

Volume 24, Issue 4

FALL, 2015



CANADIAN ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL EDUCATION & RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

# RAPHHIA

# FIESTA VERDE

Shared • Visions

Join us for our 15th annual fundraising event

Hosted by:



Includes: Dinner, Auctions, Presentations, Call from Costa Rica, and a wonderful time!

Tickets can be purchased @ [coterc.com/fiesta-verde](http://coterc.com/fiesta-verde)

January 23rd, 2016  
Doors Open at 6:00 pm  
\$75/Person

Deer Creek Golf and Banquet Facility  
2700 Audley Rd. N,  
Ajax, Ontario

For questions or concerns email [SpecialEvents@Coterc.org](mailto:SpecialEvents@Coterc.org)

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# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

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On the front page of this edition of Raphia you will find an announcement for our annual fundraiser Fiesta Verde on January 23, 2016. The spider monkey is the featured animal.

This year we have moved the event to Deer Creek Golf & Banquet Facility in Ajax, Ontario, primarily to allow us more space and to take advantage of their in-house catering facilities. We're planning some exciting features, and hope that you will join us.

Ticket price is the same as last year—\$75 per person. You can order your ticket online at

<http://www.coterc.com/fiesta-verde.html>

Or email

[specialevents@coterc.org](mailto:specialevents@coterc.org)

***HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!***

I am pleased to report that Director At Large Alex Lee has been elected to the position of Director of Marketing, following the resignation of Darryl Swain. Alex is a young entrepreneur, a 4th year student of finance at University of Ontario Institute of Technology with a marketing background. We want to thank Darryl for his work done over the past few years, and wish him well in his demanding career at the Toronto Zoo.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that Sruthi Surampudi has been elected to the vacant position of Director of Special Events. Sruthi has experience in event planning and is a 4<sup>th</sup> yr Accounting student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Sruthi and Alex are the busy people organizing this year's Fiesta Verde, and we're excited to have their expertise for this important event.

I am sorry to announce that one of our former board members, Bev Carter has passed away very suddenly from a heart attack. Bev was a long-time member of the Toronto Zoo staff and, after retiring she joined our board and was a valued member who helped out at our annual Fiesta Verde. After her term of office was up, she continued to contribute by preparing the monthly members' update of happenings at Caño Palma Biological Station. She will be missed.

**COTERC receives no government funding and depends on your generosity to continue our work. Please consider making a donation. You can make a one-time donation or arrange for a monthly withdrawal easily through Canada Helps. Just go to their website**

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/donate/>

Click on "Find a Charity"

Type in COTERC and then follow the instructions.

**Whether the amount is \$5 or whatever, your donation is greatly appreciated — and Canada Helps issues a tax receipt directly to you.**

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# On the Border North of Caño Palma

by Doug Durno

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Setting borderlines should be simple: The countries involved agree on something and they sign a treaty. Which is what Costa Rica and Nicaragua did 157 years ago when they signed the Cañas-Jerez Treaty. Since then, disputes have occasionally arisen. But, for the past 17 years, Nicaragua has intentionally sought to increase tensions along the border with most of the issues centering on the delta region just 25 miles north of Caño Palma.

It all started back in 1821 when the Federal Republic of Central America declared its independence from Spain. The Republic was a loose federation of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua & Costa Rica. At the time, Nicaragua was larger, extending south into Costa Rica as far as the Nicoya Peninsula and Limon. But residents in Nicaraguan areas that are now Costa Rica soon seceded to Costa Rica, and Nicaragua lost about 11,000 square miles of territory.

The Cañas-Jerez Treaty of 1858 established that the eastern third of the border was to follow the Rio San Juan with Nicaragua having sovereignty over the river itself. Costa Rica was awarded certain navigation rights. Since the border followed the main channel of the San Juan right to the Caribbean Sea, this resulted in Costa Rican territory bulging into Nicaragua in the delta area. This piece of territory (called Calero Island on the map) is surrounded by Nicaragua on all but its eastern side.

The delta basically remained quiet until 1998 when Nicaragua started to take more control of river traffic. It took till 2009 for this dispute to be cleared up by the International Court of Justice. The ICJ confirmed Costa Rica's transit rights under the Cañas-Jerez Treaty and denied Nicaragua's demands that passengers on Costa Rican boats obtain a Nicaraguan visa or purchase tourist cards.

The dispute again heated up when Daniel Ortega was looking for populist causes to further his political ambitions. By picking fights over territory with Costa Rica, he was sure to stir up nationalist feeling in Nicaragua. He even resurrected the issue of Costa Rica's 1824 annexation of Guanacaste province (which Nicaragua accepted in the Cañas-Jerez Treaty).

In the delta area, Ortega's territorial claims have another purpose. A redrawn border would help support the Sandinista's expansive offshore-oil claims. Starting in 2010, Nicaragua has frequently provoked Costa Rica by entering its territory. In one bizarre incident, they set up dredging operations supported by 50 soldiers and then said that they were only going by Google Maps, which had mistakenly shown the border matching the line claimed by Nicaragua.

In 2011, claiming it was protecting its national sovereignty, Costa Rica started building a road that will run along its entire river border with Nicaragua. Nicaragua again responded by taking Costa Rica to court, claiming that construction is causing environmental damage to the river and its wetlands. The ICJ, in 2013, rejected Nicaragua's complaint. However, further claims and counterclaims are still being adjudicated. So, 156 years after the border was settled, the squabbling persists.



During 2015 Bird Studies Canada announced the following

“ Groundbreaking research into bird movements in the Western Hemisphere is uncovering critical information to guide conservation. The Motus Wildlife Tracking System enables researchers to track birds over vast distances”.

Motus is a program of Bird Studies Canada. This research was made possible through collaboration with partners SELVA (Research for Conservation in the Neotropics), University of Saskatchewan, Universidad de los Andes, Environment Canada, and Acadia University. Sierra Nevada de Santa

This research team is comprised of Ph.D. candidates Camila Gomez (Universidad de los Andes) and Ana Gonzalez (University of Saskatchewan), Dr. Nick Bayly (SELVA), Dr. Daniel Cadena (Universidad de los Andes), Dr. Keith Hobson (Environment Canada), Dr. Phil Taylor (Bird Studies Canada Chair of Ornithology at Acadia University), and Stu Mackenzie (Bird Studies Canada).

Although Motus is still very much in its infancy, researchers have already obtained a phenomenal record of the habitat use and length of stay in specific areas of certain birds, and shows great promise for future data gathering.

For more details on this exciting breakthrough, please visit the Bird Studies Canada website [www.birdscanada.org](http://www.birdscanada.org)

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## Costa Rica issues 1-year Moratorium on export of hammer-head shark products

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Costa Rica’s National System of Conservation Areas placed a one-year moratorium on the exportation of hammerhead sharks last Thursday. The moratorium will put Costa Rica in compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, known as CITES, after more than a year of the country having skirted regulations.

The moratorium comes one month after the Costa Rican government announced it would no longer support or propose any additional international protections for commercially viable shark species.

LINDSAY FENDT

Excerpted from The Tico Times, Oct. 2015

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*An average of up to 60 drowning-related deaths are reported each year in Costa Rica. According to a Tico Times report from June despite Costa Rica having just 6.5 percent of the coastline of the United States, both countries report a similar amount of drownings each year.*

*As you may know, the Board of Directors recently made a decision to eliminate the fee for membership in COTERC. We took this action in order to be able to reach out to a much broader audience worldwide. Since the announcement was sent out, we have received some very positive feedback. We hope that you will continue to support COTERC, and that you will enjoy receiving our newsletter.*

# Taro—Tropical Spud

April, 2015

In most regions of the tropics you'll find a group of plants known as "elephant ears" or taros. These exotic plants originated in the Old World tropics, perhaps in India or Southeast Asia, and are believed to be one of the earliest cultivated plants. Today, they are a major food crop grown for its roots and leaves. The starchy edible corm is much like a potato and the leaves like spinach. Taro loves wet conditions, in fact, taro and rice are only a few of the crops that can be grown in flooded conditions. Many commercial plantings are in flooded paddies to increase production and weed control. However, taro will thrive in deep, moist or even swampy soils where the annual rainfall exceeds 2,500 mm. Gardeners will find that taro can be planted in moist areas around the garden or even around the home since they fit into landscaping designs to give that tropical look. We have a nice plot of them growing over the grey water drain field from the kitchen sink. Taros mature within six to twelve months after planting in dry-land cultivation and after twelve to fifteen months in wet-land cultivation. The crop is harvested when the plant's leaves turn yellow. The young corms or tubers are clustered around a large "mother" corm. The smallest "*hijos*" or corms can be used for planting new garden beds of taro and the larger ones are ready to use in the kitchen. It's best to soak the roots overnight and cook them with a pinch of baking soda to release the calcium oxalate, a compound found in several vegetables like chard and kale. Once they are well cooked you can mash them with milk and butter to make a puree that rivals mashed potatoes. Our favorite puree recipe: cook taro roots and pejivajes separately. Then blend equal parts of the two with water or milk to form a rich puree that's a golden delight! Add onions, garlic and curry to spice it up. Costa Ricans also make a popular soup called *holla de carne*, which includes taro roots cooked whole with other vegetables and meat. Taro provides many vitamins and minerals, particularly B6, E and Magnesium. The leaves contain high levels of vitamin K. Taro is an excellent root crop for the home gardeners in the hotter regions of the country. Roots from the market are good for planting. Small tubers are fine. You'll find 3 varieties: Ñampi, Tiquisqui and Malanga. Plant them in well-tilled soil with additions of compost. Keep the plants weed free and cultivate the soil up around the plant. Once established, they generally shade out the weeds and little care is needed until harvest. Compost tea as a soil drench increases production. One plant can often produce 1/2 bushel of roots. Just remember how important it is to cook the leaves and roots to safely eat taro. Yuca, another local root crop has the same properties. .



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Ed Bernhardt, N.D. works with tropical medicinal plants & gardens in Costa Rica. He is the author of *The Costa Rican Organic Home Gardening Guide* and the Spanish translation, *Huertas Naturales Para Costa Rica*. His latest guide book, *Medicinal Plants of Costa Rica*, is widely read in the country as a reference on this subject. He is also the author of *Natural Health Care Therapies for Tropical Living*, which is used as the text for his popular course on holistic health care.

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## Disturbing News of Interference of Sea Turtles

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In September, 2015 the Tico Times reported on hundreds of tourists who invaded the seven-kilometre Ostional beach in the northwestern area of Costa Rica. They were drawn there to the nesting beaches of olive ridley sea turtles to watch them come ashore to lay their eggs. Some tourists touched the turtles, others stood on top of the nests or took selfies, and parents placed their children on top of the turtles to take photographs," wrote The Tico Times,

While the turtles arrive each year by the thousands, their nesting season is relatively short, beginning in August and ending in October. The disgraceful interference by these thoughtless tourists caused many turtles to return to the ocean without laying eggs, thus effectively eradicating a generation of this threatened species.

The story was quickly picked up by various international media.



Normally the beaches are inaccessible to people because of the flood tide of the swollen Nosara River, blocking access on the bridges. Even in the dry season, the beach is accessible only by a four-wheel-drive vehicle driven by a local guide.

Since the 1960's the olive ridley turtle population has decreased by as much as 50%, Costa Rican conservation officials take any sort of interference with their ability to reproduce seriously.

Mauricio Médez, deputy director of the Tempisque Conservation Area (including Ostional Beach) was quoted as saying "We are re-assessing the way we work and the way we tackle the issue."

Unfortunately, not long after this event, a conservation officer in a region further south was photographed grasping the hind legs of a turtle while in the ocean, supposedly to show to tourists. As a salaried representative of the government, it is to be hoped that he will be dismissed from his position.

These two incidents demonstrate a serious backlash to so-called "ecotourism", where tourists do so much harm in their pursuit of some photograph or "hands-on experience".

Fortunately, at least for the moment, the tourists who come to see the sea turtles on the North and South beaches of Tortuguero are primarily taken on the beaches by trained guides who control any thoughtless actions. But it is truly a disturbing trend.

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## NO MORE COTERC TELEPHONE

After monitoring the number of calls received on the COTERC telephone line for the past year, the Board of Directors determined that the number of calls coming in were very actually almost zero. Emails, Facebook & Twitter comments are the most common methods used to contact the charity.

As a result our telephone account has been cancelled.

# RECIPES FROM CAÑO PALMA BIOLOGICAL STATION—ORDER FORM

If you have ever visited Caño Palma, you will want this souvenir, whether you can cook or not!! The divider pages feature colour photos of people, wildlife and station buildings, while the delicious recipes speak for themselves! Marilyn Cole gathered recipes from the cooks, staff and volunteers and compiled the best into this unique cookbook. The Hints and Definitions section feature suggestions that all volunteers need to know! The cost is only \$ 20 plus shipping & handling. You can order online at [http://www.coterc.com/store/c1/Featured\\_Products.html](http://www.coterc.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html) or contact [info@coterc.org](mailto:info@coterc.org) PayPal or cheque

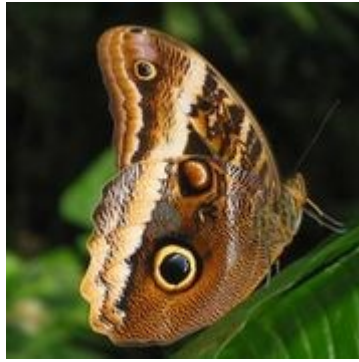
## *Recipes from Caño Palma Biological Station*



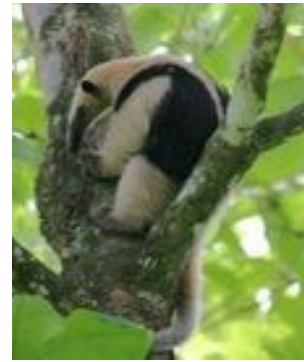
**Canadian Organization for  
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Geoffrey's Spider Monkey



Owl Butterfly



Tamandua

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

**Free Membership Application Form**

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ Given Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

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As a member of COTERC a copy of our quarterly newsletter “*Raphia*” will be sent to your primary E-Mail address unless you check one of the following options.

- Do not E-Mail the newsletter to me. Please send a hard copy to my Mailing Address
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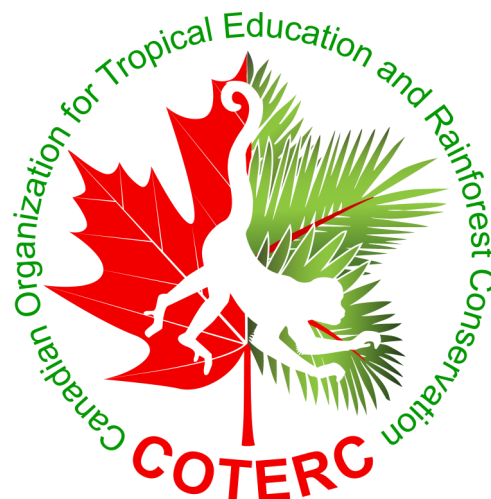
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We welcome any comments or suggestions from our members so that we can be sure that you feel involved. If you have an idea for an article, or better yet, would like to write one yourself –if you have a photo or two that you think we could use — if you have a suggestion for improving Raphia, please do send it along to us at [chair@coterc.org](mailto:chair@coterc.org)

If you have a general comment about COTERC or Cano Palma Biological Station, please email [info@coterc.org](mailto:info@coterc.org)