

Rancho Mastatal Updates

January 2004

We hope that winter is treating those up north well. We have had a wonderful start to the New Year. January was highlighted by a tremendously successful Wilderness First Responder Certification Course, an unbelievably wonderful crew at the Ranch, and as always, heaps of building. Next month guarantees to be a dynamic and active month as we hit stride heading into our busiest months. February will showcase a bamboo construction workshop, the Cultural Connection 2004 group from Seattle, and our first renewable energy course. Lastly, we're always trying to think of ways to increase the conservation efforts in our region, so if you have any experience in setting up land trusts, running non-profits, or the like, contact us with your ideas, and as always, thanks for staying tuned in to our updates.



The rainforest around Rancho Mastatal holds thousands of surprises, like this amazing millipede

photo by Delfino Cornali

Hasta pronto.

Tim and Robin

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RM Program News: Incredible WFR

An enormous thanks to all of the wonderful Wilderness First Responder students, FERNANDO GIACCAGLIA, RODRIGO MADRIGAL, JAVIER CANO, JUAN CARLOS NELSON, MAURICE MOTTE SIMPSON, URSULA JENSEN, ELLIOT REED, MELINDA MUELLER, ROGER WHALLEY, ALEX BIRDSALL, LEXIE LOFTS, SEBASTIAN ZAVALLA, ERIC CANO RODRIGUEZ, CLAIRE NELSON, GARNETT from Turrialba (sorry, no last name), JIM ROWE AND FELIPE PEREZ. You were all absolutely incredible and the core of what we consider

to be an exceedingly successful Wilderness First Responder Certification Course. Instructors DAVE MCEVOY, STEVE SHEPRO, JEREMY MORAN, JAIME DIBROWA, EDDIE and AMY OLWELL, and JOAN SCHEFFER formed an extraordinary collection of minds bursting with knowledge and years of experience working in the field. Students spent long days working at stations and absorbing a tremendous amount of information.

One of the highlights of the course was the opportunity for both instructors and students to put their old and new skills to use, in a real life situation. At around 4:30 p.m. one afternoon, a bleeding and visibly shaken man entered through the Ranch's gates pleading for help. He explained to us that the car he was in had flipped, and that his two companions were severely injured about 1.5 kilometers up the road. One of the man's fingers was almost completely severed. We jumped to action. We informed the policeman on duty to call an ambulance, and notified the instructors and students who were in class what had happened. Once we were able to convince the group that this was simply not another staged situation, a teaching technique used throughout the week for practical work for the course, we split into two groups, one that stayed at the Ranch to care for the bleeding man who had brought the scary news, and another that loaded up the vehicles with First Aid gear and bodies and headed to the site of the accident. We arrived to the scene to find a truck on its side, sans windshield and pretty banged up, one man lying on his back, with a deep gash in his head and blood over many other parts of his body, and another man staggering about on the street as he covered the side of his head where it was evident that part of his ear had gone missing. We split into two groups, and began administering First Aid. We immobilized the two men, checked their airways, breathing and circulation, monitored vital signs, and took action to assure their safety and well being until the ambulance could arrive. It was a thing of beauty to see everyone in action as curious locals started to arrive to the scene. It was soon deduced that two ambulances would be need to extract the men. Once the first ambulance arrived, from La Gloria about 45 minutes from Mastatal, we asked the paramedics to call a second ambulance. We then had to wait more than an hour for the second ambulance, as darkness fell upon us. The men were loaded into the vehicles which then sped to Puriscal or San José so that the men could be admitted to the hospital. With our numerous flashlights, we cleaned up our gear, and headed back to a long-awaited meal, where we exchanged stories about the day over wonderful food. The day could not have been fabricated better for the students. A real life opportunity to put their newly learned skills to use. And they all performed with courage and professionalism. Congratulations to all of you!

We are already planning for the 2005 workshop, and hope to host this course every year, both in Spanish in English. Tentative dates are for January, 2005, and we will be posting the specifics as soon as they are nailed down.

Conservation Update: Creating a Worldwide Example of Sustainability in Mastatal

One of our long-term goals at the Ranch is to encourage the long-term development of a sustainable community in rural Central America. We dream of Mastatal becoming an example of sustainability that can be emulated throughout the world. Big ideas have always been a part of our thinking process, and we've found out these past two years that dreaming big combined with hard slog, a confident and ambitious attitude, and wonderful people can and does produce magnificence, a better and beautiful way of living, and hope for future generations. A considerable part of the overall equation, as we see it, is the protection of our surroundings from excessive logging,

poaching, and in general, the deterioration of our environment. Mastatal's greatest assets include its virgin forests, immense biodiversity, countless waterfalls, and crystalline waters.

To compromise these attributes is to risk destroying our community. Therefore, we would like to make efforts in the coming years to further protect presently unused land in the region, perhaps through the creation of a land trust and/or a non-profit organization that works to preserve the region of Mastatal. Given our limited ability to communicate with the outside world and our rather heavy workload, it has been a challenge to find time and information on how to best make this a reality. As more and more people learn about the newly created La Cangreja National Park, the pressure to develop the area continues to grow. Consequently, today's decisions affecting how this area will evolve are critical. We can choose sustainability, or we can select development in the conventional sense. Thanks to the work of many, perhaps most notably the University of Washington and Forestry professor Susan Bolton, the community leaders of Mastatal, and the many socially and environmentally conscious folks that pass through our doors, sustainability has a head start. Nevertheless, this by no means assures success. There are years and years of hard work ahead. To end this segment, I would like to ask any of you out there with experience and/or knowledge about conservation and sustainable development, to contact us with ideas on how we may work to achieve a sustainable example for the rest of the world to follow.

Building Report: La Revolución de Bambú

We are getting ready to put on the roof of our newest bamboo structure, a large barn that will be used to store supplies such as wood, piping, straw, bamboo (of course), and other bulky materials that we use at the Ranch. The large structure was designed prior to our bamboo workshop, and will free up needed space at the main house, the current home for most of our building materials.

Moreover, we are preparing to begin construction of the new passive solar shower that we will be building during our upcoming renewable energy workshop, also to be built out of, yep, you guessed it, bamboo. With our growing knowledge of bamboo, we are getting more confident in using this incredibly versatile material. There are dozens of examples on site now that showcase the enormous versatility of bamboo. We will soon begin preparations for the construction of an open-air bamboo classroom. Please let us know if you would like to come down and help out. It promises to be an amazing structure.

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Costa Rica Impressions

Three weeks in Costa Rica is not enough time to know a place, draw conclusions, or have any depth of familiarity, but impressions are abundant. I am trying to categorize my impressions into four areas: the land, the plants and animals, the people, and the trip.

I have never been in a place where the terrain is so severe. "Quebradas" in deep ravines with outrageous waterfalls climbing into impassable terrain. Ridges for both hiking and driving that wind through rainforest or open landscape, with slopes falling off into deep ravines, twisting and turning and coming back to a new view of the same thing. The country being so narrow with a backbone of mountains and climate that erodes almost daily, and visibly, creates a country that is spectacular.

The plants and animals were a constant source of amazement. I have never seen so many different

exotic species. I don't have a clue of how long it would take me to be comfortable with the "terciopelos". Maybe if I got bit or had to face one down, I just don't know. The amount of diversity makes me think that the area is young evolutionarily. Are Bellbird populations growing or shrinking, or have they always had a small habitat and a minor population? Lots of questions come to mind. When I arrived in Costa Rica, I was expecting everything to be extremely colorful. I was surprised to see that the majority of plants and animals were the same colors we are accustomed to at home. The most colorful areas in the rainforest are the people's yards!

This brings me to the people. They were very friendly, appeared happy, and were quite handsome. I never once felt intimidated, threatened, or at risk. I also never felt any contempt or envy. The people seemed very curious, intelligent, and open to changes. I wonder what changes are coming for them? I know that change is taking place. How people will accept it seemed different on different levels. The indigenous husband, Noe, kept referring to being Catholic and always being Catholic as if the changes coming were a threat to a way of life. How would it affect their self-image and their heritage? Chepo (the middle generation) seemed to be in a 'wait and see' mode. He seemed pleased with the added money coming into the community and accepting of change, but still unsure of the long-term impact. The younger generation seemed excited and ready for change. Everything from Junior's boombox to the spike in Pablo's tongue to the classes and the direction of the high school, said that we embrace change and are looking forward to a more affluent future.

My last comments are about the trip itself. It had a great mix of people. Helen's enthusiasm is unparalleled. It was a definite plus to the trip. All of the kids both individually and as a group were fun, outrageous, obnoxious, interesting and a constant source of jokes and humor. It was great for us to be around all the youthful energy and not have to feel responsible for their safety and welfare. The whole trip was unparalleled experience. THANK YOU!

Bill

Community Facts/Stories: English

MEGHAN VITA, ERIN HANLON, ROGER WHALLEY and others have taken it upon themselves to organize free English classes for all those interested in the community of Mastatal. The response to date has been fantastic. Class are being held a few times a week in the elementary school, the "telesecundaria" (remote classroom using video to offer 7th and 8th graders in rural communities to continue with their education upon graduating from elementary school), and at the Ranch. Classes are structured depending on the student's language aptitude, past exposure to English, and age. We hope to be able to offer these free classes throughout the year.

Comida Corner: Honolulu Beans

Every time that Meghan and Erin cook these up at lunch time we get oohhs and ahhs. These aren't your traditional Boston Baked Beans! This recipe comes from the Moosewood Restaurant Cooks for a Crowd and is for 24-10 oz. servings, so the next time you are going to a barbecue or pot luck and need an easy crowd pleaser, this will do it. We like to serve it with coconut rice and cornbread. Preparation Time: 20 minutes Baking Time: 40 minutes Ingredients 2 quarts (2 lbs.) onions, chopped 1/3 cup vegetable oil (or ghee) 2 ¼ quarts (3 lb. 4 oz) Kidney beans, dried or 6 quarts (2#10 cans) (9 lbs.) Cooked, drained kidney beans ¾ cup Hoi sin sauce (see below) 2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard ½ cup tomato paste ½ cup soy sauce 2 Tbsp. Sesame oil, dark 2 Tbsp Cumin, ground 2

Tbsp. Orange peel, grated 1 quart Pineapple, unsweetened, canned, crushed (we use fresh)

Procedure 1. If using dried beans, sort through for stones, rinse, and soak overnight in water to cover, or bring to a boil, remove from heat, and soak for 1-2 hours. After the beans have soaked, drain and cook in 2 gallons of water for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until tender. (We use a pressure cooker, no soaking, 45 minute cook time, gas saved and a lot quicker!) 2. Sauté the onions in oil until lightly browned. 3. Mash one-third of the beans and combine them with the remaining beans, onions, and the rest of the ingredients. 4. Cover with foil and bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes.

Hoi sin Sauce: A thick, reddish-brown, sweet, and spicy paste used as a glaze or dipping sauce in Chinese cooking. Hoi sin is a commercial product made of fermented soybeans, flour, salt, sugar, vinegar, chili peppers, and spices. It can be purchased from Asian and gourmet food suppliers and in the ethnic section of many supermarkets. We make our own when we don't have any on hand (yes, I can even find it here in Costa Rica!). We blend dried plums (prunes), rice wine vinegar, chilies, soy, and honey. It does the trick, but nothing like the real thing.

Inspirational Impressions: Serving MLK

"Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't even have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love..."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.