



(Rambito our Baby Donkey being evacuated to higher ground)

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Water, Water Everywhere...

Like the rest of the world, Peru is affected by the weather cycle “El Nino”, this weather system has the ability to affect weather at all points of the world and generally follows a 4/5 year pattern.

In 2003 Taricaya was hit by its first major flood, February 2008 we suffered our second, although not as seriously.

The week leading up to February we heard several stories out of Cusco of heavy rains which seemed to have lasted over 1 week. This rain then blew towards us, giving us a double whammy of wetness. The rains that happen over Cusco and Puno affect the river systems that feed the Madre de Dios, so we had 1 week of rain flowing down, plus the week of rain along the rivers, then 1 week more of rain on top of us. The result was the river rising at a crazy speed!

The Saturday before the waters finally went over the banks, we left Taricaya as normal, but having spent most of Friday preparing the lodge area for the possibility of a flood, we felt confident that nothing would go wrong.

Getting to Puerto, everyone went off to do their normal things, Internet, phone calls, airport made up my day, finally finishing at about 2pm, and I decided it would be nice to have a little siesta before the afternoons work began again.

At about 3pm I had Maria Fernanda (Nandos’ daughter) knocking on my door to ask me if I had been down to the port yet, confused, half asleep and still tired I wasn’t sure what she was talking about. After a little explanation she reminded me about the river levels and added that she had been down to the port and said that the water had risen about another 40CM, this wasn’t good news – Before we left Taricaya I checked the river level and saw that we had about another 30CM before it went over.

Quickly phoning Nando and Stuart (Who were both in Cusco) explaining the situation and then getting shouted at for not phoning earlier, we started our emergency plans, getting Gasoline, buying torches, extra food, finding as many volunteers and staff as possible, on to the boat and then shooting off to Taricaya as quickly as possible...

Arriving at about 7pm we saw that we were on time, the waters had just started to come over a few hours before, so we could begin to plan what needed to be done – moving all the tools, electrical equipment, generators and any animals that needed to be moved – A lot of work, groups were made for the next day and after a hard mornings work we managed to get everything into place and ready if the waters came any higher... Which of course they did. Measuring from just outside the new kitchen the water levels rose to about 70CM over the course of 4 days, and then slowly began to drop down again. 70cm doesn’t sound like a lot, but the point we were measuring from was actually higher than a lot of the land around us.

The results of this flood? Everything behind the lodge filled with water, swamps, depressions, holes... everything is now full, getting to canopy, HOB, walks in to the forest are now 100% certain to result in wetness.



(The River breaks the banks at about 10:00 on 02/02/08)

Fortunately, as I said earlier, we were prepared enough to avoid any serious problems, nothing was damaged or washed away that could not be replaced/repared cheaply, only one animal was lost (A Blue and Yellow Macaw that could not fly – We believe it had epilepsy) and nobody lost any personally items during the flood.



(In just 24 hours the whole lodge is under water)

Of course once the flood waters had dropped down again, we had a lot of cleaning to do... The river waters had brought in about 1" of mud with them and lifted the walkway between the rooms away into the football field.

The easiest way to clean all the mud from the floors (the work shop, bar, bottom floor of the big block, old kitchen and Rachel's room were all under water for the last couple of days) was to use the big water pump we have at New Farm (Think of the power of a fireman's hose and you have an idea of the power we had) Going from room to room, flooding them out, shooting water along the floors, under the beds, along the walls we managed to get everything cleaner than it was before the flood came! (We actually considered using the pump to clean the buildings out at least once every 2 months)

It was amazing fun! And I think I may have another calling in life as a fireman... Although I don't think the people who were cleaning with me will think the same, I may have gotten a little carried away a few times and soaked them, almost knocking them down a few times!



(The flood waters at their maximum level, just covering the ground floor of the big block)



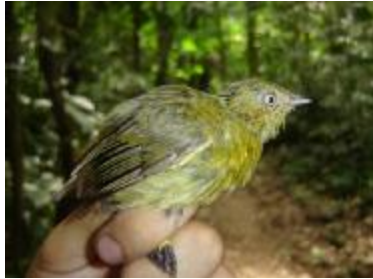
(Animal Feeding becomes a little more difficult)



(Me pretending to be fireman Sam, Getting Gigo a little wet too, oh and cleaning the bar)

Species List

Since 2005 Taricaya has been working hard in creating an accurate and up to date species list, which now includes 359 birds, 54 mammals, 42 amphibians, 54 reptiles and 105 species of butterfly. Various methods have been used to collect this data from mist-netting to manual capture.



Band-tailed Manakin



Brown-mandibled Aracari



Chestnut-tailed Antbird



Black Caiman



Hyla leucophylata



Earth Snake



Brazilian Rabbit



South American Coati



Kinkajou



Morpho menelaus



Nessaea obvinus



Currently Unknown

Auto Camera Feature

The Auto-Cameras use infra red sensors to detect movement (Like a burglar alarm) which then activates the camera. They have memory for 150 photos and rechargeable batteries which last for up to 1 month. Completely water proof, they can be left out in the jungle in all conditions.



Female Red Brocket Deer



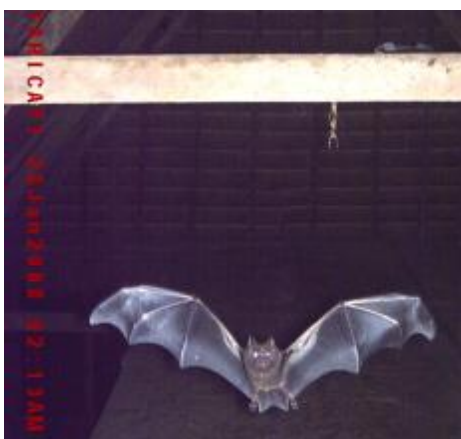
Male Red Brocket Deer



Collared Peccery



White Lipped Peccary



Spear-nosed Bat



Male and Female Spix's Guan

Zoo work...

Due to the floods, we of course had to evacuate the volunteers from the lodge, the water was dirty (contaminated from the river and from the toilet waste pits) everything was underwater so we couldn't work and of course there was always the lingering thought that the water would keep going higher and higher...

So with 10 volunteers in Puerto, we of course had to come up with some work for them to do. Last time we were working at the zoo we had several volunteers coming to us and saying that they didn't like being here because the place was a mess, the enclosures looked horrible and depressing and the animals looked like they were depressed and bored too.

So with a whole week to use, we decided that we would go back to the zoo and do some repair work for them, fixing enclosures, painting as much of the wood as possible, moving the animals around a bit so they had more space and were each species to one enclosure and we did some improvement inside the enclosures – placing new sticks, poles, ropes, swings and other things for the animals to play on and basically give them more things to do.



One of the New Monkey Enclosures



Painting the Caiman Pool

During the course of the week we changed the look of the entire place, turning it from a depressing, drab prison like area, to something that could easily be confused with a zoo.

The volunteers who didn't like being there the last time were the ones who really made the effort this time round, painting some amazing pictures and helping us change the inside of the enclosures. And of course it was those volunteers who left this time the happiest, really feeling like they had made a difference, which of course they did.

We hope to be able to work at the zoo again in the future, doing some more work on the enclosures and of course worming the animals again.



Amazing art work by a baby cat...



The new welcome sign

www.projects-abroad.net

<http://www.volunteer-conservation-peru.org>

Happenings in Puerto Maldonado and Snippets of Taricaya News!

Volunteers Leaving

In February we said goodbye too Lydia Schaedlich and Nicholas Drury.

Thank you for all your help at the reserve, we really couldn't do a lot of the work we do here with out your help.

**New Volunteers
IN FEBRUARY**

In February we welcomed Nicholas Drury, Christopher Parsons, Alex Lund, Thomas Disley, Marius Gutter, Thomas Cole, David Geary, Kirsty Spaven and Amy Clarke.

See you all soon! Hope you'll have a fantastic experience with usJ .

Donkey!

At the start of the month we had 2 new arrivals at Taricaya, 2 more donkeys, one male and one female.

After being trucked in from Cusco they took the short boat ride back to the lodge. A recent addition to the mountains of paper work we have to do at Taricaya has been something called "Zarpe" Which is a declaration of the boats movements on the river and contains all the volunteers' names and details. Now normally when we carry livestock we just add "CARGO" to the list, but this time I decided to play around a little and added "Donkey 1 and Donkey 2 under names, added their ages, nationality and occupation to the form, fortunately the marina was in a good mood, they stamped the forms after joking around for a while, even calling the commander out of his office, who insisted that the donkeys had life-jackets on the boat...Only in Peru!

JUNGLE FACT!

There are some 30,000 types of species of epiphytes (some examples: bromeliads, mosses, ferns, orchids, cacti) In the rainforest.

Activities

Another bad effect of the flood waters is that the majority of the forest is now underwater and looks to remain that way until the water evaporates – I.E several more months. This has meant that we are not using Canopy at the moment and we are generally restricted to about 6KM of trails (Out of the normal 30KM) This hasn't been a major problem for us, although we have changed a lot of the activities around to try and make sure that we are not getting wet every day using the dry 6km we have! We are now working with the Mist-nets more often – Catching birds and now Bats too, we are also working with Butterfly and reptile traps again and of course the auto cameras.

We hope the waters will drop enough to start using the canopy in the next few weeks, but the rain is still coming...!

Man League...?

The male volunteers have set up something they call the "man league", which is where they compete during the day to do the manliest activity. During the night they then have a comity to decide between them who wins...Now after having heard several of the winning activities, I can safely say that we are in no danger of being out performed by them...We all know who the manliest man of Taricaya is anyway...Nando of course! Anything for a bit of entertainment I guess!

Info Centre

The Taricaya Information Centre, or Bar as most of you know it, has been re-vamped again! This time with comfort and use in mind! The Bar area is now a nice long table, the benches are all Sofa style, with cushions all over them and several different seating areas. We hope that this will help the volunteers feel more comfortable in more than just the dining room, meaning that at nights they will be more likely to move there than stay in the dining room and make it all messy!

Batman!

Along with all the dramas of February, we also managed to receive our first out-side expert, Hugo, a bat expert we met in Arequipa last year when we were at the Ecological Conference. Hugo was captivated by our working style and was very enthusiastic about coming to work with us to do research in to the species of bat we have inside the reserve.



(Hugo Zamora Meza, working to extract a bat)

Hugo was working with us for 2 weeks (The last week of February and the first week of March) During those 2 weeks, we worked with 8 locations (8 Mist-Nets) over the course of 11 nights, for 6 hours each night (From 6pm till 12am) Checking the nets every 1 hour.

Using this method we were able to identify an amazing 25 species of bat, with another 3 awaiting confirmation (So hopefully we will have a total of 28 species) Which according to Hugo is more than half than would be expected in area like Taricaya (Biologists can estimate the average number of species in an area – Hugo believes Taricaya will contain about 40 species in total)

Included in the species we have so far are – Vampire bats, Fruit eating bats and Insect eating bats, unfortunately we did not get the one species I was personally hoping for which is a Fish eating bat...



Large fruit eating bat



Woolly false vampire bat



Macconnell's bat

Hugo will be back with us towards the end of the dry season. Like with our Bird monitoring project, the Bat project needs to work during the wet season and the dry season, as different species will be more active in certain location during different times of the year, of course we will also be working in areas of the forest which are currently underwater too.

We would like to thank Hugo for the work he has helped us accomplish so far, enduring some horrible weather, torrential down pours, chilling winds and of course wadding through knee deep swamp waters to check the area for good sites, not an easy task for anyone, especially when your working from 12pm till 12am everyday for 2 weeks!

The volunteers were not exactly loving the situation either, but like always they put on a brave face and fought through the dramas, making the most of the situation and helping us get to this amazing level so quickly.

Over the course of the next few months I will be adding Bats to our Species list section, so that we can all see the different types we have recorded so far.

AND FINALLY...

Like every month I would like to hear from some of you about what you are doing at the moment, A few of you seem to have dropped off the map! Where are you? What are you doing? Do you have any plans to have or join a Taricaya reunion? Let us know what you are up to, we really do enjoy sitting and having a few drinks...oh and reading the emails you send us of course!

Those of you meeting up with Taricaya volunteers we really do want photos for our Reunion section in the New dining room, remember though, you need to find an interesting way to include the phrase "Projects Abroad – Reserva Ecologica Taricaya" Write it in Bananas and Papaya, find a small monkey on the road side and get him to hold a sign up for you – Make it new and interesting.

Also we'd like to know if you guys have any questions about anything, anything about the rainforest that you want to know about and didn't learn whilst you were here? Or maybe something you've forgotten? Let us know for our new Question area of the newsletter!

So until next month, bye!!!

And remember that we also have a Taricaya website, which is full of information and updates from our own Stuart Timson, located at <http://www.volunteer-conservation-peru.org>

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