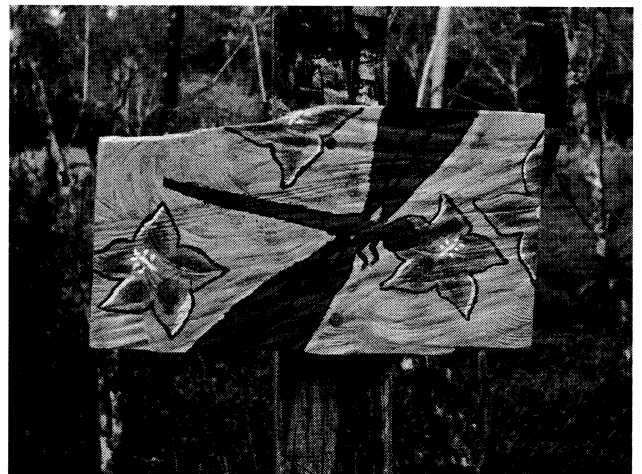
Thanks to all who were involved,
Sami Abdelmalik
Project coordinator
Caño Palma Biological Station

REFLECTIONS ON THE SCHOOL GARDEN INCHOATIVE

*by Caroline Greenland,
Manager of Education, Toronto Zoo*

Over the past year I have had the pleasure of doing what I could to help fulfill Sami’s ambitious dream to create a community garden for the residents of San Francisco. Sami recognized the positive power of involving the local people – adults and children – in moving toward a common goal of producing vegetables and medicinal plants, along with some decorative specimens that attract colorful pollinating birds and insects, for the enjoyment and use by the community.

By being resourceful and using bits and pieces of wood and other found items lying around the station, Sami was able to stretch a meager budget not only to complete the garden and surrounding protective fence but also add some artistic elements. These included a driftwood trellis, a bridge, a sitting area encircling a centerpiece and hand painted wildlife plaques for the garden perimeter.



I looked forward to Sami’s e-mails from Costa Rica reporting on the progress of the garden, the enthusiasm he was receiving from the students and his plans for further improvements and innovations. I was gratified to be involved with such an inspiring project and such a dedicated and generous individual.

by Matthew Vernhout, Director of Marketing

GETTING CONNECTED WITH COTERC

Hello COTERC Supporters, I don't write here too often, as I'm usually out somewhere trying to digitally spread the news about COTERC and get more people interested in becoming a member or volunteer, but I have some exciting news for you all now.

COTERC has been steadily growing our Social Media footprint over the last few months with the following initiatives - drop by if your already participating in one of these networks;

- * One year after launching a new blog (<http://blog.coterc.org>) to share up to date event and news listings we have seen month over month engagement from our readers. Drop by and leave us a comment, we would love to hear from you
- * We recently joined Twitter ([@COTERC](http://www.twitter.com/COTERC)), a fast growing and highly popular communication service that allows real time conversations with hundreds of people. Follow our updates and have open discussions with us in real time.
- * We have also been building a steady following on Facebook so people can stay in touch and learn about our research and get connected with each other. We have already seen past station volunteer's reconnect with others that spent time at the station together and continue to build on past friendships.
- * Get LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1949351>) by joining our group and connecting with our board members and others just like you.

All of these services are allowing us to stay connected with our friends (just like you) and to reach out and meet new and interesting people interested in conservation or already working with similar Research and Conservation programs - just like us.

Last month we made the COTERC EDUCATION MANUAL (a resource for Teachers) available for download under our 'Educational Resources' section on the COTERC Website. A fantastic resource for High School Earth Science classes for Grade 9 through 11 students. We have also been busily working to build our 'SPECIES FACT SHEETS' adding 12 new species in the last month alone. These make great companion guides along side our Education Manual.

I hope you'll join our communities and engage us in one of the above ways as we continue to progress and build our online presence. Thank you.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL EUCHRE NIGHT

By June Enright, Executive Director

Saturday, May 30th.

Although it was a rain filled night COTERC held another great Euchre night and was able to raise approximately \$724. after expenses. We had seven full tables of players.

Special thanks to Amy Lathrop for supplying the BBQ, music and great salads and to Karen Loudon for supplying the hamburger buns and great deserts. Thanks to Blue Enright for helping out with the cooking and for

Tom Mason for helping out with the bartending.

We hope everyone had a great time and enjoyed the prizes and silent auction items. Thanks also to the Royal Ontario Museum for a great fish book and to the Enrights for an assortment of items for the silent auction.

We hope to see everyone back for another tournament in the fall. Watch the web and COTERC blogs for upcoming dates!



Galapagos

Join us on a wonderful adventure to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

November 5th to 20th, 2009

This includes a 7 day cruise of the islands on the Daphne Cost for land and cruise US\$ 3,675.

Airfare from Toronto to Quito via Air Canada and Avianca is CA\$ 1,135.

For a detailed itinerary please contact Annette Simms at 416-654-4844.

Membership to COTERC* included in cost.

*Canadian Organization for Tropical Education and Rainforest Conservation;

TOUR TO ECUADOR AND THE GALAPAGOS NOV.05/20, 2009

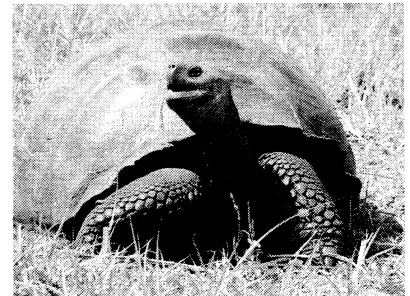
TOUR INFORMATION

COST US\$ 3675 per passenger for services in Ecuador Nov.05/20,2009
Based a double occupancy. Singles, willing to share pay the same rate.

ADD AIRFARE FROM YOUR HOMETOWN TO QUITO
From Toronto with Air Canada and Avianca CAS 1130.15
This rate is subject to change at time of booking.

EXTRAS Package tour insurance which is mandatory. The cost of this depends on your age. Rate will be quoted to you, and the policy will be issued by McFarlane Travel and sent to you.

Galapagos National Park Fee	US\$ 100.
Extra fee to pay at airport	US\$ 10.
Gratuity for Galapagos crew suggest	US\$ 140.
Gratuity for guide on mainland suggest	US\$ 40.
Gratuity for driver mainland suggest	US\$ 20.
Ecuadorian airport departure tax	US\$ 25.
Beverages (water is free)	
1 lunch and 2 dinners in Quito	



PAYMENT For services in Ecuador, US\$ cheque made out to Ingrid Versteeg. I will do a bank transfer to the account of Galanet in Miami.
Insurance and airfare can be paid with a major credit in CAS.

PAYMENT DUE DATES Deposit of US\$ 700 due at time of booking
Insurance and airfare due at time of booking
Balance of services in Ecuador due Aug.15,2009

REFUNDS Your deposit, airfare and insurance are non refundable

Your balance of payment is non refundable. We will however attempt to sell your space and credit you the amounts we can transfer to the new passenger.

AIR ITINERARY

Nov.05	Air Canada 962	departs Toronto 2:00 PM,	arrives Bogota 7:55 PM
Nov.05	Avianca 081	departs Bogota 9:36 PM,	arrives Quito 11:01 PM
Nov.19	Avianca 112	departs Guayaquil 6:31 PM,	arrives Bogota 8:31 PM
Nov.20	Air Canada 963	departs Bogota 00:45 AM,	arrives Toronto 06:55 AM



COTERC SIGNS RAINFORESTSOS DECLARATION

by Matthew Vernhout, Director of Marketing

I'm happy to announce that our support for the RainforestSOS project is now official. The RainforestSOS was founded by His Royal Highness Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, in response to reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the immediate need to take actions that will save the planet's rainforests.

The RainforestSOS project is targeting two main goals; Raising awareness about the effects of Rainforest Deforestation and Identifying incentives to stop deforestation, by targeting the economic reasons and identifying other sources of income that will benefit the needs of rainforest nations. Here at COTERC we found this to be a natural fit with our objectives.

By signing this declaration, COTERC joins a number of esteemed organizations working toward the conservation and protection of the planet's Rainforests. We also reaffirm our goals and project mandates on Education and Conservation of an irreplaceable resource that is declining at an accelerated rate, as demand and populations continue to grow.

About the RainforestSOS Project:

The Prince's Rainforests Project (PRP) was set up in 2007 by HRH The Prince of Wales following reports from leading climate change experts, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to promote awareness of the urgent need to take action against tropical deforestation. The Prince of Wales has long been concerned about climate change and about how destruction of the world's rainforests contributes to rising temperatures and sea levels.

PETER SILVERMAN RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

We would like to extend congratulations to former COTERC Chair and present member of the Advisory Committee Dr. Peter Silverman, Order of Ontario, who received a Lifetime Achievement Award on June 26, 2009 from the Radio-Television News Directors' Association of Canada.

Peter Silverman led the 'Silverman Helps' investigative/consumer news unit at CityTV Toronto for over 20 years. In his time as 'Ombudsman' for CityNews, Silverman not only helped many deserving families with their problems, he also managed to tell these stories in a way that informed, educated, and entertained viewers. Silverman's impact through his journalistic endeavours has been life-changing for hundreds of people. Silverman also volunteered much of his time to charitable causes: COTERC, Habitat for Humanity (using vacation time to build homes in places like El Salvador and India; Peter also sat on Habitat Toronto's Board), and 'Save a Child's Heart Israel.' Silverman is the winner of several prestigious journalism awards, including the New York Festival's 'Grand' and 'Gold' awards, and an RTNDA Award for investigative reporting. He has also been nominated for several Gemini awards.

Reprinted from www.newswire.ca

I'd like to thank Kim Pullin of Becton Dickinson of Oakville for the donation of two filing cabinets for our office. Kim found out that we were looking for the storage units via our web site and gave us a call. Their offices are moving in May and they had some surplus. We picked up two five drawer lateral cabinets which have made finding records and storing them for retrieval a whole lot easier. Thanks Kim, you've made our day to day life so much less stressful.

June Enright, Executive Director

BROWN THROATED THREE TOED SLOTH

Ai, Perezoso

Bradypus variegates
(Spanish)

Class: Mammalia
Order: Pilosa
Family: Bradypodidae
Genus: Bradypus

Distribution

Widespread throughout Central and South America.

Habitat

Warm, humid tropical forests.

Food

Folivore

Reproduction

The female calls out to attract a male during the mating season. He approaches her slowly and quietly. He leaves after a few hours.

Development

At birth the baby sloth clings to its mother's abdomen. It remains there, spending the first three to four weeks nursing. It is fully weaned at about six months of age.

The range of this species extends from the tropical forests of Honduras in the north, south through Central America and into South America. It is found in areas of Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil.

Trees within its habitat must be close enough together for the sloth to move around the forest canopy. They prefer trees with large crowns. They occupy several forest types and reside in at least 96 tree species.

They eat leaves, shoots and buds. They use their claws to pull these through their mouths. Water is acquired during this process from dewdrops and juicy leaves.

Her call is a distinct 'aa-ee' sound. He responds and a brief courtship takes place. This is very short and perfunctory. It appears to lack any emotion. They do not stay near each other for long. Her gestation period is almost six months. She does not build a nest or shelter. Females give birth to a single young while upside down. Generally the sloth has one baby each year.

The male's role ends after mating. The mother provides all parental care. The newborn sloth is about 25 cm long and weighs about 350 g. It clings to its mother until weaned at about five weeks old. It will remain with her through lactation, about four months. It will develop some independence in two to four months, but remains with its mother a little longer. During the time they are together the baby develops the mother's dietary



preference. Once the baby is weaned, the mother leaves her baby shifting her territory slight, thus reducing competition between them..

Characteristics

They have long curved claws on all four limbs. Forelegs are longer than the rear ones. It has a small tail. Average weight is 4.34 kg. Total body length averages 578 mm. They have a rounded head and a curved mouth. The lips are hard and tough. They do not have incisor or canine teeth. They have a set of peg-shaped cheek teeth.

Adaptations

They are both diurnal and nocturnal. They conserve energy by maintaining a lower body temperature than other mammals. Strands of hair are longitudinally grooved and allow algae to accumulate on the body. This species has nine cervical vertebrae. They are good swimmers.

As an adaptation to the low nutrient content of what it eats, the sloth has a low metabolic rate, a very slow digestive process and a lower, variable body temperature. The sloth's body temperature fluctuates with ambient temperature. A sloth sunbathes in the morning to warm up and hides in the shade to avoid overheating. Its average body temperature is 19.6°C.

The stomach is large and compartmentalized. They descend to defecate approximately once a week and the amount is substantial. It can be as much as one third of the sloth's body weight. It frequently buries its waste, possibly to avoid detection. They have three more cervical vertebrae than other mammals allowing greater head rotation. A symbiotic relationship between algae and sloth provides a greenish tinge to the coat resulting in additional camouflage for the host sloth. An additional relationship exists with moths foraging on the algae growth.

Status/Threats

They are not listed as endangered, however they are regulated. This species is present in many protected areas. They are considered extinct in Argentina..

All sloths are threatened by large-scale clearing of forests. Forest fires threaten these slow moving animals. They do not handle change well. Habitat fragmentation is a constant threat in many areas. The IUCN Red List status is LC: Least Concern. It is listed as an Appendix II species by CITES. Jaguars and ocelots are a threat when the sloth is on the ground. The anaconda and harpy eagle are also predators of the sloth.

Sightings at Caño Palma

Most members of the C.O.T.E.R.C. board have visited the station, several making repeat visits. On Blue and June's first visit they had a lot of photographic equipment to unload at the boat dock. They had just arrived and Blue could not resist the temptation to wander down a nearby trail to explore. Within minutes he came rushing back to the dock yelling "sloth, sloth". He had not only spotted a three-toed sloth but a mother with her baby clinging to her. A truly eventful arrival.

References

IUCN (2006). *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Retrieved March 11, 2008

Editor's Note: This article is one of many researched and written by volunteer Annette Sims and which can be found on our website at www.coterc.org.



Forest Litter at Cano Palma

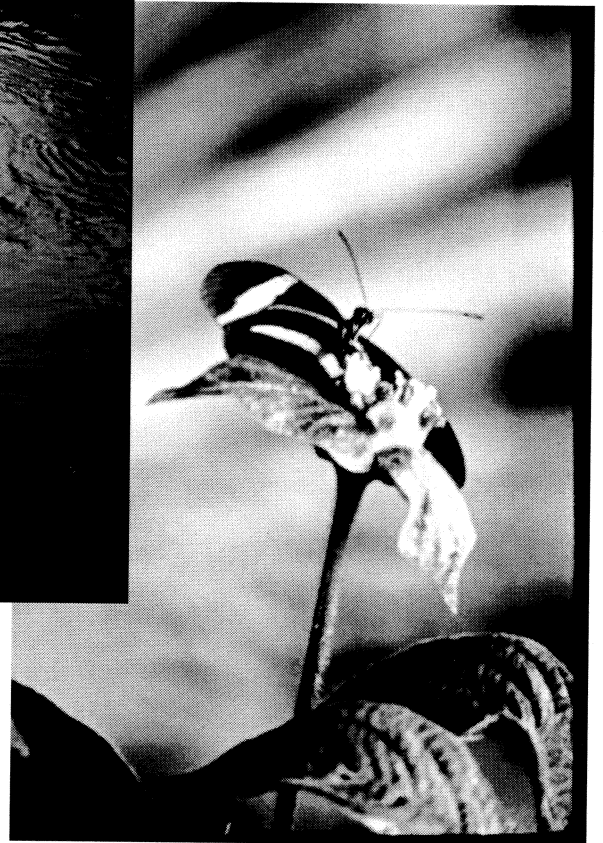


Denise Roberts and husband — early visitors to Cano Palma

Photos all taken from the archives of Marilyn Cole



*From top: Pat Opay, on motor, Jim (former station managers), Antoinette, Gutierrez, daughter Isabeaux, her son, husband Elvin and Marilyn Cole
Circa 1994*



Heliconia Butterfly



Forest Litter at Cano Palma



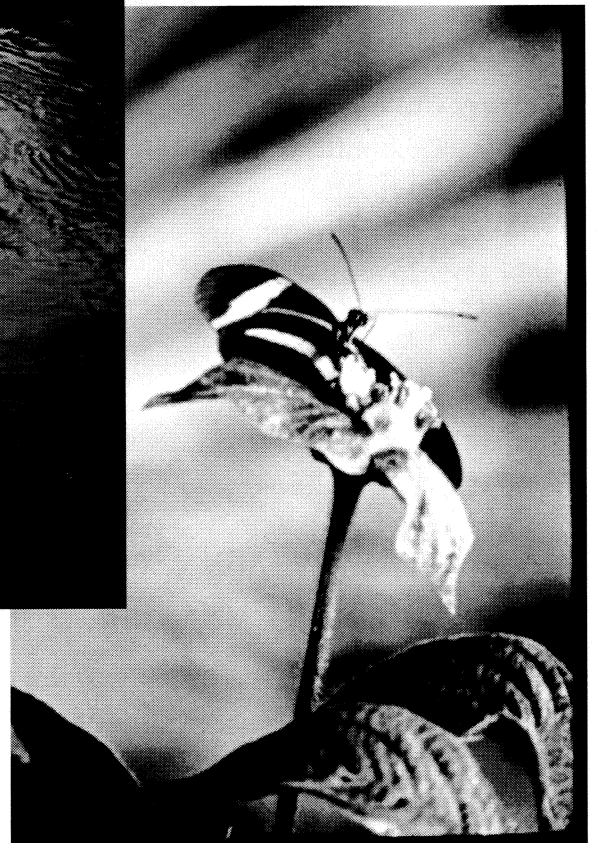
Denise Roberts and husband — early visitors to Cano Palma

Photos all taken from the archives of Marilyn Cole



From top: Pat Opay, on motor, Jim (former station managers), Antoinette, Gutierrez, daughter Isabeaux, her son, husband Elvin and Marilyn Cole

Circa 1994



Heliconia Butterfly



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COTERC
 P.O. BOX 335
 PICKERING ONTARIO
 L1V 2R6
 CANADA

Phone: 905-831-8809
 Fax: 905-831-4203
 E-mail: info@coterc.org
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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.

You will need Adobe Reader to open the document. To download Adobe Reader, go to

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

