



*Transporting the saplings*

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## **Agroforestry System**

Throughout 2008, we have been developing various projects in the village of Palma Real, a community of Ese'ejá people approximately 1 hours' boat ride downriver from Taricaya. We helped the community with a pilot turtle repopulation project last year along with a donkey and cart that they are using increasingly for activities around the village (carrying wood, water, rubbish etc.) and December saw the completion of our final project for 2008, which was the implementation of an agro-forestry system based on Brazil nut trees. At the back of the village they have a lot of land that has been used many times for agriculture but is now unused as the majority of nutrients have been taken from the soil. Since October we have been visiting them to clear rows in the low brush that is left and to dig holes ready for planting. In the first week of December we took with us 40 Brazil nut saplings and a variety of fruit plants – pineapple, banana and guayaba – which we proceeded to plant in the prepared land.

The Brazil nut trees were planted 10 metres apart along the rows with 3 other plants in between, the idea being that while they are waiting for the trees to mature and produce nuts (which may take up to 10 years) there will be plants in the same area producing fruit, which can be consumed or sold, thus giving them a reason to keep the rows well maintained and clear of weeds.

Brazil nuts provide a large part of the income of many families between December and March of each year, but as the families grow they must share out the trees between more and more people. If the saplings grow and produce fruit successfully it will go some way towards easing the strain on the economy of the community, but also may bring some life back to the land with the addition of shade and nutrients. The saplings will have to be fertilised to start with (another advantage of having a donkey around!); however, once they are well established they will not require such tender care.

## **Transplanting Alpinias**

Many of you may remember Percy, a guy who lives with his family on the opposite side of the river from Taricaya. In 2006, with the help of many volunteers, we spent a few months clearing some of his land and planting tropical flowers transplanted from our pilot farm. The flowers have grown beautifully, and from early on this year Percy and his wife have been cutting them every weekend to sell in Puerto Maldonado. At the same time we planted some mahogany saplings which are also growing nicely. They are very pleased with the success they are having and have been planting more flowers around their land, separating them out from the original bulbs. However they wanted

to grow more, so this month we transplanted more of our alpinias (large dark pink flowers from the same family as ginger) over to their farm,. This takes Percy's flower plantation up to a total area of 2500 m<sup>2</sup> (2.5 ha). Percy is also very keen on the idea of reforestation, having been a wood extractor himself, so in 2009 we are planning to plant more mahoganies for him and also a new variety of flower, an orange heliconia that we have been cultivating in the pilot farm.

## **Completion of Enclosures**

Early in 2008, we completed our first group of spider monkeys with the arrival of Dixon, the second male. They have been kept in the enclosure all this year to enable them to bond as a group, which will help them when they are eventually released. However, with the males still maturing (none of them are fully adult yet) tempers have been high, and we have had a few incidents where they attacked people who were inside the enclosure. To solve this problem we have constructed a separate dormitory on the side of their main enclosure. In the evening they are moved through a corridor to the dormitory and closed in there so that we may clean and maintain the large enclosure, then they are let out in the morning once their food has been prepared. At the beginning there were a few issues in persuading them to enter the dormitory; however, we expect that with a little time they will become accustomed to the new routine. Keeping in mind the safety of the staff and volunteers we made the same alteration to the coati cage and they have adjusted quite happily to passing the night there. Mario (formerly Maria until we discovered 'she' was actually a 'he') and TC are growing well and can get a little too boisterous when people enter the enclosure with them. The system of building dormitories for the enclosures - to avoid too much human contact and any possible conflict - is one we hope to implement this year for all of our mammal enclosures.

## **Cedars**

Returning to the pilot farm, we came into possession of a quantity of seeds from the cedar, a tree also highly prized here for the quality of the wood. As with the mahoganies in 2004, we made special germination beds for the seeds and were rewarded near the end of December with around 300 seedlings, which we will be planting out early in 2009. We have a cedar tree just beside the nursery at the lodge that produces seeds most years, so this is a possible alternative to mahogany for the agro-forestry system we are trying.

## New Animals!

It's an exciting time for the Animal Rescue Centre, at the beginning of the month we received a young margay (a small cat with markings similar to a jaguar) from a family at Palma Real. Named by the volunteers as Sandy, she was a little thin when she first arrived but is thriving nicely now on a diet of raw meat, cat biscuits and the occasional guinea pig from the farm!



*Sandy enjoying the time with us*

Also this month we acquired a young spider monkey, Gretel, from Puerto Maldonado, she had been a pet and arrived with cuts on her stomach where a rope had been tied too tightly around her waist. The cuts healed nicely, and she is now accompanied by Bruce, a young male spider monkey 'borrowed' from El Jaguar, the zoo in Puerto. We hope that they can be persuaded to leave him with us so that we can build up a second group of spider monkeys for release in a few years.

## New Staff

Finally we would like to give a big thank you to all the volunteers and staff who have supported us this year; it would have been very difficult without their help. To further develop the current projects in Taricaya we would also like to give a warm welcome to 3 new members of staff who will be joining our team in the coming year.

**Daniel Medina** is a biologist who specialises in botanical studies. He visited a couple of times this year and will now be with us for the whole of 2009 to establish an inventory and monitoring system of the plants within the reserve.

**Raul Bello** is also a biologist, expert in the captive management of wild animals. He comes to us from Amazon Shelter, an animal rescue centre in Puerto Maldonado with whom we have been working closely in the latter half of 2008.

**Alejandro Vigil** some of you will know; he started out as a work experience volunteer in February this year to be able to complete his degree in Ecotourism. He joins our staff to support the many projects we have in the pipeline for this year – a valuable member of the team.