

TReeS News

The Tambopata Reserve Society
Newsletter, No. 18

May 1991

Once again Peru has been in the news recently and as usual the reports have referred to another tragic event - the largest cholera epidemic in the western hemisphere since the early C20th. With over 150,000 cases and 1100 deaths in Peru alone since January, the reports in the UK media have tended to be sporadic and generalised, and often overshadowed by other terrible world events.

Coming at a time of continuing severe economic problems Peru could not have been worse prepared for such a catastrophe. Many thousands of Peruvians, already living in the most desperate of conditions, now have even less control over their circumstances.

The work that TReeS supports in Madre de Dios aims to provide a higher standard of living, health and hygiene for the native communities there in the long-term, rather than just short-term relief. It is only through supporting such long-term projects that the native communities in Madre de Dios will be able to strengthen their circumstances so that they can withstand the kind of crises that Peru is currently facing. On this basis we hope that they are less likely to have to resort to the denudation of the surrounding natural environment as a mechanism of survival.

1991 Membership Reminder -

TReeS Annual Membership runs from 1st January each year, unless you have joined since 1st October of the preceding year. We include with this Newsletter a **Reminder** to those members who have not recently renewed their membership. We hope that all of them will continue with their valuable support which makes a very significant financial contribution to the work that TReeS can sponsor in Peru.

The work of TReeS/AMETRA 2001 is endorsed/supported by Helpage, ICBP UK/USA, Anglo-Peruvian Society, OXFAM, the Body Shop International PLC, Kilverstone Latin American Wildlife Park in Norfolk, several FoE groups and schools, and various small trusts and charities.



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Resident Naturalist News

The rains have been heavy over recent months bringing out the tree frogs and snakes in greater numbers than usual. Most of Sunset Point and part of the Dock landing were washed away by the river and a new Dock landing will probably need to be built a short distance downriver from the old one.

The Tayras (Mancos) are still seen regularly on the edge of the Lodge clearing and three were also seen descending from Big Tree, but the Peccaries had to be destroyed after they showed the symptoms of rabies. Rabies is common in bats in the Madre de Dios area, particularly in the Manu region, and can be passed on to other feral creatures.

Recent or current RN's and their studies include S. Yorath who returned for a second visit to complete her rainforest education and conservation display materials for use at the Lodge and elsewhere by TReeS Peru; C. Ivey, who has just arrived; P. Pejoves and S. Ayqui who are working on the applied biology projects. O. Philips, assisted by M. Butt, is continuing his studies on the ecology tropical plants. Arrangements have been made for RN's to have greater contact with AMETRA 2001 through a re-forestation project involving Cedar (*Cedrella odorata*) and Ojé (*Ficus insipida*).

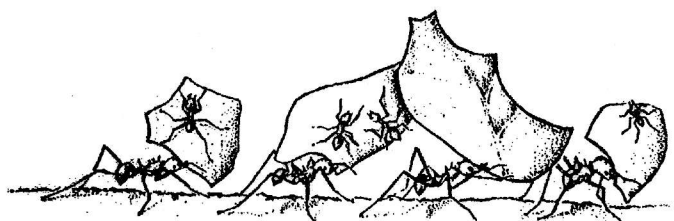
Visitors to Peru

We would be extremely grateful to hear from anyone who is flying to Lima this year and could carry a few items needed there by AMETRA and the research projects that TReeS is supporting. If you can assist, please write to J.Forrest with your phone number.

The RN's lot! - J. Proctor, a 1990 RN

A short flight, a warm welcome by the effusive Juan Carlos, an abundance of the "uniform" macaw and jaguar T-shirts, ravined muddy roads, a soporific long boat-ride - and I was at the Explorer's Inn on the Tambopata Zona Reservada.

With barely time to drink a papaya cocktail and change into long sleeves I followed Pat, one of the RN's, leading a group of tourists on the short afternoon walk. Armed with wellies and repellent I trod carefully along the dark and humid trail - the paths were thick with mud and we'd been warned about snakes, ferocious ants etc!



The dense mat of trees, climbers, palms and rotting wood surrounded us and at times seemed to close in. Strange noises broke through the wall of green, but we saw little of what made them through the tangle. As we walked we learnt that the forest is not a "jungle" - there is order; a structure, built through the struggle for existence - a struggle for light and not to be eaten. I didn't sense the struggle, but an uncanny serenity and a sadly false feeling of permanency. As we walked I became aware of every noise, movement and smell, trying to perceive like a predator to increase our chances of seeing the elusive fauna. Ant and termite colonies abound though, and provide fascinating anecdotal stories of dependency and closeness.

Colourful birds, curious tamarins or indifferent monkeys, incredible stick-insects, butterflies and beetles, caterpillars and lizards were frequently seen and over my 3 months I saw an impressive array of animals. The experience of animals was not restricted to the forest, as biting insects waited in the clearing, ferocious ants patrolled the toilet seat, tree frogs joined me in the shower and opossums and rats competed for the chocolate brazil nuts - a rightly prized treat!

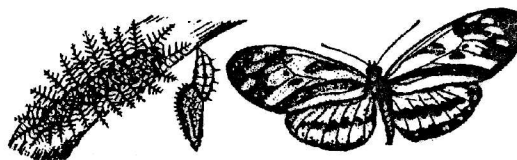
Learning to appreciate the forest for what it is and holds became an important part of my

time and message to the tourists. With this appreciation comes care and conservation.

As time progressed I read more about the natural history and ecology (there's a library) and became more familiar with the flora and fauna, guided by other RN's and the Peruvian workers. The ideas of traditional medicine and the plants involved fascinated me and as an RN I was able to make memorable visits to Don José and his "chacra", or farm, on the opposite river bank and to the native people's medicine garden and meeting centre - part of the "AMETRA 2001" project.

Most people's visit ends with the Caiman Hunt. The hunt is conducted with torches, as the light reflects off the caiman's retina - the bright red eyes are easy markers in the dark. The boatmen manoeuvre the dugouts close to the bank and allow even the least adventurous tourist the chance to see this rare animal and to experience the forest at night. The dugout gliding swift and smooth downstream to the Lodge, guided by the Southern Cross, with the stillness broken by the frogs croaking and the slowly fading bark of the bamboo rat made a lasting impression.

However, the work of the RN involves much more than just the guiding and the experience of the rainforest. Arranging, working-on and hopefully completing a project of your choice provides the reserve with useful data or resources and might even yield sponsorship, or contribute to established and ongoing projects. It's a fascinating and rare opportunity to live and work within a different culture. Everyday life involves the jokes in the kitchen, games of backgammon and cards at the bar and constant washing and attempts to dry clothes in the battle against fungus. Washing was no longer a chore when Julio serenaded me with Andean pipe music at the sink and butterflies gathered to lick at the spilt soap.



All these important communications and interactions bound me tightly to Tambopata and led to an unexpected familiarity and ease with the rainforest.

AMETRA 2001: Report on 4th AGM

The 1990 Annual General Meeting of the AMETRA 2001 (Application of Traditional Medicine) project was held in December 1990, at the Ñape Ethnobiological Centre. Delegates representing 10 native communities of FENAMAD (the Native Federation of the River Madre de Dios and Tributaries) were present. AMETRA 2001 continues to work towards creating a bridge to link the best, most efficient, and most effective of both native and western medical practices.

AMETRA 2001 reaffirmed its commitment to its four general objectives: (1) promoting acceptance of the benefits of traditional medicine practices, both by regional health authorities and rural populations; (2) facilitating widespread use of effective herbal remedies, drawn from local resources, to treat local ailments; (3) integrating the best uses of plant remedies and the most appropriate chemical-pharmaceutical ones, for the most effective health care possible; and (4) promoting conservation and preservation of flora and fauna that can contribute to indigenous health care practices.

In 1990, AMETRA 2001 established the "PECOSA" (Programme of Community Health Education) programme to train the volunteer health workers from the native communities at the Ñape Ethnobiological Centre. In Alto Madre de Dios, Mateo Italiano has been trained to promote AMETRA 2001's activities in the Manu Biosphere Reserve. A greater effort will be made this year to continue the training programme and to enlist more volunteers from native communities that have not been visited, such as Sonene on the R. Heath.

The Ñape Ethnobiological Centre is now considered fully operational. Thanks to the work of many native community volunteers, the office-library building, pharmacy and lodging house will soon be fully completed. In late 1992 it is planned for FENAMAD to take over the running of the Centre and for it to be developed as a Native Cultural Centre. Traditional medicine will remain the principal function of the Centre along with further research, educational activities and community visits.

A "women's programme" has been developing at the Centre, since August, headed primarily by Bertha Solisonquehua (a Wachipaeri). With the premise that women

and children in their care suffer most from health problems, it is important to involve them in the process of curing, as well as understanding disease in a holistic and a preventative way. Successful workshops, incorporating slides, talks and participatory exercises, have also been held on traumatology (including fractures, arthritic pain and skeletal/muscular anatomy) and basic traditional medicine techniques.

Over 100 species of medicinal plants are now cultivated in the Ñape Centre herb garden. These can be made into effective medical pastes and pomades for demonstration and treatment (of bruises, burns, fractures, skin diseases, etc). In the future, a small still will be installed in the pharmacy to produce medicinal alcohol, rubs, etc., and to extract various plant resins.

With current outbreaks of TB, treatment will be made available to anyone requiring it when they visit the Centre. A special building for TB sufferers may be built in 1991 and treatment for and education regarding TB will be emphasised.

In Manu National Park, Señor Mateo Arevalo retired (for health reasons) in March 1990 from running the programme of traditional medicine. Sr. Benito Arevalo Barbaran, a Shipibo healer and longtime friend of AMETRA 2001, was found as replacement in October. The post of academic doctor was filled by Dr. Jose Echevarria after Dr. Atilio Rivera retired in August.

A temporary snag occurred when AMETRA 2001 proposed renewal of its Manu National Park agreements to the management of the Manu Microregion, but did not receive a formal response. It is hoped that this will be resolved soon so that the native communities of Manu National Park can again receive medical care from AMETRA health visitors.

In ethnobiological activities, Michel Alexiades has documented over 434 plants and their uses, and Victor Pesha continues to collect, catalogue and replant plant samples from the area surrounding the Ñape Centre. Continued conservation and protection of this area from use of firearms and chainsaws is being promoted.

For 1991, AMETRA 2001's goals will

continue to focus on training and outreach so that the best combinations of local medications and pharmaceuticals can be available to and understood by the native populations. Enlisting the cooperation of native healers, women and the elderly, within the framework of their cultural norms, will be important to the projects' goals.

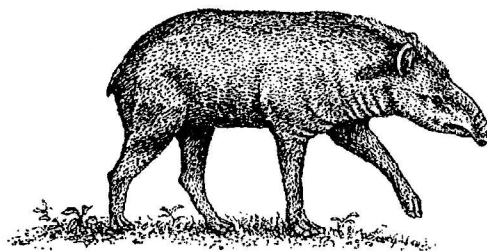


Peruvian Economic Update

Early in the New Year Peru was hit by a major cholera epidemic. The vast majority of cases and deaths have occurred along the northern coast and in Lima but nearly all of them have been in areas of poor housing with extremely limited water supply facilities and sanitation. In suburbs such as Miraflores, in Lima, there have been relatively few cases. Ministry of Health statistics show that by mid-April there had been only 5 reported cases in Madre de Dios and 9 cases in the department of Cuzco, with no deaths in either. Cases have been reported in Iquitos and along the R.Amazon.

The rate of new cases in Peru appears to be decreasing and hopefully this will be maintained as the cold season along the coast and in the Sierra approaches. Cholera will now be an established Latin American disease for many years to come and cholera vaccination certificates will be required by travellers.

President Fujimori appointed a new cabinet early in the New Year and, inspired by organisations such as the IMF, the current policy is to reduce state intervention in the economy. This is almost the complete opposite of the policies on which Fujimori was elected and with most Peruvian companies virtually bankrupt, it is likely to benefit non-Peruvian organisations the most. For the vast majority of the population it means higher prices and a further drop in real wages: the minimum monthly wage is now supposedly \$60 - in 1982 it was \$50. 70% of the population are now thought to be living in extreme poverty. A dramatic reduction in public spending will also hit much needed social projects, including the health projects which might help to alleviate the cholera crisis. In July the "Inti" will be replaced by the "New Sol" (1m Intis).



AMETRA T-SHIRTS, POSTCARDS, Rainforest BOOKLET & Rainforest TAPE

T-shirts: Small or Medium - £5.50 each, or 3 for £15.

Postcards: In addition to the Tree-frog and Tapir we can now also offer Hoatzin, Hummingbird/Heliconia and AMETRA Centre postcards: 10 for £2; 60 for £10; 100 for £16.

Rainforest Requiem Tape: A symphony of sounds from the rainforest - £6.50 each, 2 for £12, 5 for £25.

"The Ecology of Tropical Rainforests - an introduction for eco-tourists". A small booklet published by TReeS, £2.50 each.

"The Budget Traveller's Guide to Peru and Northern Bolivia", 7th edition, April 1991. £4.95 each, including a £1 donation to TReeS.

All prices include postage. Available from: J. Forrest, 64 Belsize Park, London, NW3 4EH.

Forthcoming Events

TUCAN Latin American Craft Shop, 29 Bond St., Brighton. A photographic exhibition about the "Children of Peru", continuing into June.

Photographers Gallery, Great Newport St., London WC2. An exhibition of photos taken by Peruvian workers in their workplaces, from 16th May.

TReeS Meeting

TReeS Meeting - 15th June 2-5pm. East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St. (corner of Cowley Road), Oxford. M. Butt and other recent RN's will talk about their experiences in the Tambopata area.

