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PROJECT UPDATES

RESCUE CENTRE

It has been a relatively eventful month for the rescue centre as various animals have been moved around as their needs have changed.

The new parakeet enclosure is complete, and now houses all of the parrots and the red-masked parakeet, the squirrel monkeys, Nicol (baby spider monkey) and Muñeca (baby howler monkey), however, it is soon to become solely a monkey enclosure, as the birds are to be moved to a larger enclosure, formerly inhabited by Sid the otter.



Sid himself has had to be moved to a larger, stronger enclosure due to repeated escapes (both volunteers and staff were beginning to get annoyed at being woken in the middle of the night by an otter barging into their room demanding attention!). His new enclosure has also been equipped with a much larger pool; perfect for an ever-growing otter!

Nicol and Muñeca have moved to their new cage that has a lot more space for them to swing around in, and they've been making the most of it! At the moment they are only in this cage during the day, coming back inside the animal hospital to spend the night to escape the relative cold outside. Their diet has also recently changed: they are being weaned off milk, and are now moving on to solely a high energy diet of fruit and vegetables.

The adult spider monkeys are currently awaiting the results of their last round of virus tests. Once they have received the all-clear on these they can then finally be moved to the pre-release enclosure on the edge of Taricaya bordering Tambopata Reserve.

The Short-eared dogs are also soon to have an enclosure upgrade. Their new enclosure will have a lot more space for them to move around in,



and is also in a quieter area of the rescue centre which is better suited for the dogs and will hopefully result in them eventually reproducing.

And finally, there is some sad news to report. Unfortunately in the running of a rescue centre there are occasionally deaths, and in the past month there have been two.

Many recent volunteers will remember Lilou, the young spider monkey, who has been brought up here since she was a baby. Sadly she died of heart problems at just one and a half years of age.

Also the male jaguarundi died from pneumonia a short time ago. He arrived at the rescue centre one year ago suffering from malnutrition and a crippling leg condition from which he had been completely rehabilitated. However, this particular cloud may have a silver lining – both of the female jaguarundis look to have put on weight recently and may be pregnant, so watch this space for further news.

BIODIVERSITY DAY

One of our longer serving volunteers, Anne Bogler, has kindly written the following article on a biodiversity competition that we organised recently:

Every year, the 22nd of May is the United Nations International Day of Biodiversity and this year is the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity. To celebrate this event Taricaya and Amazon Planet (the tourist and conservation lodge associated with, and situated next to Taricaya) organized a contest for the schools in Puerto Maldonado with the title: “Madre de Dios, the Capital of Biodiversity”.

The participating children had to build a model representing any subject relating to biodiversity in the region of Madre de Dios. These models could demonstrate biodiversity itself, show the problems that threaten biodiversity or show ideas on how to protect biodiversity. Apart from the model, they had to prepare a small presentation and hand in an essay about their subject.

Initially, a winner from each of the schools was chosen, and then, on the 22nd of March, all the winners met on the Plaza de Armas in Puerto Maldonado and presented their work to four judges. The judges were sent by the Ecological Police, the Tambopata Reserve, the National Institute of Culture and the Ministerium of Education. They listened to the presentations, asked questions and had a good look at the models. Then they had to give points for things like creativity, use of material, and presentation of the biodiversity subject matter.

The work of the volunteers was easy. We had to give the judges the forms with the marking system and then collect them again when they were finished. We also had to be there for the children in case they had any questions about Taricaya or the contest.

Of the 22 schools in Puerto nine sent their winners to the final. One of the models showed the pollution of air, water and soil that threatens biodiversity.

Another one showed the map of the region decorated with little figures of all the animals you can find here. A third was about the school's turtle project where they are trying to save the Taricaya turtle, just like us. The ideas of the pupils were very interesting and looked at many different aspects of biodiversity.



When all the judges had seen all the models and presentations, the results were collected, and half an hour later the three winners were announced. All three of them got a small flag for the school announcing their participation. The prize for first place included visits to Taricaya and Lake Sandoval as well as a dinner at a Pizza Restaurant in Puerto. Those who won second place were also invited to the two excursions and the third school also got to visit Taricaya as well. All the children, schools, judges and volunteers received a certificate for their participation and help.

Many people visited the Plaza that day to look at the models and to ask questions. Maybe it was also a good thing that at the same time all the schools were practicing their school march for the following day, because many other school children were around from schools who didn't participate and they got to know about the contest. Radio, TV and newspaper journalists were present, taking interviews, filming the presentations and taking pictures of the models.

I think many people had the opportunity to learn something about the importance and problems of biodiversity and I hope they will keep it in mind.

BUTTERFLY PROJECT

Gigo has been overseeing the building of the caterpillar enclosures within the large butterfly enclosure. The butterflies that are caught around Taricaya, both in nets and traps, are released into the large enclosure, where they breed and lay eggs. Once the caterpillars hatch, they are collected, placed in the caterpillar enclosures and fed on a diet of banana leaves until they form a chrysalis.



At the moment we are releasing all the butterflies we breed. In the future we hope to focus on the species *Morpho menelaus*, more commonly known as the Blue Morpho, and also the Owl butterfly (*Caligo memnon*). Once we have bred 150 specimens of each, we will release half and keep the remainder to continue the breeding programme.

EXTRAS

TRAILS

During the past couple of months trail clearing has featured heavily, as the wet season has come to an end and the swamps have started to recede. Many of the trails have not been cleared since last year and so require quite a lot of work in order for them to be re-opened. In some places fallen trees have completely blocked the trails and so the chainsaw had to be called into action.

The trails are also all being marked, as many of the previous markers are no longer visible. At the same time, GPS readings are taken, which should result in a more accurate map of the trail network of Taricaya.

GIBBA TOAD-HEADED TURTLE

The Gibba Toad-Headed Turtle that we found roughly 3 months ago has just laid a batch of five eggs which we are hoping to hatch out in around 2 months time.

This species of turtle spend very little time out of water, rarely leaving the water to bask and they are accomplished swimmers. The turtle and all of her eggs are currently being kept near the turtle pool within the butterfly enclosure.



SIGHTINGS

There are times when we specifically go out looking for mammals and reptiles, such as on observation walks around various parts of Taricaya, but some of the best sightings often come when they are least expected, as the past month has shown...

An armadillo was spotted on the return from bird watching on the canopy, just as dusk was setting in. These incredibly shy animals are very rare to see at Taricaya, but luckily a couple of our volunteers were quick enough off the mark to snap some photos of this elusive creature before it disappeared into the forest. Contrary to popular belief these animals will not form a ball immediately if confronted with danger. Instead they run away from the danger and only form a ball as a last resort. They feed predominantly on insects and grubs, and are one of the few animals that burrow in the rainforest; their burrow contains a U-bend, which prevents it getting flooded out during the rainy season.

An adult rainbow boa was found near to the small spider monkey enclosure in the rescue centre. It measured approximately 2 metres in length, and we think this particular snake is the same one that has been sighted around Taricaya on a few other recent occasions. A rainbow boa's diet would consist of small birds, mammals, lizards and frogs.

And a neo-tropical otter (the same species as our very own Sid) was seen during bird-watching at the HOB platform. Its head bobbed above the water of the swamp right in front of the platform, and it proceeded to surface in other areas around the swamp, proving to be something of a distraction to the bird-watching that was supposed to be taking place!