

# STRI newsletter

August 21, 1992

SMITHSONIAN TROPICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE - Apartado 2072, Balboa, Panamá

No. 34

## TUPPER CENTER SEMINARS

Tuesday, August 25, noon presentation of Carlos Fuentes' second video in the series "El espejo enterrado":

### *La batalla de los dioses*

in celebration of the 500 years of the discovery of America.

#### Resumen

A lo largo de su vida Carlos Fuentes ha sido testigo del re-descubrimiento de los antiguos templos aztecas ocultos bajo la plaza mayor de la ciudad de México. "Entonces supimos que lo que habíamos creído muerto en realidad estaba vivo". El vuelve a recorrer el mundo indígena con sus magníficas pirámides y esculturas, un mundo de astronomía exacta y sacrificios humanos, de tranquilidad y violencia. La vuelta de su exilado Dios rubio había sido anticipada para el mismo año que Hernán Cortés llegó a las playas de México. La brutalidad del conquistador igualó a la de los aztecas, pero éste traía consigo un nuevo Dios, un Dios que se sacrificaba por los humanos.

## Next Week

Tuesday, Sep 1, noon presentation of third video from the series "El espejo enterrado":

### *La edad de oro.*

## BAMBI SEMINAR

On Wednesday, Aug 26, Robert Stallard, will give a talk on BCI on

### *Tropical weathering in global biogeochemistry.*

Please contact Vielka Liao to arrange transportation.

## PEOPLE

### Arrivals

- Stephen Nicholls and Michael Pitts, BBC, Aug 26-Sept 3, to film a segment on land crabs for the "Wildlife on One" series. John Christy will be their scientific advisor while at STRI.



Participants of the Twenty-Fifth Annual and Anniversary Meeting of the Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean gathered at the Corotu Plaza, Tupper Center during their meeting held at STRI from August 17-22. This event was organized by John Christy ••• Los participantes del congreso anual y de aniversario de la Asociación de Laboratorios Marinos del Caribe, se reunieron en la Plaza Corotú del Centro Tupper durante sus sesiones llevadas a cabo en STRI del 17 al 22 de agosto. El evento fue organizado por John Christy.

(Foto: M.A. Guerra)

- Michael Hart, short-term fellow, Aug 27-Nov 12, to work on the evolution of egg size in geminate species pairs of Panamanian echinoderms.
- Paul Morris, postdoctoral fellow, Aug 27, 1992-Aug 1993, to work on fluid mechanics, functional morphology, and phylogeny of gastropod palliad anatomy.

### Departures

- Klaus Winter, staff scientist, to Kona, Hawaii, to attend a meeting on Photosynthetic Responses to the Environment, then to Nagoya, Japan, to attend the IXth International Congress on Photosynthesis.
- Haris Lessios, staff scientist, Aug 24, leaves for a six months on sabbatical to Greece.

## THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

### Important News Regarding BCI

#### *Aviso Importante sobre Barro Colorado*

The cooperation of the STRI community that visits BCI frequently is requested. Visitors should notify the BCI secretary at least one day

prior to their visit in order to make transportation and food arrangements. On some days the visitors flow is larger than expected and persons have to stand during the trip. Remember that visitors to the island include not only regular workers and nature visitors, who have made arrangements through the Visitors' Office, but also construction workers. Also please bear in mind that boat operators receive instructions as to what boat to use depending on the estimated number of people traveling. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated \*\*\* *Se solicita la cooperación de toda la comunidad de STRI que visita la isla de Barro Colorado. Deben avisar por lo menos con un día de anticipación siempre que piensen visitar la isla. Actualmente existe el problema que la lancha trae personas paradas por exceso de pasajeros; deben recordar que BCI no sólo tiene los trabajadores de STRI en BCI y los visitantes que reservan cupo para visitar la isla a través de la Oficina de Visitantes, sino también una cuadrilla de trabajadores de construcción. Los operadores de lancha reciben instrucciones sobre cual lancha usar dependiendo del número estimado de pasajeros, y es necesario coordinar con el cocinero el número diario de visitantes.*

### From the Computer Specialist

Due to changes in the system, the password for the dial-up mode for e-mail has been changed. Please contact Francisco Rivera at 27-6022 for information and new password. The e-mail system is only for STRI personnel and official business.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Oportunidades de Entrenamiento

El Instituto para la Formación y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Humanos (IFARHU) se complace en informar que la Organización de las Naciones Unidas a través de la misión permanente de Finlandia en Ginebra ofrece becas para los siguientes cursos: Curso Básico sobre Entrenamiento para Químicos Analíticos en Países en Desarrollo que se realizará en Finlandia del 1ro de febrero al 28 de mayo de 1992 y un Curso Avanzado sobre la misma materia, en Finlandia del 23 de agosto al 17 de diciembre de 1993.

**Requisitos:** Formación académica relacionada al área del curso. Experiencia previa y que su trabajo este vinculado al tema del curso y dominio del idioma inglés.

**Beneficios:** Pasaje de ida y vuelta, alojamiento, viáticos por US\$33.00 diarios y un seguro.

Los interesados pueden dirigirse al Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales, Cooperación y Asistencia Técnica, al 69-6666 o por fax 63-6101.

### Consejo Internacional para la Preservación de las Aves

#### • Sección Panamericana (CIPA • Pan Americana)

La Sección Panamericana del CIPA está en capacidad de ofrecer pequeñas donaciones para proyectos de conservación de aves en México, Centro América, Sur América

y el Caribe. Para el financiamiento de proyectos se considerarán una amplia gama de propuestas, incluyendo actividades de investigación, protección y manejo de hábitats y extensión. Todos los proyectos deben tener un componente conservacionista bien definido. He aquí algunos ejemplos de actividades que pueden ser financiadas por la Sección Panamericana:

- Investigación de especies amenazadas o poco conocidas (censos, historia natural, ecología)
- Estudio de áreas importantes para aves (ubicación, análisis de hábitat, ecología, etc.)
- Planificación, desarrollo y manejo de áreas protegidas
- Simposio científico/conservacionista, talleres de trabajo, programas de entrenamiento
- Problemas poblacionales en aves (pesticidas, introducción de depredadores, recolección de huevos)
- Información y educación al público (publicaciones, programas audiovisuales, seminarios, afiches)
- Desarrollo de recursos conservacionistas (adquisición de materiales, literatura, equipo para centros de entrenamiento, bibliotecas, etc.)

**Eligibilidad:** Cualquiera trabajando con la conservación de aves puede aplicar para una donación de la Sección Panamericana del CIPA, pero los residentes de América Latina o el Caribe tienen preferencia.

**Monto de la donación:** No hay límite para el monto de la donación a solicitarse. No obstante, los solicitantes deben estar conscientes que este es un programa de pequeñas donaciones y se puede dar financiamiento parcial a proyectos ya aprobados con gran presupuesto. La donaciones otorgadas en años recientes variaron de U.S. \$100 a \$5,000.

Para más información comuníquese con la Oficina de Educación en el Centro Tupper.

## CONGRESOS

### ■ Congreso Internacional de los Profesionales del Turismo

Feria Exposición de literatura científico técnica turística, a realizarse del 27 de septiembre al 2 de octubre en el Palacio de Convenciones de la Habana, Cuba.

### ■ Encuentro Internacional de Documentalistas y Bibliotecarios del Turismo

A realizarse del 27 de septiembre al 2 de octubre en el Palacio de Convenciones de la Habana, Cuba.

Para cualquier información sobre ambos congresos debe dirigirse al: Ing. Jesús Álvarez Valdés, Coordinador General del Congreso, teléfono 32-2217 o escribir a: INTUR-AMFOR, Calle F, Esquina a 5a, La Habana 10400, Cuba.

**For Sale**

2 sets of twin size trundle beds, desks with shelves (2) chairs (2), night table pecan wood, \$650. Call Leonor Motta, 26-1182.

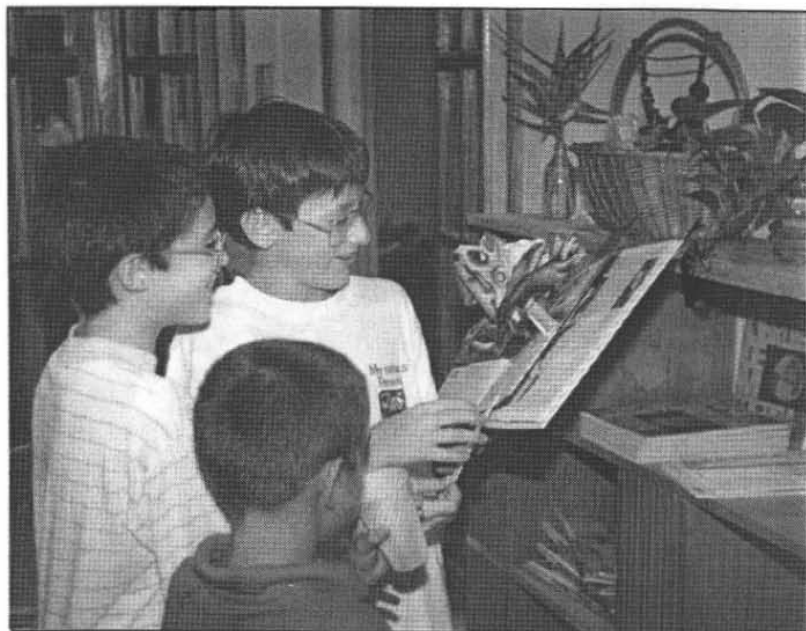
**CONSERVATION UPDATE****The Sweet and Sour of the Canal Area Forests**

by Nicholas Smythe

Last Sunday evening, standing on the steps of our house in Gamboa, I was saying goodbye to some friends I had not seen in years. They were on their way back to the United States having spent the last few weeks "ecotouring" on the Amazon. Suddenly it became almost impossible for any of us to hear what the others were saying, as a flock of nearly 300 red-ored parrots, calling stridently to one another, came in to roost in the mahogany trees directly overhead. I was on the point of apologizing for the racket when I noticed that all eight of my guests were staring dumbfounded into the trees overhead. As the birds settled down and the noise subsided they explained their astonishment. While on one of the famous Amazon nature tours their guide had turned and said "look, there's a wild parrot"! But only four of them got a glance at it before it silently flew away. And here they were, only 30 minutes from a major city, not hundreds of miles up the Amazon by bus and boat, and surrounded by so many parrots that they could hardly hear one another speak.

I wonder how many of us in Panama take for granted this incredible treasure: the forest that borders the canal? How many people in the World have ever seen one wild parrot, never mind 300? For that matter, how many people have even seen a full grown mahogany tree?

These questions were brought even more strongly to my attention the next morning when I went to the Gamboa gas station. The attendant told me that a friend of his had asked him to ask me about some strange animals that were killing his chickens. When asked what the animals looked like he gave a perfect description of a grison. I had to tell him that I knew what



On Friday, Aug 14, "Tienda Ecológica y Artesanal" was inaugurated at the Metropolitan Nature Park in Panama with the support of STRI. Children at the inauguration admired the colorful books at the shop ••• El viernes 14 de agosto, se inauguró la "Tienda Ecológica y Artesanal en el Parque Natural Metropolitano en Panamá, con el apoyo de STRI. Los niños que asistieron a la inauguración mostraron un gran entusiasmo al encontrarse con los preciosos libros de la tienda.

(Foto: M.A. Guerra)

the animal is but I couldn't tell him much about it because very little is known. No one has ever studied grisons in the wild. Yet here they are in the middle of Gamboa.

There are even more unusual animals around. Dr. David Roubik drove around a corner on the Pipeline Road early one morning a few months ago and saw a large cat playing in the middle of the road. He was able to get a good enough view of it to see that the back of its neck was covered with spots - not stripes. There is only one wild cat in the new World tropics with spots on the back of its neck and that is the jaguar. From its size, Roubik's description of its feet and the way it was behaving, we know that it was a cub. Jaguars are one of the most endangered animals in the world, to see one at all is a lifetime experience; yet here we have good evidence that jaguars are breeding within an hour's drive of Panama city.

But an experience of Dr. Greg Adler's is perhaps the most extraordinary. He was birdwatching with his wife Akimi on the old Gamboa road one morning about a month ago. Suddenly they heard a series of high pitched yips and three strange looking little dogs ran right past them. Greg says that they were about the size and shape of a small pig and they had short, stub tails. There is only one animal that they could have been, and that is the bush-dog. Bush dogs are so rarely seen that almost all of the information in the biological literature is anecdotal, from hunters. I know of only one biologist, besides Greg and Akimi, who has seen one in the wild. They are not recorded from Panama west of the Darien, although there is fairly reliable evidence that they occur around Fortuna, and probably into the Parque Nacional la Amistad.





Los instructores Carlos Corcho, (izquierda, segundo plano) y Eladio Meneses (derecha, primer plano), dictaron cursos intensivos de defensa personal a los guardabosques de STRI durante este mes. De izquierda a derecha en segundo plano aparecen Juan Barría, Gabriel Abrego, Enrique Marciaga y Rodolfo Selles. En primer plano, Andrés Ramos, Mario Santamaría y Mario Bernal. El resto de los guardabosques se graduarán el viernes 21 de agosto.

(Foto: M.A. Guerra)

Perhaps these stories will help to remind us of the incredible value of the forest in the canal area. Its potential to attract tourists is beyond calculation. It is not just a matter of interest to people who like nature. Preservation of this forest is probably one of the most profitable investments Panama could make. But how secure is that investment?

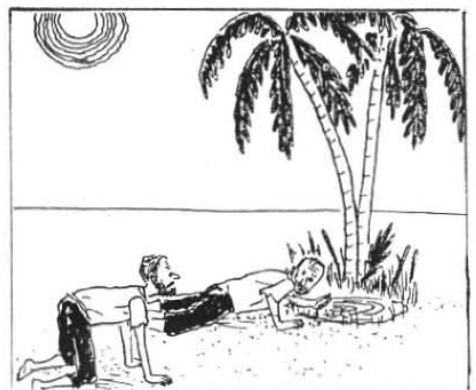
A few years ago I was out with Drs. Rubinoff and Rand in a boat near Bohio Peninsula in Gatun Lake. Above the noise of the outboard motor I heard a sound that was so out of place that I could not, for some time, identify it. It was repeated several times. I stopped the motor and we all listened to it, and were able to get a recognizable recording on a small tape recorder. Then I suddenly remembered where I had heard it: in the forest above Cerro Punta. It was the calling of a male Bellbird. Bellbirds had never been reported from anywhere near the canal area, although they are known to migrate altitudinally with the seasons. Isn't that fantastic! A new record! But is it good from an ecological point of view? What is that bird doing so far from its accustomed range? The most likely explanation is that the forest in its usual winter habitat has been destroyed, and it reached the canal area in a desperate effort to survive.

Could that be part of the reason for the presence of other unusual animals here? Perhaps there are other species that are finding the forest around the canal a last, desperate refuge.

Protection of the canal area forest may thus be of much greater importance than most of us realize. The question is particularly critical at this time because several sizeable portions of that forest are about to be relinquished by the US

military, which has had custodianship of them, and has let the forest survive, for many years. What will happen to them? If the forest on them is destroyed, and the total area of forest around the canal thus diminished, it may well become too small to support breeding populations of several species, and thus lose its value as a refuge and as an attraction for tourists.

In tropical forest that has already been destroyed elsewhere the destruction has proceeded in stages: first hunters come in and reduce the game populations, then the selective loggers, then the slash-and-burn farmers and finally, when the soil is nearly exhausted and will support nothing but grass, the cattle ranchers. They can persist there for a few years, but grass is not sustainable on lowland soils and the land becomes more and more useless until it is abandoned. What stage are we at in the canal area? Early this year I initiated a mammal trapping project with members of the student biological research society (SIBUP) from the University of Panama. We placed 12 lines of traps at different places along the Pipeline Road in the Sobe- rania National Park. In one of these, along the Agua Salud River, deep within the park, 19 of 25 traps, useless for catching anything larger than a rat, were stolen the first night they were put out. Horse tracks in the river bed indicated that hunters had come down the river from outside the park. More and more traps were stolen from other lines and the project finally had to be abandoned. So, we are well into stage one. Anyone, whether interested in wildlife or in the future of Panama would do well to heed the warning.



¡Oye Rainaldo! y ¿a quién le importa cuál sea su nivel de nitrato?