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Tití Times

Vol. 1, Oct. - Dec. 2006



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WCN Visits Our Field Site

Proyecto Tití was pleased to have Stacey Iverson and Sherry Paul from the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) visit our field site. We had some wonderful treks through the tropical dry forest to see the cotton-tops. Normally, the forest is very hot and dry except when you visit during the rainy season! Sherry didn't believe we were really in a tropical dry forest, since we walked through dense mud patches and slogged through water that reached your knees! The monkeys love it because the rains bring lots of fruiting trees and insects that make for tasty treats



We visited the village of Los Limites, home of our eco-mochila

program. The ASOARTESANSAS were busy crocheting mochilas made from recycled plastic bags.



To date, the village of Los Limites has recycled more than 300,000 plastic bags and they have significantly reduced the amount of litter in their community. The eco-mochila program provides income for a community of more than 200 people!

The children welcomed us to their school by singing the "Cotton-top Tamarin Anthem" and performing their Tití Baile. The anthem shows their dedication to actively protecting the cotton-top tamarins and their habitat and the dance illustrates some of the very cute behaviors of the monkeys!



Tamarins, Turtles, and Trash

Plastic littering the forests is a problem for cotton-tops, and our eco-mochila program



has shown that we can dramatically reduce the amount of litter in the environment while creating a sustainable income for a community. Since the eco-mochila program has had such a positive impact for cotton-tops, we want to share our program with other conservation organizations so that eco-mochilas can be spread around the world.

Sea turtles are exposed to lots of litter in the ocean and commonly ingest plastic. Last year, Disney's Animal Programs helped to rescue "Little Crush" who had over 70 pieces of plastic in his belly! Proyecto Tití formed a partnership with WIDECAST, a conservation organization that partners worldwide with various agencies to



protect sea turtles, and invited 6 women from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama to visit

Colombia and learn how to make eco-mochilas.

It was an amazing cultural exchange for all involved. It was the first time that any of the WIDECAST women had ever left their countries and the first time



the ASOARTESANAS were teaching international colleagues! An intensive week-long training followed with each of the women learning the process of how to make an eco-mochila. Friendships were made that will last a lifetime and eco-mochilas are spreading throughout Latin America.

Everyone returned to their countries motivated to start eco-mochilas in their communities. The ladies from Costa Rica have received a small grant to continue to train and expand their group and they have already begun to collect plastic bags in their community and from neighboring communities.



It's All In A Drop, It's All In A Plop!

Understanding what factors influence cotton-top tamarin reproduction is so important as we form comprehensive conservation plans to protect this species for the future. Cotton-top tamarins ovulate every 18 days and are pregnant for approximately 184



days. Females typically give birth to twins that weigh between 15-20% of their body weight. That's equivalent to an average human female giving birth to two 10 pound infants!!!

Cotton-top tamarins in the wild generally give birth once a year while cotton-tops in captivity can give birth every 7 months!!! Why are there such difference between animals in the wild and those in captivity... that's what we are trying to figure out.

So how do you figure out who's pregnant and who's not? Well, we have created our very own tamarin pregnancy test that is similar to a human in-home pregnancy test. Since urine is really difficult to

collect from an a tiny monkey that is 30 feet high in a tree, Felix and German, our field assistants collect tamarin feces.

It is an art form to collecting feces, but Felix and German, are pros at collecting tamarin poop! We freeze



the feces and store it until we are ready for our endocrinologist Dr. Cat Wheaton and Holly Forde from Disney's Animal Kingdom to join us at our lab in the Barranquilla Zoo.

There is a lot of weighing, measuring, and mixing of chemicals but we end up with some amazing data that shows pregnancy and hormone cycles. We have even documented when young females go through puberty and we are now gaining insights into what factors influence fertility ... more on that in a future article



Saving the Forests Using Binde



The village of Hobo, in the northwest region of Colombia, has approximately 150 individuals in their community and everyone is completely dependent upon firewood for cooking. We have introduced our binde program to the community with great success. Binde are small cookstoves made from clay that burn fuel more efficiently. A family of 5 burns on average 15 logs a day just to cook their meals in a traditional

Tamarin Tales: Donaldo - it's not easy being in charge!

Tamarins typically live in social groups, with one breeding adult male, an adult female and their offspring. Being the dominant male can be tough since younger males are often trying to take over your position. Such is the case for Donaldo. He arrived in Group 7 in October of 2004 and took over the group. He and Suzy raised several offspring before Ephraim came into the picture! Ephraim was born May 2004 and lived in another of our study groups (Group 11) and recently came of age and was ready to find his own group. Ephraim came into Group 7 and sent Donaldo packing! Donaldo lived by

campfire. However, if you use a binde to cook your food, you will burn only 5 logs a day. That is a significant savings of firewood and forest that can be conserved for cotton-tops!

Binde were eagerly embraced by the women of the community since there is much less smoke produced in a binde resulting in fewer eye



and lung irritations.

Now all families in the village are cooking in a

binde and helping to protect the forest for the cotton-tops!

himself and was constantly being chased by neighboring groups of tamarins. But things got better for Donaldo after a few weeks.

Ephraim evicted Pipe (Donaldo's son) and



Gonzalo and they joined Donaldo in the forest. We found them wandering outside of our study area looking for suitable habitat. Then one day the field team noticed that they had new addition to the group, an unmarked female. The team thinks she looks like a female that has been missing for the last 8 months. We will have to trap her to look at her tattoo and then re-dye her hair so that we can identify her in the trees. The good news is that Donaldo has a new family and a new territory.