

# Rancho Mastatal Updates

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## April 2008

*Rancho Mastatal UPDATE for the month of APRIL 2008*

*As I start to write this, Robin's only a few weeks off from her trip to motherhood. We're all preparing for a little change. Her health and waddle have been perfect. The rains are back with afternoon showers becoming more and more common. The result has been cooler temps and greener environs, and unfortunately less horseshoes. But the Ultimate games have been epic with pain-free slip-n-slide layouts. Our numbers have been substantial and consistent as we find ourselves more than halfway through Susan's quarter abroad with her UW students.*



*Food baskets in corner of porch*

*photo by Meg*

*In addition to attending to the sizeable group, we're getting ready for our summer internship, sneaking up quickly. Soon after we'll begin our summer educational programs with Tropical Adventures in Education, TIBURON'S organization. All of us here in Mastatal want to send out our love and thoughts to Tiburon, who has had a recent relapse with his cancer. The chemotherapy treatments will prevent him from coming to Mastatal this summer, though the prognosis is good as they caught it early again. Please send him your good thoughts, love, emails, and letters when you get a minute.*

*ANGELA will be filling in for Tom throughout the summertime, leading his numerous programs. We can't wait to see you back in Mastatal Ang. Thanks to everyone that contributed to this month's edition as we struggle to catch back up. A belated Happy Mother's Day out there to all that this holiday pertains to. We're starting to think about our fall schedule and hope to see many of you in the States. We're planning on extending our stay a few weeks this year, adding the last week of September and the first week or two of December to our yearly stateside visit. Keep us posted up where you'll be during that time. We're eager for another Ranch-like reunion in Eastern MA for Bioneers in October. Other than that, we're fairly open with tentative visits to Ithaca, NY; Worcester and Bennington, VT; and Raleigh, NC. We're also hoping to get to ME and maybe FL. Otherwise, we'll be bouncing back and forth between families in the Binghamton and Schenectady, NY areas. We hope that all of you in the northern climes are loving the springtime weather. Enjoy this edition, and send us word on how you're doing when you can.*

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*Bats nesting beneath a banana leaf*

*photo by Delfino Cornali*

## **RM Program News: Bat Love**

One of the things I love most about Mastatal is the presence of bats.

In the forest at night, especially near the streams, mosquitoes and other flying insects swerve and veer jagged paths through the air – looking for their next meal, looking for a mate, looking for that ever-elusive light around which to buzz and into which to haphazardly bump. They want to pester someone, I'm sure. I am invariably perched on a little wooden stool (borrowed from the tool shed) looking rather like a strange collegiate hobbit in my black poncho, shining my flashlight into the pitch blackness every fifteen minutes for mammalian eye shines. A regular sitting duck. I'd rather not be their target. But when night falls, the balmy air is enriched with the soft leathery flapping that sounds a little like a damp towel being idly whipped around. It's at that point that I know I have nothing to worry about. The bats are watching my back.

Bats are expert navigators of dense foliage. The ease with which they swoop at top speed through minuscule gaps between leaves and branches (in total darkness, no less) puts Han Solo to shame. They owe their extraordinary prowess to the ability to echolocate. Like all bats in Costa Rica (and the entire Western hemisphere), the bats in and around Mastatal are micro-bats – they echolocate – and are distinguishable from the megabats (flying foxes) of Australasia, who find their food by sight and scent. Echolocation is an evolutionary adaptation that involves making ultra-high frequency vocalizations. The sounds are amplified by the bat's "noseleaf," the elaborate cartilaginous structure around its nostrils. The high pitch of these vocalizations makes them imperceptible to us, but they resonate off any object in the air and the echoes are easily received by

the bats (many micro-bats have large cupped ears that help them perceive high-frequency sounds). The time it takes for the echoes to return to the bat will send information about the direction, distance and shape of any object in the nearby environment. This allows the bat to fly quickly in the dark to capture moving insects, while avoiding collision with branches and other stationary structures. Echolocation is a trait completely unique to bats.

The bats never run into me during their forays, but I can often feel the warm wind on my face from their wingbeats as they deftly swoop by. They smell slightly musky. It hardly impedes our relationship – as long as they're eating the bugs, the bugs can't eat me. As long as I sit there, I'm attracting bugs, and the bats get a good meal. We're friends and equals in the forest. I may never see another mammalian eye shine during my observations in the woods at night. But I'll never be lonely, as long as I hear the soft flutter of those leathery wings.

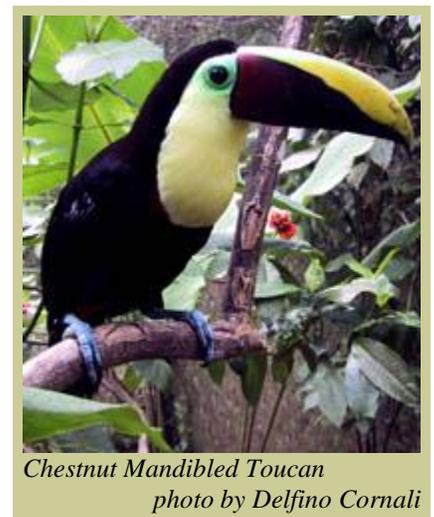
Betsy Hall, University of Washington

### **Conservation Update: Birds**

This letter is borrowed (with permission) from the Birding Club of Costa Rica Newsletter.

### **RANCHO MASTATAL, LA CANGREJA NATIONAL PARK - March 8 - 9, 2008 (9.67935N, -84.37063W)**

Gorgeous weather was our first indication that this would be an enjoyable outing. The setting of Rancho Mastatal, located on 550 acres of the last of the true virgin rain forest of Puriscal County, shares significant border area with La Cangreja National Park. Rancho Mastatal encompasses an impressive amount of walking trails where we spotted many more birds than we had hoped.



*Chestnut Mandibled Toucan  
photo by Delfino Cornali*

There were a few early bird attendees who took advantage of a short walk around the grounds to spot some interesting birds, including a King Vulture. By noon, most had arrived and we enjoyed a delicious vegetarian lunch before starting on our afternoon trek. Our two well-experienced guides, Henry Kantrowitz and Patrick O'Donnell, lead us to two separate areas of the property. Unexpected sightings of seldom-seen species included four different varieties of trogons, a Bay-headed Tanager, a Blue-crowned Manakin, and a view -in a single tree - of three species of honeycreepers along with a Blue Dacnis.

Back at the lodge we enjoyed an evening of camaraderie, wine, and bocas and a meal of a mouth-watering quiche and yucca patties.

Several early Sunday morning excursions netted sightings of toucans, araçaris, and a Double-toothed Kite. Bell birds were heard but did not make an appearance. The group that walked along the roadside entrance to Rancho Mastatal was rewarded with an exceptional number of sightings without having to trek far.

We reconvened for a hearty breakfast of fine vegetarian cuisine. The groups then traded guides and areas for the morning outing. The highlight of that walk was spotting an Ornate Hawk-Eagle. We also enjoyed a deep forest sighting of both a male and a female Red-capped Manakin. Near the river some birders in that group saw a Fasciated Tiger-Heron.

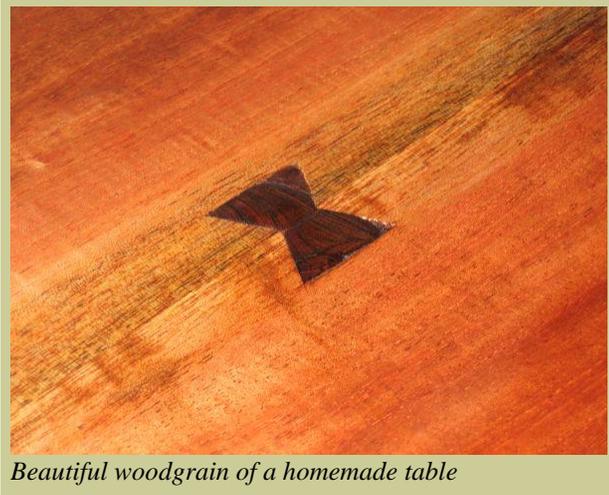
A final gathering for lunch concluded the outing. Everyone agreed that the sustainable living and environmental learning center focus of Rancho Mastatal made for a most enjoyable excursion. We also extend a warm welcome to Carol Marujo who decided this weekend to join BCCR as a member. Carol authored the Tico Times article that garnered many people's interest in visiting this area.

Bird list: (128 seen or heard)

Great Tinamou (H), Little Tinamou (H), Crested Guan, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Green Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, King Vulture, Double-toothed Kite, Roadside Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Gray Hawk, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Laughing Falcon, Pale-vented Pigeon, Red-billed Pigeon, Band-tailed Pigeon, Short-billed Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Blue Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, Ruddy Quail-Dove, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Brown-hooded Parrot, White-crowned Parrot, Red-lored Parrot, Squirrel Cuckoo (H), Groove-billed Ani, Mottled Owl, Common Pauraque (H), Common Potoo (H), White-collared Swift, Costa Rican Swift, Stripe-throated Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, Blue-throated goldentail, Charming Hummingbird, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Purple-crowned Fairy, Long-billed Starthroat, Baird's Trogon, Violaceous Trogon, Black-throated Trogon, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Blue-crowned Motmot, Fiery-billed Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Chestnut-mandibled Toucan, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Slaty Spinetail (H), Plain Xenops, Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Barred Antshrike (H), Black-hooded Antshrike (H), Chestnut-backed Antbird, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Paltry Tyrannulet, Northern Bentbill, Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Tropical Pewee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Yellowish Flycatcher, Bright-rumped Attila, Dusky-capped Flycatcher (H), Great Crested Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, Gray-capped Flycatcher, Streaked Flycatcher, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Piratic Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Rufous Piha, White-winged Becard, Rose-throated Becard, Masked Tityra, Three-wattled Bellbird (H), Orange-collared Manakin, Blue-crowned Manakin, Red-capped Manakin, Philadelphia Vireo, Lesser Greenlet, Brown Jay, Blue-and-White Swallow, Rufous-naped Wren, Riverside Wren, Rufous-breasted Wren, House Wren, Scaly-breasted Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren (H), Tropical Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush (H), Clay-colored Robin, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Summer Tanager, Western Tanager, Cherrie's Tanager, Blue-gray Tanager, Palm Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Golden-hooded tanager, Blue Dacnis, Green Honeycreeper, Shining Honeycreeper, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Variable Seedeater, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Buff-throated Saltator, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great-tailed Grackle, Bronzed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, Montezuma Oropendola, Spot-crowned Euphonia.

## Attendees:

Janet Peterson, Joel Bowers, Lisa Carnicom, Don Voelker, Janis Bolt, Dieter Holdt, Henry Espinoza, Nicole Sault, Carol Marujo, Johan Kuilder, Ineke van Leeuwen, Sara Clark, Paul Schmidt, Julie Jackson, James Lewis, Jordan & Beth Holtam and guides, Henry Kantrowitz and Patrick O'Donnell.



*Beautiful woodgrain of a homemade table*

## **Building Report: New Computer Desks for *La Escuela***

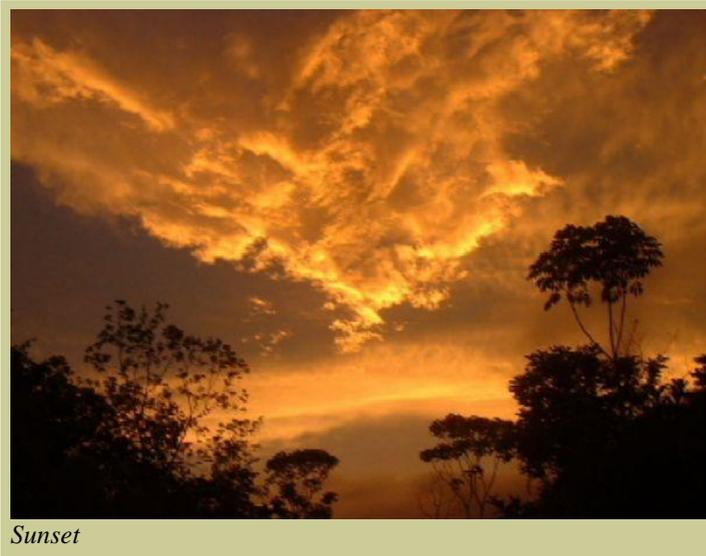
Mastatal's elementary-level grade school has been asking for months for a new table on which to place their computers. This month, some of the students visiting from the University of Washington have taken it upon themselves to take on this task.

In addition to learning basic mortis and tenon joinery, the students have also been learning how to adapt to change throughout the construction process. The original plans called for a table that would have been roughly shoulder level to the seated students, too high for computer work. Also, the plans called

for the table to be long enough to fill a specific corner of the classroom, longer than most dinner tables. To create a more usable desk, the students decided to bring the height down about eight inches, and to build two desks instead of one, each one half the length of the original plans. This way, the desks will allow for more versatility in the future, should the class wish to move them around.

Perhaps the biggest lesson the students are learning is that everything takes a little bit longer in Mastatal. The project has been divided into three phases, and while the project is still on schedule overall, each phase thus far has required at least 50% more time than originally planned. However, the students remain diligent and look forward to presenting their gift to the school at the end of their stay.

Charlie Wenger



### **Volunteer/Guest Gossip: The Perfect High**

This was written by the famous Shel Silverstein years ago. The following entry contains some profane language and may not be appropriate for everyone.

There once was a boy named Gimme-Some-Roy... He was nothin' like me or you, 'cause laying back and getting high was all he cared to do.

As a kid, he sat in the cellar... sniffing airplane glue. And then he smoked banana peels, when that was the thing to do. He tried aspirin in Coca-Cola, he breathed helium on

the sly, and his became an endless search to find the perfect high.

But grass just made him wanna lay back and eat chocolate-chip pizza all night, and the great things he wrote when he was stoned looked like shit in the morning light. Speed made him wanna rap all day, reds laid him too far back, Cocaine-Rose was sweet to his nose, but the price nearly broke his back.

He tried PCP, he tried THC, but they never quite did the trick. Poppers nearly blew his heart, mushrooms made him sick. Acid made him see the light, but he couldn't remember it long. Hash was a little too weak, and smack was a lot too strong. Quaaludes made him stumble, booze just made him cry, Then he heard of a cat named Baba Fats who knew of the perfect high.

Now, Baba Fats was a hermit cat... lived high up in Nepal, High on a craggy mountain top, up a sheet and icy wall. "Well., hell!" says Roy, "I'm a healthy boy, and I'll crawl or climb or fly, Till I find that guru who'll give me the clue as to what's the perfect high.

Grinding his teeth, coughing blood, aching and shaking and weak, Starving and sore, bleeding and tore, he reaches the mountain peak. And his eyes blink red like a snow-blind would, and he snarls the snarl of a rat, As there in repose, and wearing no clothes, sits the god-like Baba Fats.

"What's happenin', Fats?" says Roy with joy, "I've come to state my biz... I hear you're hip to the perfect trip... Please tell me what it is. "For you can see," says Roy to he, "I'm about to die, So for my last ride, tell me, how can I achieve the perfect high?"

"Well, dog my cats!" says Baba Fats. "Another burned out soul, Who's lookin' for an alchemist to turn his trip to gold. It isn't in a dealer's stash, or on a druggist's shelf... Son, if you would find the perfect high, find it in yourself."

"Why, you jive mother-fucker!" says Roy, "I climbed through rain and sleet, I froze three finger off my hands, and four toes off my feet! I braved the lair of the polar bear, I've tasted the maggot's kiss.

Now, you tell me the high is in myself? What kinda shit is this?

My ears, before they froze off," says Roy, "had I heard all kindsa crap; But I didn't climb for fourteen years to hear your sophomore rap. And I didn't climb up here to hear that the high is on the snatch, So you tell me where the real stuff is, or I'll kill your guru ass!"

"Okay... Okay," says Bab Fats, "You're forcin' it outta me... There is a land beyond the sun that's known as Zabolee. A wretched land of stone and sand, where snakes and buzzards scream, and in this devil's garden blooms the mystic Tzutzu tree.

Now, once every ten years it blooms one flower, as white as the Key West sky, And he who eats of the Tzutzu flower shall know the perfect high. For the rush comes on like a tidal wave... hits like the blazin' sun. And the high? It lasts forever, and the down don't never come.

But, Zabolee Land is ruled by a giant, who stands twelve cubits high, And with eyes of red in his hundred heads, he awaits the passer-by. And you must slay the red-eyed giant, and swim the river of the slime, Where the mucous beasts await to feast on those who journey by. And if you slay the giant and beasts, and swim the slimy sea, There's a blood-drinking witch who sharpens her teeth as she guards the Tzutzu tree."

"Well, to hell with your witches and giants," says Roy, "To hell with the beast of the sea—Why, as long as the Tzutzu flower still blooms, hope still blooms for me." And with tears of joy in his sun-blind eyes, he slips the guru a five, And crawls back down the mountainsides, pursuing the perfect high.

"Well, that is that," says Baba Fats, sitting back down on his stone, Facing another thousand years of talking to God, alone. "Yes, Gods, it's always the same...old men or bright-eyed youth... It's always easier to sell `em some shit than it is to tell them the truth."

Shel Silverstein

### **Community Facts/Stories: Music & Shrimp**

BETH WHEAT, a Ph.D. student at the University of Washington has been coming here for the past three years to conduct a study on river shrimp. She graciously takes various interns to accompany her in setting traps and recording fish numbers. This is a great experience, because not only do you get pick Beth's brain about the plants and birds along the trails that lead to the river, but you get to see her in a wetsuit and snorkel! JULIAN EPPS and I went out with her and recorded the numbers, which she gave between periods of submerging her snorkeled head in five to seven inches of water. "It's easier to see the fish that way!" she said.

One day, Beth went out to one of her study sites along the Juco River, and found hundreds and hundreds of shrimp, insects, worms, and frogs, all dead. A large stretch of the river had been poisoned! Unfortunately, this is not such an unusual occurrence; People eat shrimp, *orcamarones*, all the time. But there is a legal way to catch them and an illegal way. The legal way is to use a long stick as a spear while walking through the river at night, when the shrimp come out.

Apparently, people here have been doing this for generations and, since it involves quite a bit of work and discrimination between large and small shrimp, it is a safe way to prevent any one person from taking too many. The illegal way is to poison the river. The poison that people use affects all of the invertebrates, including all sizes of shrimp, worms, and insects-- and the things that eat the invertebrates, like frogs, birds, and some fish. The upside is, the shrimp are easier to catch that way. And for some reason, people don't seem to connect the idea that if they use poison on the shrimp and then eat the shrimp, they are essentially eating the poison themselves, which can't be good. Beth was distraught, and so was everyone she told about it, including myself. Was there anything we could do about it?

Putting two and two together happened when I realized I could connect a shrimp lesson with the daily music class I've been doing at the elementary school. A fellow volunteer, DEIVIS GARCIA, speaks fluent Spanish and plays the guitar, so together we wrote a song about keeping the rivers clean, and taught it to the kids. Who knows what sort of an affect it will have, but it seems to be getting properly stuck in their heads. And the local policeman recently asked us to perform it for him. Here it is, sung in a similar style to the local Rancheras:

*Quería nadar, pero no pude  
Y hacia tanto calor  
El Rio Juco estaba enfermo  
Los animales tenían dolor*

*Coro:  
Morieron los camarones  
Morieron los gusanitos  
Ese día quede tan triste  
Necesito limpiar mi río!*

*Los que comen los gusanos  
Estaba enfermo también  
Tantos insectos y ranas  
Morieron más que cien.*

*{Coro}*

*A donde pasa mi río?  
A donde pasa el veneno?  
El río visita a todos  
Regalando tesoros de vida*

*{coro}*

*En la ida del mar  
El río se cambia a otros  
Como el Rey, Candelaria, y Pirris*

*Regalando pura vida a todos*

*{Coro}*

*English Translation:*

*I wanted to swim, but I couldn't  
And it was so hot  
The Juco River was sick  
And the animals were not doing well.*

*Chorus:*

*The shrimp were dead  
The little worms were dead  
I was so sad that day  
I have to clean my river!*

*Those that eat the worms  
Were sick too  
So many insects and frogs  
More than a hundred were dead.*

*{chorus}*

*Where does my river flow?  
Where does the poison go?  
The river visits everyone  
Giving treasures of life.*

*{chorus}*

*On its way to the ocean  
The river becomes other rivers  
Like the Rey, the Candelaria, and the Pirris  
Giving "pure life" to everyone.*

*{chorus}*

By Anya Rose

## Comida Corner: Pineapple Cobbler

This gem was made up on the spot by MERCY and boy is it a good one! You can use whatever fruit is locally available and in season. We are eating it with mangoes right now, yummm!!!

Serves 8 people

### Ingredients:

#### Filling

1 pineapple cut into ½-inch pieces  
2/3 – 1-cup *tapa dulce*, brown sugar or maple syrup  
(amount depends on how sweet the fruit is and your sweet tooth)

#### Topping

8 Tablespoons butter  
2/3 – 1-cup *tapa dulce*, brown sugar or maple syrup  
1 – 1½ cups grated coconut  
1 Tablespoon lemon juice  
1 - 1½ cups flour  
Pinch of salt

1. Cut up pineapple and mix with sugar. Set aside in fridge to macerate the fruit for 1-4 hours.
2. Cream butter and sugar together. Mix in coconut, lemon juice, salt and flour
3. Heat oven to 400 degrees F.
4. Grease glass-baking dish and spread pineapple on bottom (don't forget to oil the pan). Dollop cobbler topping evenly
5. Bake at 400 degrees for 30-40 minutes. Let cool 15 minutes and serve.

*BUEN PROVECHO!!*

### Special Edition: Advice to the Nug

This was written by Ranch vols for the coming new addition.

We welcome you to the Rancho world  
Whether straight like Robin's or curled like Tim,  
A few little things that you should know  
That will help you here or wherever you go

First of all keep the fridge full of beer  
And scrub your nails after every poo shmear  
Put your wee little shoes on the goddamn rack  
And only ONE serving of afternoon snack



*A young pineapple*

*photo by Joel Green*

Drinkin' at the Pulp till nine is fine  
But don't rock the Casucha till you're 29  
Cover the food with lids, not towels  
And don't forget Pinto for healthy bowels

Be kind to tweakers who always pass through  
We need their money, despite what they do  
Leave your f'ing plastic at the grocery store  
The water here is fine, why the f' did you bring more?

And one last point, my dear little Nug  
Don't ever forget, to wash your damn mug

.

**Inspirational Impressions: Anonymous**

"There was never such a sorry man as one who did nothing because he could not do everything."

-Anonymous (?)

*Abrazos,*

The Ranch Crew