



Our Volunteers and Staff outside the Native community of Palma Reals School.

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After another busy month in Taricaya we are all very pleased with the progresses we have made in each of our projects. We have started many new things and of course kept all of our key projects running efficiently which hasn't been easy as we have a lower number of volunteers than we did in July!

Project Updates

Turtle Project

As I mentioned a few times over the last few months, August is a key month for the Taricaya Turtle Repopulation Project. We spent July preparing the beaches and getting all of our equipment ready for the key part...collecting the eggs on the beach! The project is at night due to the fact that the turtles lay their eggs at night between 9pm and 4am. So we have to take tents, food, water and of course the equipment we need to collect the eggs with us. Leaving Taricaya at about 5-5:30pm we get to the beach just in time for sunset and then we have time for dinner and a rest before we have make our first patrol at 11pm. The turtle beach is located around an island in the middle of the Madre de Dios River about 20 minutes from Taricaya itself. Walking around the edge of the beach we are looking out for the tell-tale tracks left by the turtles as they come out of the water and start their trek looking for a suitable place to lay their eggs. On occasions the turtles can go a few hundred meters looking for the right place to lay and as far as we can tell there isn't a reason why they choose each location (apart from the fact that the sand needs to be dry, level and a certain temperature). Once we find the tracks, we follow them until we find the area of the nest which, with practice, is fairly easy to find and we begin the task of measuring everything and recording all of the data so we can replace them in the artificial beach in the same way as they were originally laid. Removing the eggs with great care we place them in plastic buckets to be transported back to Taricaya the next day and then we move off looking for more tracks and nests. The whole process is then repeated at 4am so we are generally leaving the beach at about 6am and back at Taricaya by 6:30. Once we get back we then have to go to new farm and begin placing the nests into the artificial beach whilst also taking more measurements of the eggs themselves. Then it's finally time to rest until the afternoon when it's back to normal activities!



Volunteers collecting Eggs



A close up of the Nest

This year has so far been below average in regards to the amount of nests we have collected, through a combination of poachers and bad weather we have taken 30 nests up until now but with the bad weather stopping the turtles from laying we are fairly confident that they will continue laying for a week or so more instead of finishing on September 1st like they have every year before. So in my next newsletter I will be able to tell you exactly how many we have managed to take back to the artificial beaches in the farm. It generally takes about 80 days for the eggs to begin to hatch so until then we will just be keeping an eye on the beaches to stop ants and other insects from attacking them.

This year has been special with the Turtle Project as we have also started a ground breaking project with the government. Two lucky volunteers had the chance to go for one week with Daniel Niera and a team of people from the government and Palma real native community to a place called the Heath River which is right on the border with Bolivia. This area is inside of a national reserve and has a huge amount of Taricaya Turtles that nest there each year. The native community of Palma real has been going to this area for many years to take the eggs that they now sell in Puerto Maldonado (which although illegal is not stopped as the natives are generally allowed to do as they please without having to worry about legal action). Following the same process as we use here in Taricaya the team managed to collect a massive 60 nests in six days for the Conservation Project. Obviously other natives will have worked the area to take more nests for themselves but as this is the first time with this project we have to start small. The nests were split into two groups; half for Taricaya and half for the artificial beach built in Palma real itself. And again now we have to wait for a couple of months until they hatch. The idea is that with each nest that is conserved in this way the community will receive financial support. This year we have asked them to provide a list of all the things that the school needs or wants and we will present them with their prize in November. With the success of this project we will of course be hoping to expand the project further next year and save even more nests!



The Palma Real Turtle Beach



The School Teachers In Charge Of the Beach

Another part of the Taricaya Turtle Project in Palma real is of course education. We have to work closely with the community, especially the children, so that they start to change their attitude to nature and its resources. With the help of Amazon Planet and Sandra Rosemberg we went to Palma real to teach them a little about the importance of conserving the turtles and protecting the nests they have behind the school. We had a quiz game which involved all of the kids in different groups having to answer questions about the turtles and then running to certain points to see who the winner of each question was. Thanks to the help of the teachers, volunteers and staff that were there that day we managed to entertain them all for an hour and hopefully they will remember a few things about the turtles but most importantly the message of conserving and protecting the nests and turtles will be more present with them and little by little they will start to change their attitude.



Competitors running to get the right answer first!



Our Judges and Helpers!

New Platform

We have also begun construction of a new observation platform in Taricaya. In the middle of the banana plantation in new farm two you will now see a large steel construction that reaches just over the top of the trees. The new design is much easier to construct than the old wooden platforms and will obviously last many more years before we have to repair or replace the structure. It has been much quicker to build as well taking us only a week and a few days to get the whole thing up in the air and ready for use. There are still a few things that need to be done before we can officially say it's finished but as you can see it's usable and the first observation activity has already taken place. Rachel, who was the one who had been asking for the platform in the first place, took a group up there in the afternoon one day and they saw many interesting things. Even during the construction phase we were lucky enough to see red and green macaws, vultures, woodpeckers, hawks and swifts all flying around and past the platform.

Caiman Research

As part of our on-going efforts to support staff education, we have been helping our staff vet to finish her thesis. Carmen has been with us since March this year and has decided to focus her thesis on Caimans. The project required us to capture about 50 caiman so that blood samples, weight and length measurements could be taken so that the health of the caiman in this area of the Madre de Dios River could be evaluated. Obviously capturing 50 caiman is a huge task. Those of you who have been in Taricaya before and who have taken part in Stuart Caiman talks will know that when we go out after to capture a caiman to help with the explanations it can take a few hours to capture one! So we were fairly sure that we would be working on this for a month or so. Luckily though we had a good group of staff in the boat and we were able to capture all 50 in just over a month and Carmen, with the help of other staff, was able to take all the samples quickly and easily to avoid stressing the animals too much. All of the blood samples were sent off to a lab in Lima for analysis and hopefully Carmen will be able to continue her work and present her finished thesis for us all to see!



A very Large Caiman being held down by The staff. As you can see we were all very happy by this capture!

Sensor Camera Update

A final update of the sensor camera Project for you all, a few weeks ago Wendy, one of the staff in the rescue center, spotted a wild Jaguar walking around the rescue center in the evening. Since then we have been placing our sensor cameras around the camp and studying the individual to see what its up too. We have seen very positive behavior from the male Jaguar, he comes in and out of the camp from many different directions but always leaves the momento he hears or sees people coming and has not been bothering any of the other animals which is excellent as it means he isnt interested in us or the animals we have but only Preciosa who happens to be in her Reproductive phase this month...we are very confident that he will leave again soon and we probably wont see him again until next year!



Our Male Jaguar coming into the rescue center and then moving around Preciosas enclosure.

Hi,

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 on 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.

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