

# Rancho Mastatal Updates

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## July 2004

*We are doing our best to get these updates out "on schedule". We apologize for the delayed publication of a number of them. Time simply flies on by with so much going on. Here we are, already in August, with the bulk of the "Busy Season" behind us. We will be receiving 3 more groups before the end of 2004, though their arrivals are well dispersed, so we are looking forward to a more "ordinary" last few months of the year. Everything continues to go well here at the Ranch. July was a whirlwind and August, first expected to be a relatively quiet month, is shaping up to be manageably busy. As more people find out about our projects, it seems that our slow period continues to shrink. We are even getting group inquiries for our slowest months, October and November. Nevertheless, we're dedicated to spending a few months back north with family and friends this fall, and are looking forward to some quality time in the States soon. For all of you Mangy lovers out there, she is now officially unable to have any*



Dayana

*puppies. She "went under" the other day at the vet's, in a dingy space the size of a very small closet, and so is now allowed to run free and snuggle with whatever she pleases. Our new challenge will be dealing with the fleas she carries back from her other canine friends in the neighborhood. Inspired by Mangy's recent surgery, we are going to try to put together a 1-day free castration/spaying clinic in Mastatal so that other dog and cat lovers, and haters, in the community have another option for their animals. We're hoping that this will help keep in check the canine and feline populations in our community. Cu, as always, is ruling the Ranch with his badass left hook. Mangy has learned to keep her distance. We'll be looking forward to see a number of you either here in Costa Rica or in the Northeast in the coming months. Until then, be well.*

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## **RM Program News: O' Canada**

We will be receiving our first group of Canadian high schoolers during the month of August. IVO POLACH, an educator based out of Toronto, will be leading a small crew from Vancouver, British Columbia to Mastatal for 10 days of education and community work. On the docket are projects to build furniture for the elementary school, do work on a cob floor at the Ranch, organize a community garbage cleanup, reforest degraded land with the regional high school and work sanding the school to ready it for its new paint job. Other highlights on the itinerary include homestays, a visit to the Zapatón Indian Reserve, soccer with the locals, and of course, Pizza and Ping Pong Night. We'll be looking forward to receive more groups from Canada in the coming years.

## **Conservation Update: Poisoning our Waterways**

It happened once again the other day. The beautiful Quebrada Negra was poisoned. All for a few fresh water shrimp. It is unfortunately a more common occurrence than at times we like to admit. A few uneducated and/or uncaring individuals go to one of our lovely local rivers, toss in some poison, often times chemicals used for agriculture, or sometimes cement, and then wait downstream for the "harvest". The shrimp are collected and then eaten or sold. The obvious sin is the indiscriminatory nature of this practice. It kills all of the shrimp, whether the length of you fingernail or your foot. The poison also kills an unknown quantity of other aquatic life. It's devastating and difficult to understand and accept. What's the solution? It is a difficult question to ponder and much harder to answer. The community may need to increase the vigilance of our rivers and we will all have to work to educate locals and visitors alike about the distressing effects of this custom. This will certainly be one of our top challenges in the coming years and with any luck one that we will overcome.

## **Building Report: Hoochin' Along**

I know that we've been bombarding you with updates from the Hooch these past few months. One of the main reasons for this is that it is presently the only larger-scale building project going on at the moment. We are incessantly talking about and designing new buildings, but for the moment, aside from cobbin' away on our floors, The Hooch makes up the bulk of the construction taking place at the Ranch these days. Billy is back and has taken it upon himself to chip away at the multitude of details and work necessary to finish up the construction. The rafters are almost in place, the floor's going down and the roof will be ordered in the coming weeks. It's starting to look like a building, at last, and a damn beautiful one at that. We'll try and post up some pictures in the coming months. Or better yet, come down and see it for yourself.

## **Volunteer/Guest Gossip: A Student's View**

The laid-back, peaceful atmosphere of Costa Rica got to us right away. Our group of 7 high school students was not expecting the conditions down here to be so nice: the beauty of Rancho Mastatal and the jungle surroundings; Timo, Robin and all the volunteers hospitality and awesome food; and, furthermore, exciting new projects or excursions everyday. Nor did any of us imagine that we'd stomp in sand, clay and cow excrement in order to make a natural "cob floor"! I, myself, did not plan on getting so thrilled to speak Spanish with the curious little "tico" kids or dance salsa with the local boys! All in all, every experience was very memorable and I don't know who couldn't have fun in such a great place. Thank you – Muchas gracias y Pura Vida!!

Robyn Hooper

### **Community Facts/Stories: Fútbol**

Having spent a great deal of time in Latin America during the past decade, we have come to better understand the importance of fútbol. The world's most popular sport touches the lives of just about every Latin America man, woman and child in some way or another. The people of Mastatal are no exception. Just about everyone in this country of a bit less than 4 million people have some affinity to one of Costa Rica's two most popular soccer teams, La Liga from Alajuela and Saprissa from San José. Babies less than a year old can be seen donning the red and black or purple and white of their parent's beloved squads. Kids often times receive their first soccer ball before their first birthday. In Mastatal, soccer represents one of the few recreational outlets available to the population. Our community proudly backs both a women's and a men's team. Most Sundays will find the girls, boys, men and women of our town gathering at the "pulpería" at around 9 a.m. in wait for transportation to that day's games. We travel as much as an hour from town to meet our opponents, and sponsor our own events about every other month. At all of the activities, local organizations sell food and drinks to raise money for their communities while everyone else enjoys some decent quality soccer. The winning teams bring home brand new soccer balls for use in their towns as their reward for the tough work on the field, often times accomplished under a blistering sun or a relentless downpour. For Robin and me, it too has become an integral part of our lives. As the only vehicle owners in town, we often times cart the teams to their destinations and we both start for our respective squads. This beautiful sport has helped fill the void that was created when we left our organized activities back north and has provided us with countless memories, numerous friends, and a great reason for a cold Imperial or two after a tough Sunday afternoon on the pitch.

### **Comida Corner: Roasted Garlic Salad Dressing**

This salad dressing is a winner. It is so delicious and easy that it's hard to understand why anyone would buy bottled a salad dressing. This recipe comes from the Moosewood Restaurant Cooks for a Crowd book. It makes quite a bit, but if you keep it covered and refrigerated, this dressing will keep for several weeks. Preparation Time: 10 minutes Baking Time: 1 hour

Ingredients: 30 cloves garlic, unpeeled 1 quart of olive oil 1 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar 1 1/3 cups water 4 tsp. salt 4 Tbsp. Dijon mustard 1 Tbsp. black pepper, ground

Procedure: 1. Roast the garlic in the oven at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, or until the cloves are soft and golden. (We cut the top off of the garlic head, drizzle olive oil over it, and tightly wrap it in tinfoil and place it in a glass baking dish). 2. Squeeze the soften garlic from the skins. Discard skins. 3. In a blender, puree half of the garlic with half of all the other ingredients until smooth. 4. Repeat.

Hope you enjoy and may you never buy bottled dressing again!

### **Inspirational Impressions: Ansel Adams**

It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment. Ansel Adams

See you next time.

Abrazos,

Tim and Robin