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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Volunteers,

This is my final newsletter as writer and editor. After several years at Taricaya I decided it was time to leave Peru in search of new adventures. While the future is exciting it's very sad to leave a project which has given me so much invaluable knowledge and experience, not to mention a team of co-workers who have become family. I will miss everyone so much, but will of course be keeping an eye on the progress of this amazing project as there are always interesting new ideas developing. So I have taken this opportunity to reintroduce the staff at Taricaya, without whom the project would not have been able to advance so far.

If you would just like to send a note, we would love to hear from any of you who have volunteered at Taricaya, it doesn't matter how long you were here for or how long ago, we're always interested in what you're doing or where you are now.

We welcome your feedback for the newsletter as well, what would you like to see or hear about here every month.

Also if you have any queries about the rainforest (or Peru), we have a number of qualified biologists on the team who would be very happy to answer any of your questions.

For quick updates or information about Taricaya, check out our website at www.volunteer-conservation-peru.org, or you can reach us through the Projects Abroad website at www.projects-abroad.net.

Have a good month, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Rachel Kilby
Volunteer Co-ordinator
Reserva Ecologica Taricaya

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STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Stuart Timson: as most of you should know, Stuart is the Conservation Director for Peru. Spending most of his time in the lodge, he combines the co-ordination of projects and administration with time spent with the volunteers, taking part in the every-day activities.

Fernando Rosemberg Fort: Nando is the lodge manager, designing and implementing projects, co-ordinating with Stuart, and overseeing every aspect of life at the lodge to ensure that everything on site runs smoothly.

Daniel Neira Herrera: our Resident Biologist and Herpetologist, Daniel is responsible for all the reptile and amphibian projects including the Yellow-spotted Side-necked River Turtle project which is now going into its 6th year.

Raúl Bello Santa Cruz: Raúl is the biologist in charge of the Animal Rescue Centre, the person responsible for the management, maintenance and health of all the animals we maintain here at the lodge.



Daniel Alvarado Macedo: Daniel (or Gigo) is the co-ordinator of the butterfly project, with several years' work experience in the reproduction of butterflies, he is responsible for the collection of butterflies for our project, also the maintenance and management of the butterfly house. Daniel is our main pilot, responsible for the maintenance of the canoes and outboard motors.

Alejandro Vigil Padilla: Alejandro is a tourism graduate who has the responsibility of maintaining our extensive trail network. With over 40km of trails, this takes up much of his time but he will turn his hand to anything from animal feeding to construction.

Reina Medina: a more recent addition to our team, since December 2009 Reina has been head chef at Taricaya, providing staff and volunteers with a wide selection of dishes which combine a touch of Europe with the traditional cuisine of Peru.

Finally, we would all like to extend a warm welcome to Dan Howell, who will be spending the next 6 months as volunteer co-ordinator. Dan has been volunteering with us and we were delighted when he accepted our invitation to work with us. For the last several years employed in environmental management, Dan has the necessary qualifications and enthusiasm for the post, and has proven himself a calm and efficient person, well equipped to co-ordinate between staff and volunteers and deal with any problem or query that may arise.

We would like to wish him good luck, and hope that he will enjoy working in Taricaya.

PROJECT UPDATES

WALKWAY

Several years ago (2004, I believe) we built a raised walkway around the lodge that connected all the buildings to the kitchen, enabling everyone to walk around the lodge area, even through the rainy season, without getting wet and muddy all the time. Sadly, due to the effects of the humidity, termites, Winnie the tapir, and the floods in February 2008, the walkway has ended up at ground level. Since 2008 it has been steadily deteriorating until this year. At the end of February we concentrated on replacing the walkway, buying and transporting wood from Puerto Maldonado, and from one of our neighbours across the river, then removing the old structure. The wood we have used comes from the Ironwood tree (local name Shihuahuaco) which is a very high density hardwood and is expected to last for at least 5 years in good condition. The walkway is now so much easier and more comfortable to walk on as all the planks are level. It

remains at just above ground level so as not to obstruct any other movement throughout the lodge and has been extended to connect several of our newer buildings.

BUTTERFLY PROJECT

As we mentioned briefly last month, Gigo spent a good part of the first weeks of February repairing and replacing the butterfly traps. Following on from that, when the traps were ready, he started installing them in the forest. Our aims are to collect primarily individuals of the 2 largest types of butterfly, the blue morpho and the owl butterfly. These types can be seen in many different places in the forest, but there are certain areas where they become slightly more concentrated. Many of you might remember a fruit from a tree in



the forest which is reputed to be an incredible mosquito repellent – the huito (pronounced ‘we-toe’). These fruits are very attractive to the blue morpho, so the first location for the traps was along Quebrada Trail near to a large tree of this species. At the same time we are still monitoring to collect new species of butterfly, carrying on with our inventory of butterfly species within the Taricaya Ecological Reserve.

As the traps were being installed, we had to make sure that everything was ready to receive any individuals that were caught. The plants inside the butterfly house have been growing at a tremendous rate – it is the rainy season after all – so Gigo spent several days with the volunteers trimming back plants,

restoring borders of the flower beds, planting new plants and generally tidying up so we could receive butterflies.

ANIMAL RESCUE CENTRE

Again, this month has seen many changes in the Animal Rescue Centre. We have carried on with the reorganization of the animal enclosures, all designed to give the animals the best environment possible for them and in the best location, making division of labour within the centre much more efficient.

After relocating the auroras (Mealy Parrots and Yellow-crowned Parrots), their previous enclosure was redecorated to house the 4 capuchin monkeys. We have 2 Brown

Capuchins and 2 White-fronted Capuchins, all male (sadly) and all juvenile, thus able to reside in the same enclosure. They had been temporarily housed in an enclosure close to the rear of the rescue centre, but this was not ideal. The new enclosure, while a little smaller, is closer to the other primates and has more light, so providing a better environment for them.

We mentioned in the January Newsletter the arrival of 2 young short-eared dogs in the rescue centre. While all seemed to be fine to start with, we were experimenting with their diet and this may have contributed to the cause of a prolapse in the male. This condition is simply a part of the rectum becoming unanchored from the abdomen and actually ends up protruding from the animal through the anus. It requires an operation, and we had plans to send him to Lima. However, after consultation with an experienced vet in Puerto Maldonado, we submitted him there for treatment. It was very quick and we were able to return him to the rescue centre in the afternoon. We fashioned our own bucket collar from a large water bottle so that he could not remove the stitches himself, but after 5 days he was walking around and seemingly very happy. He always remained one step ahead of us though, as the day the stitches were due to come out he was inspected by the vet and the stitches were gone. The vet proposed one more day with the bucket collar just to be on the safe side, but when we went to remove it the next morning it was right there on the floor outside his house!

As a result of this condition we changed the diet slightly, just in the form of cooking the meat before giving it to them and therefore making it easier to digest. As they get older we will change it gradually back to raw meat, readying them for release. Now both animals are looking very healthy and also are growing very nicely. Having passed the required time in the quarantine area, we moved them to the recently-vacated enclosure at the rear of the rescue centre between the small felines and the jaguar. This area is a little further away from the main lodge area and is more peaceful, especially good for this kind of animal which can get stressed when too many people come near.

In the 3rd week of February we received a new animal, but one destined for a different project. We were approached early on this year by a couple who were studying Saddleback Tamarins, one of the smallest primates found in the rainforest. They had been studying a particular population and believed that they had identified 2 different groups within the main one. To see if this could be a difference enough to separate them out into subspecies, they wanted to take blood tests but had trouble trapping the wild individuals as they would not come near to the traps set for them. The proposal they put to Taricaya was to borrow any tamarins which we accepted into the rescue centre, to use them as an attraction for the wild animals of their study. Following the conclusion of their project the animals would be returned to us and released following our normal protocols. The

proposal was approved by INRENA, the Institute of Natural Resources attached to the government, and just a few weeks later we received our first tamarin. We kept him for 3 weeks in the rescue centre to check on his health and during which time he cleaned us out of insects! Finally, at the beginning of March, after his veterinary examinations were complete he was released for inclusion into the tamarin project, and we expect him back in our care in approximately 5 months.

Those of you who volunteered at Taricaya in 2006 will know that we spent much of that year building the majority of animal enclosures that make up the rescue centre. Many of those are still in good condition with only a minimum of repairs necessary; however, one enclosure stands out from the rest. The parakeet enclosure, a hexagonal building divided into 4 separate cages, was built

of wood which was slightly thinner than the other enclosures, not quite so robust, and for a while has looked to be on the verge of collapsing. So at the beginning of March we moved the 4 birds into a small cage inside the enclosure of the larger green parrots and set about building a new one. It didn't take long to take down the old cage, but the new one



has required a little more thought. It will be a little taller than the other, and the enclosures a little wider, also the middle section into which all the doors open will have a roof this time, so as to protect the area from becoming too muddy in the rain. With the volunteers we have been working steadily cutting the wood (there is many a volunteer with a sore arm from sawing, the wood was surprisingly tough), nailing it in place, painting it, nailing on the wire mesh and making the doors. It is not quite finished, but we are hoping that by the end of the month the parrots and parakeet will be installed in their new homes.

Finally, to round out the month we started on something we have talked about for a while. None of the birds we have had in the rescue centre have been sexually dimorphic, so you cannot tell the difference physically between males and females. Starting with the auroras, we took some blood samples and sent them off for analysis. These were to determine sex but also to check on the general health of the animals in preparation for release, hopefully at the end of April. Two of the tests were successful, so we now know

that the 2 Yellow-crowned Parrots (*Amazonas ochrocephala*) are male and female, a



possible breeding pair. The blood samples from the Mealy parrots were unsuccessful, so we returned to take a further sample from them, then at the same time a very small sample for each of the birds in the centre just to test for sex. The samples have been sent off to Lima for analysis so we will let you know in the next newsletter, what you have all been waiting for: is Beaky male or female?

EXTRAS

CHANGE OF SCHEDULE

In the last several years the schedule of activities has not changed very much. We have always tried to have 3 early-morning activities every week, as this is the best time for watching birds especially, and also it's a lot cooler. However, a lot of people have found it a struggle to get up 3 days a week at 5:30am, and it can put a lot of pressure on the staff, so we have switched things around. Now the schedule has changed so that Monday, Wednesday and Friday we let everyone have a little more time to rest, and start activities at 8am. Tuesday and Thursday we start at 5:30am as it is a good time to be out in the forest and we like to give the volunteers as much opportunity as possible to see wildlife while they are here.

FISHING

In August 2009 we became the proud parents of Sid, a young otter. He was a very cute baby when he first arrived and after a couple of weeks drinking a special milk formula, showed a huge appetite for chicken. Although we live by a river we don't eat fish at the lodge all that often, and bringing it all the way from Puerto can be quite expensive so we were very happy to find a relatively cheap and abundant alternative. However, now that Sid has grown we have had to start changing his diet, as we do not want to release an animal that will start hunting the neighbours' chickens instead of catching fish like he



should be. So we have added to our list of regular activities twice a week a group to go fishing for the otter. It has been very successful and now at least 4 days a week Sid is crunching his way through some nice juicy catfish or some of the many other local varieties. Thankfully he seems to love the taste of fish just as much as he does chicken, so the change in diet has progressed very smoothly.

VOLUNTEERS

It seems that Taricaya is steadily gaining in reputation. One thing we have noticed more and more often over the last few years, especially in the last several months, is that many of the new volunteers decided to visit us after hearing of the project from a member of their family or a friend. It's always nice to hear from volunteers who have left, especially when they encourage other people to come and visit us also. The volunteers are a very important part of Taricaya, without you we would not have advanced to the place we are today.