



The Hum...

Las Gralarias Foundation Inc. Newsletter

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SEÑOR TIM'S TALES

BY TIM KRYNAK, PRESIDENT

Nearly five years ago I visited Ecuador for the first time. Upon returning from that trip I knew that I wanted to do something for conservation in this region of the world. In five short years, I have watched Reserva Las Gralarias grow from less than 300 acres to now over 1000! Each time I visit I see progress and I am still amazed at how much there is still to do and learn. Remote cameras are shedding light on some of the mammals on the reserve. Our amphibian research has uncovered 14 known species and potential new species. Charlie and Jane keep discovering new nests of birds of which some are very rare. New moth species have been described and countless other insects I am sure await this honor. Clients from all over the world

have visited and have been impressed, not only by the amazing natural history, but friendly staff that always great you with a smile. The staff are members of the local community that have grown up with this forest as their backyard.

We often talk about the diversity that can be found in the forests of RLG, but I always look forward to the peace that I find when I visit. The only sounds you hear come from the forest. To be able to find a location like this is sometimes just as valuable as all the plants and animals that make it their home. The first thing I notice when I return home is how noisy our cities can be.

One of the many items that I have taken away from my experiences is that everyone can and is important in conservation and together it is amazing what we can accomplish!



FOUNDATION UPDATE

BY TIM KRYNAK

Our organization seems to be growing by leaps and bounds! Now that we have successfully purchased the Santa Rosa River Valley parcel, our new goal is to get the Damuth Chocó Research Station on this new parcel up and running. Once this is complete we can host critical research on this complex ecosystem. We will continue to raise money for additional adjoining parcels as the need to protect forests are as great as ever. Our Adopt-an Acre project has been very popular as all that money goes directly to land conservation.

The funds from programming and miscellaneous donations may be directed to support future research in this region. We are now also looking for supplies to outfit the new facility and every donation helps and adds up quickly. We are also in the early stages of developing a scholarship program for local students interested in biology. I will never be able to thank everyone enough for all the donations over the last two years.



Calendar of Events

- 2008 YEAR OF THE FROG a global amphibian conservation awareness campaign. LGF, Inc. will highlight our amphibian conservation programs.
- April 4-6 LGF Inc. board meeting and fundraiser, Austin Texas
- April 20, EarthFest Cleveland Metroparks Zoo (LGF Inc. booth)
- April 25-27 North Coast Nature Festival (LGF Inc. booth)

*Year of the Frog:
Saving Ecuador's Amphibians
by Katherine Krynak*



The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has deemed 2008 “Year of the Frog” in an effort to raise awareness globally about the amphibian crisis. It has been estimated that we could loose up to 50% of the class amphibia within the next decade. That means loosing up to 3,000 different species. In the small country of Ecuador, only about the size of Colorado, 8% of the World’s population of amphibians reside. Over 400 species of this diverse class of animals call Ecuador home including not only the frogs and salamanders, but also the little known creatures called the caecilians. Reserva Las Galarias is home to 18 known different species of amphibians. Our Cleveland Metroparks Zoo sponsored RLG Amphibian survey will be continuing this year and we hope to identify many more species both on the original part of RLG as well as on the new property containing an additional 500 acres. This new property increases the elevational range of RLG and with that being said, there are numerous different amphibian species which are known to prefer such an altitude. For example, historically, the genus of *Atelopus* and *Gastrotheca* have been found throughout Ecuador and in a particularly greater abundance at the higher elevations. World renowned herpetologists Dr. Luis Coloma and Dr. Ron Santiago and their team from Universidad de Catolica in Quito are also excited to visit RLG to scan the mountains not only in search of new species to describe, but we are all curious to see if many species thought to be extinct could be rediscovered in the pristine forest of this now protected area. You can help protect the amphibians of Ecuador by supporting the land conservation measures of LGF Inc. through the Adopt an Acre program as well as supporting Balsa de los Sapos, and amphibian rescue facility in Quito. Please visit www.puce.edu.ec/zoologia/balsasapos/antecedentes.htm for more information on this project (photos for this article are credited to Balsa De Los Sapos). Most importantly, remember the big picture. The decline of the amphibians is telling us that the environment is in trouble and making a commitment to change your own life to be a little “greener” will be the most effective way to preserve the incredible and beautiful biodiversity of this planet. Every little bit adds up. To find out more on how you can help save amphibians please visit the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo’s website www.forfrogs.org



*Trees as Fragile as Snowflakes
By Sheila Thorpe*



As snow currently falls outside my window, I glance at a picture of me dwarfed by huge leaves found in the cloud forests of Ecuador. I was one of the participants last July on the Cleveland Metroparks Institute of the Great Outdoors Ecuador bird watching tour with Tim Krynak.

Organized in conjunction with Mindo Bird Tours, this ten-day trip exceeded all expectations for my first trip to Ecuador. A large part of that satisfaction was due to the warm welcome from Jane Lyons and her staff and the incredible birding found at Reserva Las Galarias.

It is hard to imagine that trees can be as fragile as snowflakes, but that is the sad reality when one sees the destruction of rain forests. So many acres have been logged and turned into fields in Ecuador that the homes for birds and animals seem to be “melting” away. That is why kudos go to all members of the Las Galarias Foundation for putting the “freeze” on deforestation of further lands close to the Reserve and for protecting the innumerable species of life that are fighting for survival.

Oh, and what a wonderful treat to the senses to be surrounded by all that life! I enjoyed hiking in the dense forests as much as I enjoyed seeing tanagers, toucans, parrots and other beautiful birds. The different parts of the Reserve each held surprising finds (one of my favorites was the thrill of watching the graceful Swallow-tailed Kites soar in the Mindo Valley sky) and many lessons. Tim, our bird guide Charley Hesse, and Mindo Birds employee Mynor Chacon shared their incredible knowledge about the land’s biodiversity and what threatens its balance.

Seeing many different hummingbirds at the feeders at the Reserve presented a fun challenge for this amateur birder to identify. I found the Violet-tailed Sylph to be the easiest and was thrilled to see a total of 33 hummers of the 257 birds seen on the trip. If I wasn’t biased towards hummingbirds, I’d say that the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock display at Reserva Paz de las Aves was my favorite bird event of the trip. No, each bird was a treat!

On this cold wintry day, it’s not just the birds that warm my heart as I recall the trip. From tiny pale frogs to skinny walking sticks, from colorful orchids to lipstick-filled seed pods, from coffee beans to passion flowers, from tarantulas to puma tracks, from blue skies to the Southern Cross viewed on a clear black night - each added to my memories of Ecuador. Toss in the companionship of wonderful people, and it doesn’t get better than that!

The importance of conservation in this region became more real to me because of my trip, and I encourage others to experience it, too. It excites me to think that some species may still be waiting to be discovered. However, that won’t happen if the balance between progress and preservation is not met. I support the Las Galarias Foundation because I believe meeting that challenge is as important for those of us critters who visit as it is for the critters that call the cloud forest Home.



Wisps from the Cloud Forest

by Jane A. Lyons

The rainy season has begun and we are officially in peak reproductive season! During the rainy season there is an abundance of nice, soft moss to build nests plus much insect-life available for feeding hungry young.

This elaborate, cozy and well-camouflaged mossy nest was built by a female Brown Inca to hold her 2 tiny eggs.



This rather unkept moss-pouch with its two eggs belongs to a female Violet-tailed Sylph.

The Fawn-breasted Brilliant builds a compact and comfy moss-lined nest for her two offspring, which stay in the nests until they can no longer fit!



The Russet-crowned Warbler builds its nest on the ground, with sticks, leaves, and moss and placed on a dried mud root, using small ferns as camouflage to hide from potential predators above.



Much of the nesting behavior of tropical bird species is unknown. For example, this tidy rootlet-and-moss nest of a Green-and-black Fruiteater is one of only a few ever documented, and practically nothing is known about the species' incubation and nesting period.

Many species such as toucans and woodpeckers prefer to nest in a nice tree cavity, well-protected from inclement weather.

Some critters of course do not make nests. This grasshopper deposits a sticky substance on a twig to hold her eggs— and lays her eggs while hanging upside down!



Frogs and other amphibians and reptiles lay their eggs in small pools or on leaves, or hidden under a log or in amidst a bromeliad or buried in the ground—as hidden and camouflaged as possible—in hopes that their offspring will not become prey for larger animals.

What is amazing is that these animals build their nest, lay their eggs, raise their young and continue their life cycle even in the midst of pounding rains. We know from studies that many nests and young are lost from falling branches and tree limbs and of course to the various predators who also must eat. However, there is so much we do not know. Just another reason we are eager to begin our new field research station and program- -to learn more and to conserve more of the astounding creatures that call this area home.

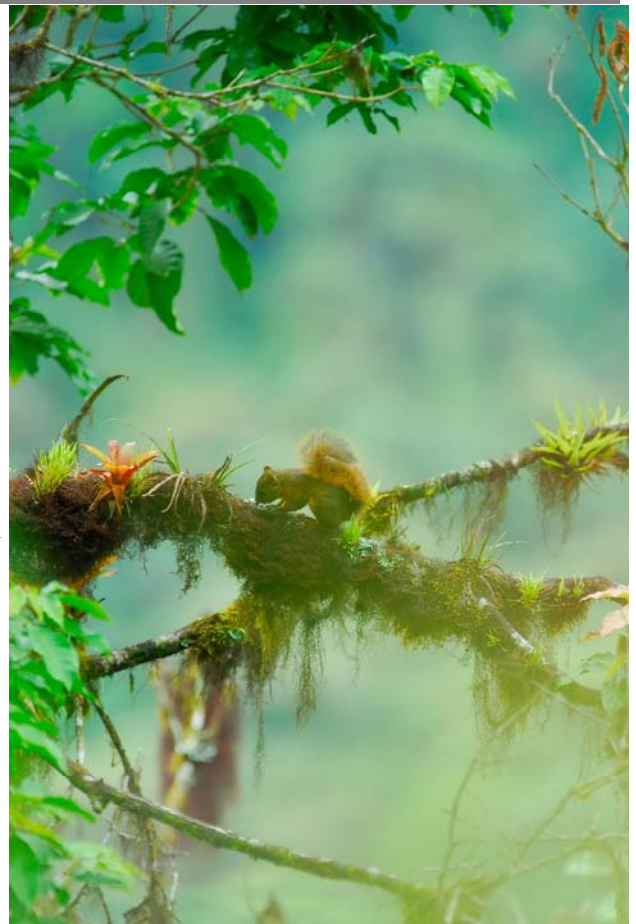
Foundation Wish List

- * Weather Station
- * Infrared video camera (cuddeback) \$350 each
- * Digital Scales
- * pH meter
- * Dissolved Oxygen Meter
- * Photos from Reserva Las Gralarias
- * Recording equipment for bird and frog calls
- * Headlamps/flash lights
- * Bird/Bat netting equipment
- * Biology/natural science children's books for Los Exploradores (in Spanish)
- * Flora/Fauna Field Guides/books of Ecuador (in Spanish and English)
- * Insect nets/dip nets (collapsible)
- * Hummingbird feeders
- * Collapsible snake hooks
- * Small portable photo printer and paper to take to the schools
- * Rechargeable batteries and charger
- * Laptop computer
- * Ultra Light Hennessey Hammock for exploration of new property

For more information contact Katherine Krynak at glassfrog04@hotmail.com

Fundraising/Volunteer Opportunities

- * We are still looking for potential donors to be added to our electronic mailing list. Please send contact information to Jo Ann Kubicki at jak1@clevelandmetroparks.com
- * Matted Prints of photographs from the reserve are needed for donation gifts. Email Tim Krynak at tkrynak@aol.com for more information. Black mats to be used for Tim's photos are also always appreciated.
- * Volunteers needed to present programs within their communities to raise money for the Foundation and spread the word about our wonderful conservation initiatives of RLG and LGF.
- * If you have anyone interested in being on the distribution list to receive *The Hum...* please contact Katherine Krynak at glassfrog04@hotmail.com
- * If you have questions or would like to contribute to LGF, Inc. in another way, please give us a call at 440-777-6353



Species Profile: The Caecilian

By Katherine Krynak

Ecuador's caecilians are a little known group of amphibians. Legless and secretive, the caecilians are difficult to study. RLG region is home to *Epicrionops bicolor* (the two colored caecilian), the endemic *Epicrionops marmoratus* (marbled caecilian) species, and another unnamed *Caecilia* sp. (pictured below). These species are sub terrestrial or found very near stream systems and are rarely ever seen. During the hard rains that saturate the soil of RLG, they have been known to surface and attempt to travel to a "drier" location much like all of the other creatures. Their diet consists of earthworms and sub terrestrial arthropods. Since these are so elusive in nature, most caecilian populations have been deemed "data deficient", but possible threats to these species include habitat loss and contamination of their habitats.



E. bicolor by Luis A. Coloma

Tim's awesome find

Caecilia sp. By Matin Bustamante

Muchas Gracias!

Thank you to our recent donors and volunteers!

Frank Bills, Gerald Pintar, Nancy Charbeneau, Ben DeRuburtis Jr., Jean Thomas, Deb Marcinski, Cheryl Ann Dinkelbach, Duane Kurapka, Kyle, Olivia and Luke Watson, Laura Watson and Joe Foss, Greater Cleveland AAZK, Rita Pence, Frances Topping, Jeff Miller, and the Northern Ohio Association of Herpetologists

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The goal of Las Gralarias Foundation Inc. is to raise funds for projects and programs of Reserva Las Gralarias, located in the parish of Mindo, Ecuador, including the purchase of adjacent and nearby lands that will enhance protection for rare endemic birds, plants and other animals as well as supports reserve management, reforestation efforts, biological research, environmental education projects, scholarships, and appropriate tourism programs.

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www.lasgralariasfoundation.org



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Las Gralarias Foundation Inc. Newsletter

Las Gralarias Foundation Inc.

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