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## Turtle Release

The 10<sup>th</sup> of November saw our final release for this year of 695 baby Side-necked turtles (*Podocnemis unifilis*). They were transported in tubs down to Playa Alta, the beach where many of you will remember staying the night, and released a couple of metres above the waterline. Unlike the first group, these turtles all knew exactly where they should be going so there was just a huge mass of taricayas heading straight for the river!



*Baby turtles heading towards the sea*

In total this year we released 1380 baby turtles, 78% of the eggs collected in July and August. This is a new record for us, and we would especially like to thank all the volunteers who have helped with this project.

We have kept 39 turtles for study in the new aquariums that are installed on the back terrace of the dining room. They will be monitored closely throughout the year by Daniel to learn more about their ecology, in particular their growth rates. They have joined 9 other baby turtles of a different species (*Phrynops Geoffroanus* – the Spotted Toad-headed Turtle), which hatched out 1 month previously. This is the first time we have encountered a nest of this species so we are eager to learn more about them.

## NHK

One of the national TV channels of Japan chooses a different area of the world every year in November/December to produce a series about eco-tourism and conservation. This year was South America, including Peru, and we were lucky enough to be chosen from among the various rainforest conservation projects. They were interested in our pilot farm because it offers a viable alternative for the usual slash-and-burn agriculture used in this region, reducing human impact on the forest while at the same time aiding in the recovery of open areas with low soil quality. The team that visited us brought huge amounts of equipment, including a satellite dish, and proceeded to do a live broadcast which included footage of some of our volunteers cutting flowers. As thanks for letting them film here, they left a donation which enabled us to buy the prizes for the school at Palma Real, and also a new generator for the bar.



*Huge Satellite dish being prepared for broadcasting of the programme*

## Palma Real – Prizes

At the end of November we visited the Ese'ja Community, Palma Real, once again. This was to achieve two goals in projects we have been running with them over recent months. The first was to hand over the prizes the school had earned by hatching and releasing 347 baby turtles. This was about 50% of the eggs that were collected; not bad for the first year. We hatched almost exactly the same in 2004. The prizes of a peki-peki motor for the school boat and an amplifier for community events were presented to them on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and we hope that these will assist the school and the community. These prizes should inspire them to repeat the experience with us next year, possibly on a larger scale.

Our other purpose was to continue with the development of the agro-forestry project. Seven opened rowshad been completed by the school, and we were there to dig the holes for the plants that should be planted in December, as the rains become more frequent. We will be planting mainly Brazil nut saplings, but as these take between 10-15 years to start producing the nuts they will be interspersed with fruit trees, which will produce on a regular basis, so giving them an income from the land whilst waiting for the brazil nut trees to mature.

We had wanted to collect the donkey manure as well from around the village, but they told us that he must have been constipated as there was not much around!

## Return of the Biologists

At the beginning of the month two of our favourite biologists, Mauricio Ugarte Lewis, ornithologist, and Hugo Zamora Meza with his assistant Yami, bat biologists, returned for a couple of weeks to continue their ongoing investigations into the fauna of Taricaya. With the arrival of new mist-nets both for bats and birds, things here were well prepared and we had wonderful results. Identifying birds by both sight and sound, Mauricio managed to increase our bird list to 400 species, a new record for us (it would have been more but the previous list had to be revised due to changes in the taxonomy).

Hugo and Yami were accompanied every evening by several volunteers from 5:30pm until about midnight, finding 8 new species giving us now a total of 34 species of bat occurring with the reserve. Hugo and Mauricio will hopefully both be joining us some time during 2009 to search for yet more new species for our lists.



*Some of the new species being identified*

## Billingham School

In the middle of the month we had an enquiry from a school in Puerto Maldonado to see if someone could go and give a presentation about turtles. In the process of sorting everything out we discovered that they had 4 nests of turtle eggs in an artificial beach, which were near to hatching. So the following week Daniel returned with a team of volunteers to work with the students showing them how to measure and weigh the baby turtles before releasing them.



*Volunteers working with the students on how to measure baby turtles*

## Workshop – Management and handling of animals in captivity

On November 27<sup>th</sup> a number of staff and volunteers attended a workshop in Puerto Maldonado coordinated by a friend of ours, Edward, who is director of Amazon Shelter, a rescue centre we have been working with closely. In the evening was the theory side of things, to understand how animals should be maintained and handled (Stuart and Daniel made presentations about reptiles and amphibians), and also the legal status of centres that hold wild animals. Then the following morning was the practical, where the owners of the zoo kindly allowed us to practice capturing and holding a variety of the animals they have. It was beneficial for the zoo also as many of their animals had a thorough check, and also the owners themselves learned how to better handle a few of their more recent additions. It was definitely a learning experience for us, introducing the volunteers to how animals should be treated, and improving the knowledge of the staff in how to manage the animals in our rescue and rehabilitation centre.

