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PROJECT UPDATES

PALMA REAL

We have recently been working with the village of Palma Real, which lies about 2 hours boat ride downriver from Taricaya.

There is an area of roughly 100 ha surrounding the village which has been over-farmed, leaving the soil a very poor quality. A few years ago we approached them, offering to help make this land useful again for future generations. They were happy for us to try this, although unwilling to commit their own time to the project at this stage. This is due to other NGOs that have previously worked with the Palma Real community not seeing their projects through to completion, and withdrawing their funding. So we need to gain their trust and prove to them that our project has the potential to succeed.

Initially we planted trees for wood, and also brazil nut trees and fruit trees such as bananas and pineapple. Unfortunately it seems the banana trees are unable to reach maturity due to the poor soil quality, and also many of the trees have not taken.

So we have now decided to try cedar, as this is able to grow well in poor soil. It should take 10-15 years before it can be harvested, and so by the time the current generation of schoolchildren reaches adulthood, they should (hopefully!) have a number of valuable trees ready for logging.

The areas for the plantation have been cleared, and the saplings planted, and now we just need to return to the village at regular intervals to keep the area around the young trees clear, giving them the best chance of survival.



We were also invited to attend a ceremony marking the anniversary of the Palma Real School. After a rousing rendition of the national and regional anthems by the schoolchildren, a small 6-a-side football tournament featuring local teams followed. Taricaya were able to field two teams, one of which easily managed to make it through to the final against the Palma Real team. After an enthralling 20 minutes of action, Taricaya were ahead 2-1, and everyone was waiting for the full-time whistle. However, the referee (also from Palma Real) had different ideas... For some reason he decided to allow play to continue for a further 5 minutes, during which time Palma Real inevitably scored an equalising goal, before then going on to win the ensuing penalty shootout. Salt was then rubbed into the wound as the Palma Real team made off with the tournament prize of four crates of beer, with unconfirmed sightings of the referee sharing in the prize...

BIG LOOP WALK

The 'Big Loop' walk takes in the entire 9km perimeter of the Taricaya reserve, and is undertaken approximately every month.

As well as giving the volunteers an idea of the size of the reserve, it is also useful in giving us an idea of animal and bird activities in the less frequently visited areas of the reserve, and in checking for evidence of hunters and loggers encroaching onto the reserve.



During the last couple of months the walk has been particularly interesting and challenging, as the rainy season has led to swamps appearing along many of the trails. Volunteers have had to perfect their swamp-swimming techniques, not an easy feat wearing rubber boots and fully clothed, and more than one volunteer has managed to completely lose their wellies in the murky depths!

ENRIQUE

Many ex-volunteers will remember Enrique as the sprightly old guy who runs a farm on the island adjacent to Taricaya where we occasionally go to collect papaya to feed the animals in our rescue centre.

But many people may not know that he is also a member of the Ese'eja tribe (native to this part of Peru), and at 68 years old has seen a lot of change come to this area, but is also still old enough to remember the old way of life and the tribe's many traditions.

At the beginning of May the volunteers were invited to his island to learn about Ese'eja culture. Enrique explained how the tribe was affected by Spanish settlers, and also talked about their traditional way of life; many people were surprised to learn that he had five wives and fourteen children! He explained and demonstrated about how the tribe made their clothes, how they made fire, and he even helped the volunteers make their own Ese'eja bows and arrows and showed them how to use them (safely!)



EXTRAS

BBC

Following Ross Kemp and Sky TV (from the UK) filming a feature at Taricaya last month, we have now also attracted the attentions of the BBC wildlife unit! A film crew spent 3 days at Taricaya shooting an episode of 'Deadly 60'. This is a programme aimed at children where the team travels the world filming the sixty most deadly creatures.

They travelled to this area of Peru searching for Black Caiman, but they filmed a number of pieces at Taricaya also. The short-eared dogs, the striped owl, and Sid the otter will all feature, as well as our now infamous canopy walkway! The episode is due to air in the UK in October, so keep your eyes peeled.

PASSOVER

We were recently visited by two Israeli volunteers, Uri and Miriam Rom, whose visit happened to coincide with the Jewish festival of Passover. It commemorates the story of the Exodus, in which the ancient Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt.

Uri and Miriam were kind enough to include all of the Taricaya staff and volunteers in their celebrations, providing everyone with unleavened bread, wine, and an explanation of why Passover is marked and how they celebrate back home in Israel.

BABY SHOWER

The middle of the rainforest may seem a strange place to have a baby shower, but at Taricaya anything is possible! Nando (one of Taricaya's founders and directors) and his girlfriend Sandra, who are expecting their first child in July, recently threw a party to celebrate before Sandra flew back to Lima to prepare for the birth. The volunteers all brought a gift along for the new baby, and lots of baby related party games followed, including the surreal sight of some of the volunteers being dressed as babies – where the enormous nappies/diapers came from is still a mystery...



LOCAL NEWS

MINERS' STRIKE

The local town of Puerto Maldonado ground to a halt for a few days recently as many gold miners from the surrounding area held a strike protesting at the Peruvian government's proposed reforms of the gold mining industry. The government wanted increased regulation, potentially reducing the environmental damage caused by mining and ensuring taxes are paid. However, the miners feel that this would limit their ability to operate independently, affecting their livelihoods. Luckily a compromise has now been reached between both parties, and life in the town is back to normal.

Dear Volunteers,

This is my first newsletter as writer and editor after taking over from Rachel Kilby as the Volunteer Co-ordinator for Taricaya. I was a volunteer here from January – April 2010, after which time I was lucky enough to inherit Rachel's position on the staff here! She will be greatly missed here by all, and if I manage to do the job half as well as she has done I'll be happy! We all wish her the very best on her new project.

It seems that somewhere in the transition between Rachel leaving and myself taking over that the April edition of the newsletter has been skipped, so apologies for that, and I will do my best to provide an update of the past two months here at Taricaya.

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.

Dan Howell
Volunteer Co-ordinator
Reserva Ecologica Taricaya

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