

The Tambopata Reserve Society Newsletter

Tourists at the Ese Eja Ethnocultural Centre

The Ese Eja Ethnocultural Centre (formerly Centro Nape) has started receiving tourists from Rainforest Expeditions and early indications suggest that this could make it financially self-sufficient. Since July, 943 tourists have visited the Centre and have generated over US\$2,800, which has been used to pay the Centre team and for the day-to-day the running of the Centre. Funds that TReeS has been sending to keep the Centre running can now be re-allocated to specific activities or to meet wider needs in the local Community.

The plan was always for the Centre to become self-financing. Serious negotiations with Rainforest Expeditions (RFE) began early last year. The local TReeS representative provided guidance when requested. A US\$3/person entry fee was agreed and RFE have made the Centre an integral part of their 3 day tour for all tourists.

During the visit tourists are guided round the botanical gardens by Alex Mishaja with a translation by the RFE guide – although Alex may make them redundant soon as he already knows many of the plant and animal names in English and is keen to learn more.

The team have worked hard to outfit the Centre to receive tourists – a better toilet was one necessity ! New signs welcome guests and inform them of the code of conduct written by the team which ensures that patients visiting the Centre get the privacy they need, and that the plants and surroundings are respected.

So far it seems to be a success and has allowed the Ese Eja to choose what aspects of their cultural heritage they share with guests. The team are planning to create an Ese Eja chacra on site so that tourists can compare some of the different methods and plants cultivated by the Ese Eja and the immigrant families in the community. They may also use the Centre to display art works and sell crafts that the community has made.

The other work at the Centre still continues - patients are being healed and medicines made and distributed (19 patients were treated in the 4th Quarter'01, including 3 from Lima !); the cultural rescue programme activities carry on, recording songs and stories; and the team still patrol the surrounding forest to make sure poachers, etc are not encroaching on community land.

A French Masters student is going out to the Centre later this year to work with Alex Mishaja on sustainable use of palm for thatch - so watch this space for more news !

In mid-November, Jose Mishaja – the healer at the Centre – was invited to an 'International meeting of Master Healers & Practicioners of Ayahuasca' in Tarapoto.

Funding: \$1200 is sought for equipment purchases and infra-structure repairs to the Centre during 2002.

English Language Scholarships

3 students, 2 of whom are employed at the Posadas Amazonas lodge, continue to be supported by TReeS. They are studying at the language school run by Tina Smith in P.Maldonado. Improved language skills will assist their work at the lodge.

* **New sponsorship** is sought for **more students** - £125 (£25 / month for 5 months).

Eco-tourism monitoring

Chris Kirkby has advised that he will shortly commence a 2-3 month study following on from the work undertaken by Andy Ashton (See TReeS News No.47, June'01). He will be discussing waste management, trail use, lake visits, etc with lodge owners along the Tambopata river within the Tambopata National Reserve to establish some 'eco-tourism' standards which will be enforced by INRENA.

* **New sponsorship** is sought to cover the cost of a radio program to broadcast the results to the public - £250.

Peruvian student biologist support

The research activities in the Tambopata area of San Antonio de Abad University, Cuzco, and San Marcos University, Lima, are increasing. They have once again approached TReeS to see whether we could offer small-scale grants to some of their students, most of whom have limited financial resources. Grants will contribute to field, transport and research costs during the 6 month study period. Lodges offer greatly subsidised board and lodging. There are four students currently in need of support – research topics include orchids, palms and ferns.

* **New sponsorship** is sought - £300 per student.

Manu National Park conferences

A series of public debates are to be held in Cuzco, mid-March, about the future management of Manu National Park. TReeS has been approached to fund the attendance at the debates of two indigenous representatives. TReeS considers that it is extremely important that as many indigenous people as possible take part in such an event.

* **New sponsorship** is sought - £75 per representative.

FENAMAD 12th Congress

FENAMAD held its twelfth congress in January. Once again TReeS contributed to the running costs. Victor Pesha, President of the Ese Eja of Baawaja Kuinaji, was elected President of FENAMAD for the next 2 years taking over from Antonio Vilchez. TReeS has worked closely with Victor for many years at Centro Nape on various projects and provided IT training at the TReeS office in Puerto Maldonado.

Peru: Government sides with loggers against Indians

The Peruvian government, despite promises, has failed to remove loggers from the territory of uncontacted Indians in northern Madre de Dios. On the contrary, the natural resources department has granted the loggers (most backed by foreign interests) a new concession leading to increased logging activity.

The uncontacted Yora, Mashco-Piro and Amahuaca Indians live deep in the Amazon, in the headwaters of four rivers, and move around in small, highly nomadic groups. Their ancestors were survivors of the 'rubber boom' 100 years ago, in which tens of thousands of Indians died through disease, torture and mass killings as outsiders poured into the area looking to make their fortunes. The Yora have suffered even more recently from outsiders coming in to steal their resources: when Shell Oil explored in the area in the early 1980s, around half of one group died from diseases carried by colonists who followed.

Under international law, the Peruvian government is obliged to recognise these isolated Indians' ownership of their lands. It must cancel all logging permits in the area, and remove, as it promised, those loggers already operating. Otherwise it will be responsible for many more tragic deaths. It is especially disappointing that the new government hasn't taken a firmer stand in this respect.

TReeS members may wish to continue to support the Survival International campaign by writing a brief, polite letter (begin 'Your Excellency') or faxing to:

S.E. Alejandro Toledo, Presidente de la República del Perú, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza de Armas, Lima 1, Perú. Fax: + 51 1 426 6770

Las Piedras lodge/research centre

Emma Tatum-Hulme an RN at the EI and TPL (1997), where she met her partner Juan Julio, has advised TReeS that she is soon to open a facility on the Las Piedras river.

She writes: 'After an expedition to Monte Salvado, a community about 5 days travel upriver from P.Maldonado on the Las Piedras river, in 1998, we found a lovely spot to build a farm/lodge/research centre. The construction of the centre will be finished in May and will hold up to 25 people in 2 bungalows with shared facilities. It is set in an eco-tourism concession of 4,000 hectares with healthy wildlife populations, a small mammal collpa and a macaw and parrot collpa on the river. We are planning to offer tour packages both to the centre and camping expeditions to the large collpa on the Tambopata river.

It has been very hard work preparing everything through a particularly wet January/February period. We hope to have our website up and running by the end of February' – more details in the next TReeS newsletter.

Our first group - Biosphere Expeditions are arriving in May for a 6 week project during which they will carry out various mammal and bird surveys to compile basic species list for the area which until now has not been studied.'

Biosphere Expeditions: full details can be found at www.biosphere-expeditions.org/expeditions/peru.htm.

TReeS members may recall from past Newsletters that the Las Piedras river flows south-eastwards across the department of Madre de Dios to join the Madre de Dios river just upriver from P.Maldonado. Uncontacted native peoples are known to live in its headwaters and it was concern for their welfare that led TReeS, amongst others, to participate in opposition to unmonitored oil exploration in the area in the mid-1990's. At this time an IUCN

expedition took 3 weeks to travel upriver from P.Maldonado to monitor the helicopter accessed Mobil camp. More recently the unhindered activities of loggers moving in to this remoter region have caused concern (see above section). Later this year an Edinburgh University expedition will undertake further research along the river.

Giant Otter Management Plan – Lake Cocococha

Over the last year, the Explorer's Inn (EI) has been implementing a tourism management plan at one of the lakes – Cocococha, which is the home to a family of 6 Giant Otters. Under the advice of Frank Hajek & Jessica Groenendijk (Frankfurt Zoological Society)(also TReeS members), a hide was constructed to minimise the impact of tourism. The process has been a long one, but definitely worth the effort !

All EI tourist groups visit Cocococha and are given a small tour of the lake, in catamarans. All Giant Otter sightings have been recorded, in detail, since January 2001 when Raphael Notin (an ex-RN) started monitoring the behaviour of the otters with every visit to the lake. 4 otters were seen regularly although the boat route taken at the time appeared to cause an element of disturbance - the sightings were generally short-lived and alarm behaviour (periscoping/barking) was often recorded. The change in the approach to Giant Otter conservation at EI began after a tense few weeks of absolutely no sightings (March 2001) and an increase in fishing activity on the lake by the local people. Frank and Jessica were consulted and visited the Lodge in May 2001.

The result of this visit was incredible. After many hours on the lake, not only were all four otters sighted, but there was an addition to the family – two cubs of approximately three months old ! By the end of May 2001, the tourism management of the lake had been changed and all guides and tourists are now educated on the importance of protecting the Giant Otters. The tour of the lake was altered and the time spent in the catamarans reduced, through the use of a small fallen palm hide. By ensuring the same boat route is used each time, the otters have been able to 'get used to' tourist activity and by June a change in behaviour was evident - not only had the length of observations increased (up to 3 hours in one case), but alarm behaviour was no longer displayed. Instead, the otters were seen playing, fishing and resting out of the water, on logs.

However, the management plan was not complete but since the cubs were still young, the construction of the hide was postponed until November 2001. Wood and 'palmiche' were carried for several kilometers down to the lake and, after two weeks of planning and hard labour, a great little hide materialized. The location is such that a complete view of the lake is possible and an educational exhibition inside, informs tourists of the common species of birds and animals seen at Cocococha.

Giant Otter conservation workshop in P.Maldonado

On mid-December'01, a one-day workshop entitled "Research & Conservation of the Giant Otter and Ox-bow lakes in the Madre de Dios region" was given and facilitated by J.Groenendijk/F.Hajek. The aim of the event was to bring together representatives of the protected areas authority – INRENA, local authorities and NGO's -, and nature tourism companies in order to share research findings and work towards a variety of ox-bow lake management models for the area.

After an introduction, the biology and ecology of the giant otter was summarised, followed by the threats to the species and its environment, especially alluvial gold mining and associated mercury use. Finally, a presentation was made about nature tourism management in giant otter habitats and how to make this economic activity a tool for conservation.

Participants were then separated into groups and presented with three hypothetical ox-bow lakes. Each lake had a different set of biotic and abiotic characteristics and human use patterns. Using the information provided at the course, as well as their varied personal experiences and work backgrounds, each group had to discuss, agree and present a management plan for each lake, which would harmonise human activities and giant otter conservation.

Further details of the project can be obtained from - fzsgop@terra.com.pe

Notes from Picaflor Research Centre

September After several months with little rain the Picaflor trails were covered in a thick anti-stealth layer of dead leaves, but despite this, September proved to be a good month for wildlife observations for anyone with the patience to stop rustling and wait a while. Yellow-billed nunbirds were seen for the first time from a 'mirador' overlooking the Gallacunca stream, and have since been seen regularly, perched conspicuously on emergent bamboo. Two individuals were observed interacting with an aggressive looking display of gaping beaks and wings drooped with their white shoulder patches flared out into a strikingly bright white flash. Not surprisingly, the duller of the two gave up the display first, a quick shake altering the posture and reducing the white shoulders to an inconspicuous thin line.

Picaflor bungalow B became the place to go this month to see rufous-headed woodpeckers, as one persistent individual began regular early morning visits to a dead cecropia within a few metres of the bungalow. Despite the tree appearing far too narrow to accommodate a woodpecker nest, the bird worked away on a hole each morning, alternating between chiseling, drumming and a manic laughing call. I made the rapid transition from wondering what a rufous-headed woodpecker sounds like to wishing it would confine its outbursts to a later hour of the day. It gave up after a week or so, but could still be seen in the vicinity of the buildings, quietly tapping in the caña brava.

September temperature range 16C-32.5C; just 5 days of rain.

October gave us a new perspective on the forest as we hosted a research group studying the behaviour of the Amazonian bumble bee. These ground nesting bees have the endearing habit of walking to work, constructing and maintaining little trails from the nest to patches of the forest floor where they gather dried leaf fragments for nest thatching. Although common behaviour in ants this is unique in bees, and fascinating to watch if you are lucky enough to find a nest - but approach with caution, as these 'ronsapas' have a fierce sting.

We were also introduced to the largest bee species in the Americas - one of the carpenter bees - and to a whole world of other bee species. There are plenty more potential bee projects for anyone interested.

October temperature range 20.5 C -33.5C, 14 days of rain.

November was the month for mangoes at Picaflor, with enough to feed violaceous jays, oropendolas, night monkeys, kinkajous and whole families of agoutis, with still a few left for us. Volunteers Harri and Alex had a close encounter with a porcupine in the bathroom, which is becoming something of a novelty feature at Picaflor. This one was first spotted with its head in the toilet bowl; it proceeded to clamber up to the sink and eat first a bar of soap and then the plug. Armed with sharp quills, it was clearly unflustered at being observed at close quarters by four people, as we debated whether or not porcupines can throw their quills. The books say no, the locals say yes. We kept a respectful distance just in case. Judging from recently gnawed handrails and the rate at which we are getting through soap, I suspect we have frequent nocturnal visits from this character.

November temperature range 19 C - 32C, 19 days of rain.

December temperature range 19.5 C - 32C, 23 days of rain

Greenforce

Andrew Raine of Greenforce writes - "Greenforce has been working at Bahuaja Lodge in the Tambopata-Candamo Buffer Zone for the last year and a half. We are a non-profit, London-based conservation organisation whose aim is to provide conservation projects that run to the host countries specifications and needs. In Peru, the project is run by a core unit of six staff members with up to fifteen international volunteers providing the necessary man-power to carry out the field work. Currently at Bahuaja we are concentrating on 3 major taxonomic groups; birds, large mammals and trees. It is hoped that in the future we will broaden our scope to encompass a wider range of biodiversity, including butterflies, reptiles, etc.

As my position with Greenforce is Avian Research Co-ordinator, I will briefly outline the bird project at Bahuaja. We utilise two main methodologies, mist netting and sound recording, covering all habitat types and all seasons of the year in our field work. The broad aim of the project is to obtain an overall understanding of the avian community inhabiting the buffer zone. The data collected is being used to cover a wide range of topics, including a species list for the area (with individual habitat designations), seasonal and temporal variation, information on migrants (both austral and northern), data on mixed species flock members and flock fidelity, territory size for various species and population sizes for common species (using capture-recapture analysis). The results of our project are produced in reports and papers in scientific journals which we are also given to INRENA, TReeS and any other conservation organisation that is interested - we want our results as widely available as possible to aid in the conservation of the area."

More information about Greenforce can be found at - www.greenforce.org

Peru News

On 29th December a severe fire, triggered by the antics of illegal firework sellers, destroyed several blocks of the Mesa Redonda district of central Lima, adjoining the 'chintown' district. Nearly 300 people died.

Opinion polls continue to show declining popularity for President Toledo. The majority now feel that he has been ineffective, performed disappointingly and lacks vision after 6 months in power.

President Bush will visit Peru in March.

TReeS UK Libraries

Forthcoming deposits will include –

- FENAMAD 2002 Congress report (translated);
- Ese'ejá Cultural centre reports (Sept-Dec'01);
- Explorer's Inn Mammal survey data Jan-April'01;
- Report entitled: 'Reproduction strategies amongst frog species of the TRZ';
- Paper entitled: 'Impactos socio-ambientales probables de la carretera Transoceanica (Rio Branco, Brazil - P.Maldonado, Peru) y la capacidad de respuesta de Peru' by M.Dourojeanni (untranslated);
- Document entitled: 'Concesion de Conservacion en la cuenca del rio Los Amigos: un proyecto de ACA (La Asociacion para la Conservacion de la cuenca Amazonica)';
- Biosphere Expeditions: Expedition report (May-July'01) 'Parrot colpa + geophagy behaviour, and vertebrate species lists from rio El Gato, Tambopata'.

New Books

* **"Where the ANDES meet the AMAZON: Bahuaja-Sonene (Peru) and Madidi (Bolivia) National Parks"** (2001)(ISBN 84-89119-14-7) Hardcover, 336 pages, 336 colour photographs. Price: \$80. Written by K.Macquarrie, with photographs by TReeS member André Bärtschi and a preface by R.A. Mittermeier (President of Conservation International). The book presents a dramatic pictorial display of the natural attributes of two adjacent protected areas in two countries. For purchase details please contact: info@grupoinca.com or AndreBaertschi@powersurf.li.

* **'Ecotravellers Wildlife Guide – Peru'**, D.L.earson & L.Beletsky (Academic Press),(2001), £19.95. A field guide with colour plates, and brief details about the major protected areas. de ACA (La Asociacion para la Conservacion de la cuenca

* **'A Field Guide to the Birds of Peru'**, J.Clements & N.Shany (Ibis Publishing & Lynx Edicions)(2001), 300p, £40. Almost all 1800 Peruvian species are illustrated – many by TReeS member Eustace Barnes, on 127 colour plates. The extensive text describes the main identification features of each species, plus its range in Peru, preferred habitat and worldwide range (See **advert** below).

TReeS Merchandise

* **NEW - Curl Crested Aracari T-shirt** - based on a painting by rainforest artist Eustace Barnes. Price: £9 (XL), £8 (S) bleached and unbleached. **NB** – available from mid-April.

* **Toothbrushes** - 4 for £5. Adult or Junior. All Soft.

* **Rainforest Animal greetings cards** (blank inside) by L.Hanna - 7 beautiful designs featuring an Ocelot, Tree-frog, Scarlet Macaw, Razor-billed Curassow, Puma, Saddleback Tamarin and Black Caiman. Price (including envelopes): £5.00 (set of 7).

* **Girl of the Rainforest:** a creative CD of Andean music and new poems set to Andean music by Sophia Buchuck & friends; full details are given on the inlay card. 10 tracks; lasts nearly 40 minutes. Price: £9 (£4 to TReeS).

All other merchandise as per the Merchandise List.

All prices include postage and packing.

TReeS – P.O.Box 33153, London NW3 4DR.

2002 Membership

Members are reminded that subscriptions fell due at the start of the year. Several members paying by standing order have yet to update their subscriptions to the new rates (introduced in 1999 !) – now £10 (not £5) or £25 (£20) per annum. We would request that standing orders are amended for 2003.

Forthcoming events

* **17th March**, 6.15pm, BBC2, Natural World: Super River – a journey along the Amazon from its source to its mouth.

* Coming soon on BBC1: Stephen Fry and the Spectacled Bears of Peru. Stephen Fry has also been 'tracing the history of Paddington Bear' for the BBC !

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