



Rainforest Biodiversity Group
Newsletter 22
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From The President

Happy New Year, Happy Ground Hog Day, Martin Luther King Jr. day (actually the most significant) and Valentine's Day. As usual with each new year we have more changes at the newly titled Rainforest Biodiversity Group. That is the first change. We are actually a little behind on implementing the name changes within our website, and our brochures, but these changes will be in place soon.

Forcing some of our others changes was an unexpected disaster in our Costa Rican Office that has changed the shape and scope of our organization. As Harmony and Blair, our Costa Rica staff will attest below, our office was flooded by the swollen waters of the Sarapiquí River, which rose to nearly 50 year highs. Our office was under five feet of water. Harmony and Blair saved many of our expensive items carrying them over their head as the waters rushed in to the office / home. However, we did lose a lot of our paperwork, data, books and other items.

With our limited budget and limited staff RBG will be limiting our workload, but we will continue to exist. We will continue to support and assist with the development of the San Juan - La Selva Biological Corridor, Maquenque National Park and associated Nature Tourism Development. In addition, we will continue our education efforts in both Costa Rica and the US, and we will keep our new Adopt-a-Nest Program in existence to ensure the protection of Great Green Macaw nesting sites.

In the near future our board will receive a bit of a make over as well. I will be stepping down as President and our Costa Rican Director Harmony Patricio will assume primary leadership of the organization. I will remain on the Board and act in an advisory role. We will also retain the support of Bill Volkert and Carl Leopold. Hopefully these changes will allow the organization to adapt, grow and advance.

Before I sign off for the month, I would like to thank Andy Paulios and all those that helped run the WSO / WBCI Symposium on Neotropical Migrants. It was a great symposium. There is more information on the symposium below.

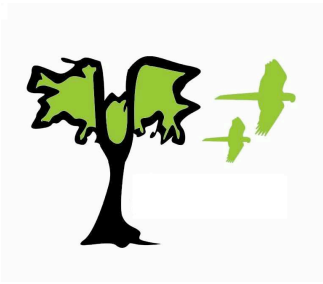
Thanks again for your continued support.

Andrew Rothman
President and Executive Director
FGGM

Costa Rica Update

By: Harmony Patricio and Blair Bumgarner

Greetings from Sarapiquí! Though the dry season is supposed to begin in January to February, we have still had a lot of rain. Some people think that many birds are nesting later this year because the weather has not been warm enough to give them the signal to nest. Our organization has felt the impact of the storms as well. We are sad to report that in early January there was tremendous flooding in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí and many people lost all their belongings and suffered extensive damage to their homes. The FGGM office was completely flooded as well, and we lost a good deal of books and papers. The height of the water in the office eventually reached nearly five feet. We were able to salvage some things, and spent quite some time cleaning up all the mud that was left when the river receded. Currently, we are staying with one of our greatest associates and president of a local conservation association Alex Martinez. We hope to set-up an office for the local association on his property, where we can continue to support conservation projects.



Through collaboration with the local association (Amigos de la Lapa Verde) funds are being raised to adopt more nesting trees for the Green Macaws. Thanks to Alex Martinez, who has encouraged a few private donors to adopt nesting trees, this program will continue to grow. Currently we are searching for good adoption candidates, and hope to finalize a few more adoptions in the coming months. Tirimbina Rainforest Reserve may also be offering us support through donations of some proceeds earned from sales of Green Macaw t-shirts in their gift shop. Though we are receiving some financial support, our programs still require more funding to enable their rapid progression.

Costa Rica Update (continued)

Currently, we are working on reducing the development along one of the main roads in this area. As a member of the Executive Committee for the San Juan-La Selva Biological Corridor, we support efforts to conserve the Corridor. One of the biggest threats to habitat connectivity and movement of species between the Braulio Carrillo National Park and the Northern part of the Corridor is the development along the road between Chilamate and Puerto Viejo. We are working with many organizations to encourage the local government of Sarapiquí to develop a Regulatory Plan which will restrict development in certain areas and define types of use for the land. Though complete development of the Plan will take some time, we are hoping to create a pilot plan which focuses on the most vulnerable areas. The importance of reducing the impact of this road barrier in the Corridor cannot be understated, as many species rely on this stretch of forest for movement between Northern Costa Rica and Southern Nicaragua. One of the species that must use this area for migration is the Great Green Macaw. We hope that with all the combined efforts of the various organizations working to preserve this region, the populations of many threatened species will be able to recover.

RBG Participates in Wisconsin Symposium on Neotropical Migratory Birds

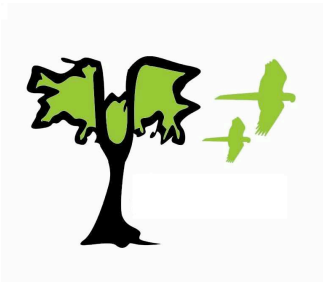
By: Bobbie Webster

I attended the conference, titled *Neotropical Migrants: Insuring Their Return*, sponsored by Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) and Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI) February 4th and 5th 2005. It was two days of excellent speakers, displays and networking on bird conservation, so I can only highlight a few things here.

Did you know you can view bird migrations on radar? This was one very interesting short presentation by John Idzikowski, where we saw examples of how to detect migrations on radar and distinguish them from weather. If you live in Madison, watch for your local news station to run updates on this topic!

Bill Evans, founder of OLD BIRD, discussed the challenges and perils of night migration. One interesting tidbit was that wind turbines tended to cause less mortality than most other obstacles such as radio and cell towers and buildings.

Professor Stan Temple discussed limitations of migratory birds, and how we should not assume what they are. He stressed that outside of reaching carrying capacity, there is always one “bottleneck” that reduces survival and reproduction rates. If a population of birds is decreasing we could assume that it is from habitat fragmentation, but this may not be the case. The example of the dickcissel was used to illustrate this. In this case, researchers followed the bird through its annual cycle and learned that the limitation for these birds was a toxic chemical being sprayed on their wintering area. This was an interesting talk and discussion following; it was stressed that management will be ineffective if the real problem is not addressed.



Chandler Robbins, who has an amazing biography including being a Wildlife Research Biologist for 60 years at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, spoke Friday night on a 20 year (wow!) research project in the American tropics. This research encompassed eight countries and compared fragmented to non-fragmented, natural to disturbed and high elevation to low elevation habitats, and much more. He presented us with a multitude of his comparisons, results, maps and photos. This research has been used in selecting sites for protection in some of these countries, like Guatemala and Mexico. We were surprised to hear that much of this research is unpublished.

On Saturday morning Andy Rothman presented a synopsis of what the situation for neo-tropical migratory birds and local birds in Costa Rica has been, and what Friends of the Great Green Macaw has done over the past few years. He described how protecting the Great Green Macaw also protects habitat for neo-tropical migrants. Noel Cutright noted that this project shows how much difference one person can make.

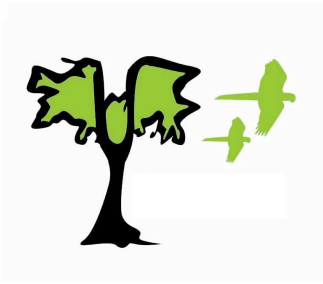
Bill Volkert and Susan Gilchrist presented an interesting account of their work in Nicaragua. The Nicaragua Project for Migratory Bird Education connected educators and researchers in Nicaragua. Bill and Susan shared their method of getting these two important groups to share ideas and information. This was a successful project culminating in a bird education plan which will help promote bird conservation. Another exciting outcome is a guide to the birds of Nicaragua which is in the works at this moment!

There were many more interesting and important discussions happening throughout the weekend. Of course these were interspersed with bird trivia and prizes. All of the sessions included action ideas; based on the participants attending this symposium, there will probably be new and continuing conservation efforts stemming from the ideas discussed here. I hope we as members of Friends of the Great Green Macaw/Rainforest Biodiversity Group are involved in these efforts in protecting neo-tropical migratory birds. See <http://www.wisconsinbirds.org/> or contact Andy Paulios from this site for more information.

Events Update

- Please be on the look out for our Annual Report for 2004
- Our Adopt – a – Tree Program continues. Please visit the website for more information. \$100 helps protect an actual Great Green Macaw Nest
- Membership renewals. If you are interested in continuing to be a member of RBG membership dues will be due soon. Be on the look out for a reminder.

WISH LIST:



Here we will note items or things that would be of great use to RBG. Please let us know if you can help provide them. Each item will receive a value that can be used as a tax-deduction.

The Wish List:

Color Printer

Computer (laptop or desktop)

Digital Camera

Pad Locks

Office Supplies (Manila and regular envelopes, printer paper, pens, pencils, etc)

Stamps

Thanks for your help!!!