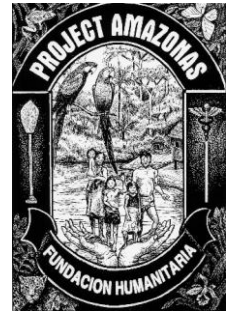


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*Dedicated to the People and Environment of the Amazon: Working to Ensure the Future through Conservation, Research, Education, Medical Care and Sustainable Development.*

*Dedicada a la Gente y Medioambiente de la Amazonia: Trabajando para asegurar su Futuro por Medio de Conservación, Investigación, Educación, Asistencia Medica y Desarrollo Sostenible*

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15 December 2011

Devon Graham, President/Scientific Director

Dear Family of Friends and Supporters,

WOW! It's already mid-December and last weekend was only New Year's, or so it seems. The year has flown by way too fast, and as usual I'm embarrassed (well, not really; OK maybe...) by the lack of correspondence that I've had with many of you and the paucity of website updates. Rest assured, however that we do appreciate your support and encouragement – whether we receive it via phone, email, word of mouth or in person! It is that support that keeps me, at least, going – that, and the fact that I do love sharing the Amazon – its rivers, forests, people, beauty, potential, and even its mosquitos with others. In fact I'm very selfless when it comes to sharing the mosquitos (even though those of you who have been there know that they are rarely as bad as most people anticipate!).

2011 has been a very busy, but also a very good year and we have lots to report. The coming year, 2012, however, is shaping up to be a banner year for us on many fronts with a lot of exciting things in the works. So I'd like to start with what lies ahead in the coming year, before recapping the events of the current year.

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## **2012 - MEDICAL WORK – Exciting Developments!**

**Medical and Dental Service Trips:** For reasons not totally known, but no doubt thanks in part to our updated website courtesy of our friends at another non-profit (thank you AidJoy! [[www.AidJoy.org](http://www.AidJoy.org)]), we've had an explosion of interest in our riverboat-based medical service trips planned for the coming year. At the moment we have trips planned for February, April, June, July/August, September and November, and most or all will be near or at capacity. Particularly exciting is the global spread of the participants – coming from Australia, Botswana, Canada, England, Ireland, Norway, Peru, Singapore, Spain, the United States, Uruguay, and no doubt other countries to come on-line still! We've got all continents covered except for Antarctica, and I'm not holding my breath on that one! Look for regular reports in the coming year as each of the service trips winds down.

**Rural Medical Clinic on the Orosa:** The Orosa River is where we started out, way back in 1994. We've long dreamed of operating a regular clinic there to serve the population and it looks like that dream may finally be coming to fruition! Residents on the Orosa currently have to travel from 2 to 12 hours to get to the nearest clinic (depending on river levels and starting point), and at some times

of the year clinic access is very difficult. At the same time, the closest government clinic is often out of medicines and supplies, so many times people don't bother to go at all – they stay at home and suffer until they either recover, or things get so bad that they are forced to go to the clinic or all the way to Iquitos for treatment.

This past summer, several students (2 from Florida International University (FIU), FL, one from Dartmouth University, NH), spent time at our Madre Selva Biological Station on the Orosa and decided that as their senior projects, they were going to take on the task of designing and fund-raising to build a clinic on the Orosa. They are already hard at work on the project, and have received official “requests” from the part of the beneficiary communities, the donation of the necessary land on the part of the Yagua Indian community of Comandancia, and even have blue-prints drawn up. The student taking lead on the project – Danny Tapanes – is the president of the pre-med club at FIU and is organizing a service trip for pre-medical students in 2012. He also received the “Student of the Year” award at the National Collegiate Honors Council annual conference in Phoenix, Arizona in October of this year. We're really looking forward to working with Mr. Tapanes and the other students involved in making an Orosa clinic a reality!

**The Big Enchilada – A large, modern and well-equipped clinic!:** Always save the best of a category till the last. ☺! In mid-2011, we were contacted by a major corporation regarding the construction of a modern, fully equipped clinic the Peruvian Amazon. At first we didn't know how seriously to take the initiative – after all, how many times does someone call up and say “we want to spend a large amount of money on building a clinic that you would then operate – we'll even throw in the first year of operating costs”. We cautiously moved ahead, however, and soon it was clear that this was a very legitimate proposal and we eventually had meetings with company representatives from the US and Peru in Lima, and again in Iquitos in October. During these meetings we also met with many local and regional government officials and with personnel from the Ministry of Health and the School of Medicine in Iquitos.

In November, I was able to travel back to Peru to visit a privately run hospital in the mountains (a useful role model), and then meet again with Ministry of Health people in Iquitos. While the original location of the clinic was projected to be in the city of Iquitos itself, it now appears that it will be located in one of the outlying small towns, and I was able to meet with the mayor (a longtime friend of Project Amazonas) and town officials, and even sign a letter of intent to the effect that the town would donate the land necessary for the clinic. In short, things are steamrolling along, and we anticipate having the project formally approved by the financing company very early in 2012, with letters of intent signed between the various parties – ourselves, the major company, our partner non-profit AidJoy (which has played a large role not only in revamping our website, but in also pushing this clinic project), the community where the clinic will be related and also the Ministry of Health and the Regional Government.

Needless to say, a fully equipped clinic will open many doors to partnerships with various schools of medicine (Peruvian and international), medical researchers, medical volunteers, and more. Most importantly, it will be huge improvement in health care provision for the community it will serve, and allow us to take healthcare in the area from a reactive model, to a very proactive one. We

already have a retired architect with hospital experience who has drawn up preliminary conception plans, so we may have some blueprints and artistic depictions of the clinic on our website in the near future.

## **2012 - EDUCATIONAL, RESEARCH & VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES**

We'll have lots of educational, research and volunteer activities taking place in 2012 – starting almost immediately! Among the courses and student research projects that we're looking forward to are:

### **Dec 2011-Jan 2012: National Collegiate Honors Council Amazon Winterim Course** – Quite the title!

This is a 3-week course (6 university credits) that will split its time between Iquitos and the Madre Selva Biological Station. While it is officially a course offered by Florida International University, student participants are coming from honors programs across the USA. The two modules in the course will look at biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources, and also at questions of identity among the varied population of Iquitos and the surrounding rural areas. It promises to be an exciting venture, and will be taught by yours truly and Dr. Teressa Trusty, an anthropologist from Oregon who first volunteered with us way back in 2001 prior to attending graduate school.

### **Jan-Apr 2012: University of Maryland – Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology**

**Graduate Course** – We were delighted to be chosen as a partner for this graduate student course which combines business smarts with conservation and sustainable development issues. This is an innovative program which pairs groups of students with organizations world-wide to work on real-life solutions. “Our” team of graduate students will be working with us to work on a plan to develop and market the Santa Cruz Forest Reserve site in a sustainable and ecologically and socially responsible manner. We're looking forward to working with them!

**Mar 2012: Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, NJ** – One of my favorite groups is coming back again! For the 5<sup>th</sup> time if memory serves! The Lawrenceville School group will be led by Jim Serach, biology and science teacher at the school with students carrying out independent research projects during their time at Madre Selva. I'm always amazed at the quality of research that these high school students do, and with their professional presentations at the end of the course. I hold them up as an example to my university students all the time. A dedicated and fun bunch of students, and it is always great to see them back.

**May 2012: University Pharmacy Group** – We're communicating with a potential new group from a School of Pharmacy in the USA. If all goes well, they should be spending two weeks with us in May 2012.

**May-Jun 2012: Nourish International – University of New Mexico** – Nourish International is a national student organization that focuses on student-led sustainable projects around the world. Students work directly with local communities and people to provide training, infrastructure facilities, and capacity-building. We are looking forward to working the UNM group in 2012. We're currently refining the nature and scope of the project that they will be working on.

**Jun-Jul 2012: Florida International University Honors College Amazon Study-Abroad Program –**

Another long title! This will be our 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year offering this program which is taught by yours-truly (again) along with Dr. James Riach of FIU. Students spend spring semester on campus learning about the Amazon and designing independent service-learning projects, which they then carry out during 4 weeks in the Peruvian Amazon. The variety of projects are always amazing and run the gamut from studying venomous snakes to designing and implementing clean-water systems for local schools or working to revitalize indigenous culture. The Honors College at FIU has been tremendously supportive of this program and we even have a poster and photos hanging in the office of the University President himself. The service-learning model that this course has developed has been held up as a model at national conferences and envied by other universities. We always take it as a super compliment when we see our ideas “stolen” and put to use by other institutions and programs.

**Jul 2012: Heritage Institute – Continuing Education Course:** Thanks to the efforts of new Project Amazonas board member Don Dean, a science teacher in New Jersey, we’ll be able to offer continuing education and graduate credits to teachers during a course taught at the end of July in Peru. The credits will be issued by Antioch College. The course will split its time between the city of Iquitos and our field station at Santa Cruz on the Mazan River. The course will be taught by Don Dean and (yet again) yours truly.

**Jun-Aug 2012: University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Student Research Group:** We’re delighted to be able to host a student research group of four University of Aberdeen students during the summer of 2012. The students will be researching a very interesting and complex association between ants and plants and which results in a natural phenomenon locally known as “devil’s gardens”. The students hail from Scotland, Finland and Lithuania.

## **2012 - FIELD SITES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Santa Cruz Forest Reserve:** Our newest site is also one that should see additional facilities added in 2012. We are also excited about the possibilities of expanding the amount of land protected at the site – a total of 6 adjacent plots of land, ranging in size from 15 to 60 acres, are available for sale, which would serve to double the area of river frontage that we have, and also protect additional old-growth forest. The cost of acquiring additional lands is about US\$110/acre.

**Sabalillo Forest Reserve:** With renewal of our long-term conservation lease assured, we’re looking to increase usage of this most remote, yet incredibly beautiful site. We’ll also be moving the location of our current “main” structure at Sabalillo to a new, better drained site located on a beautiful oxbow lake.

**Madre Selva Biological Station:** Our old workhorse and most used of all the field sites. We’ve had a number of upgrades in 2011, but the most critical needs for 2012 include the complete construction of the dining hall/kitchen facility, and also construction of a support structure that will house the

generator, laundry, water pumps, and workshop on the bottom floor, with staff quarters on the upper floor.

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2011 CALENDAR YEAR

Yep! It's almost over and I haven't yet broken my 2011 New Year's Resolutions. But that's only because I didn't make any! My resolution for 2012, however, will be to do a better job of putting updates and documents on our website. Considering the poor job that I did of that this year, it won't take a lot of effort to keep 2012's resolution! Here's a quick run-down of events and highlights in 2011

### January-February 2011:

***Santa Cruz Volunteers:*** The year started out well with volunteers Tomas Bertenyi and Laila Moire-Selvage from University of California Berkeley arriving at the Santa Cruz field station on 2 January, and staying for three weeks. Despite arriving in the middle of an unusually hot spell, they persevered with trail and road maintenance activities, caring for recently planted tree seedlings, and other activities. Our thanks to them for their time and energy!

***Peruvian Undergraduate Research:*** Two students from the National University of the Peruvian Amazon (UNAP) also spent time at Santa Cruz working on one of their required field practicum projects. Nicole Mitidieri and Daisy de Fatima Sanchez Mosqueda examined floral visitation by insects and birds to blossoms of passionflower (*Passiflora spp.*) vines.



*Passionflowers from the Peruvian Amazon, illustrating the diversity of flowers. Left: Passiflora podlechi, a very rare species with a white flower; center: Passiflora involucrata – one of the giants with flowers 8" across; right: Passiflora poeppigii, another rare species.*

***Herpetology Group*** – Shortly afterward, a group of herpetologists spent time at the Madre Selva Biological Station and at the Santa Cruz Forest Reserve. As has been the trend over the years, some species of frogs, lizards, snakes and crocodilians were predictably encountered, whereas others were inexplicably absent (or at least not found). As usual, various surprises also popped up – species that have been very rarely encountered, or which were new for the



particular site. One great find at Santa Cruz was a large female two-lined forest viper – toxic but beautiful (pictured at left). Santa Cruz has become the “go-to” site to find these rare vipers. Low water levels and unusually dry weather throughout the Peruvian Amazon may have contributed to altered patterns of herp activity and apparent abundance.

**UMISS Medical Service Expedition:** In February we were delighted to have the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, headed by Dr. Svenja Albrecht. Free clinics were conducted in communities on the Apayacu and Orosa Rivers with some 1,200 patients in 14 communities attended. Although we have been working in these communities for over 10 years, the trip emphasized the need for improved health care facilities in the region. A common complaint that we heard over and over in every community was that the local medical infrastructure was too difficult to access, and that when patients did travel to the closest clinic, that medicines and other supplies were often non-existent. Needless to say, the communities were very happy that we were able to bring clinic to them, and approximately 50% of the inhabitants of each community attended. *At right: a makeshift clinic on the edge of the Orosa River at the community of Nuevo Israel.*



**Medical Volunteers:** Kitty Jackson, a medical student from the UK joined the UMISS expedition and also volunteered additional time at the government clinic in Mazan.

A visit to the nearest health post in the region – Yanashi – confirmed the complaints of inadequate health care made by local communities – the clinic is tasked with serving 33 communities on 5 rivers, with a target population of over 6,000 persons. Nevertheless, it has been without a doctor for over a year, was short on critical medicines, and had received no funding for facilities maintenance or fuels recently. Additionally, the dedicated obstetrician, nurse, and technician who were valiantly holding the place together hadn’t been paid for

several months. Not an ideal situation, to say the least! We promised to help out in whatever way possible.

**Research:** Research activities continued in February with Dr. Haven Wiley (University of North Carolina) spending time at the Santa Cruz field station conducting research on birds.

**March 2011:**

**Lawrenceville School Expedition:**

Spring break was a busy time at Madre Selva with a double whammy of student groups and various researchers. Lawrenceville School (Lawrenceville, NJ) was back for the 4<sup>th</sup> time with a great group of 14 enthusiastic high school students, who threw themselves into independent projects with gusto. Under the direction of professors James Serach and Leah Domb, the



students designed projects, collected data and prepared PowerPoint presentations at the end of their stay. I am always impressed with what the Lawrenceville students accomplish during their relatively short stay in the Amazon. I've taught college seniors who would be intimidated if asked to do what these high school students routinely accomplish! To prove the point, check out the student-created video from the trip (typing "Lawrenceville", "Amazon" and "YouTube" into your browser should bring up the video as the first selection): *In the photo above, Lawrenceville students negotiate the challenging trail to Lunes Cocha (and yes, it is always like that!).*

**Journey to the Amazon:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nuw6cjlpiwl&feature=email>

*'Journey to the Amazon' is a student-made film documenting a school trip to Peru. This science-based excursion is the culminating experience for pupils of Science Master Jim Serach following the one-term course, "Amazon: Ecology of the Neotropics." The group travels from the port city of Iquitos along the Amazon River to a remote research station where they sample the biodiversity of the rainforest. Immersed in one of the most biologically rich places on earth each student has the opportunity to design and conduct a field study, as well as to visit indigenous communities. Produced by Alex Frumkin '11.*

**Wabash College Course:** A new and welcome addition to our student groups was an invertebrate and entomology course from Wabash College (IN). Led by professor Eric Wetzel, the 10 students explored the diversity of arthropods and other invertebrates present in the Amazon rainforest. This group too, was an enthusiastic and lively group from one of the two remaining all-male colleges in the USA – who knew that such places still existed? I didn't!

**Research:** Parasitologists Jorge Manuel Cardenas Callirgos from Lima, Peru, and Coralie Martin (France) conducted additional work on fish and reptile parasites at Madre Selva in March, and Iquitos student Christian Nolorbe Pahuaya (UNAP) conducted practicum work on diversity and habitats of fishes as well.



**Monkey rescue!** A feel-good event in March was the rescue of a baby female red uakari monkey (*Cacajao calvus*), a highly endangered species. The baby monkey was malnourished and dehydrated and was being kept as a pet in a local community. The Lawrenceville School

group persuaded the owner to give it to us and different students baby-sat and doted over it (there is no better term!) until we returned to Iquitos where we donated it to Monkey Island, a non-profit primate rehabilitation center. I've seen the monkey on subsequent visits to Monkey Island and am delighted to report that she has grown into a vigorous, happy, and well-adjusted individual, and enjoys the company of 3 other red uakari monkeys at the site. If that sounds anthropomorphic, so be it! Monkey Island is quickly becoming a "must-visit" location in the Peruvian Amazon – it is very obvious that the staff really care about the animals, so I'm always happy to stop there and support their efforts. *Photos above – left: Wabash College student Austin O'Neal with the newly rescued "Monk". Right: Six months later, "Monk" with friends at Monkey Island.*

**More Medical Service:** Also during March and into April two medical students from Oxford Medical School (UK) – Lance Rane and Sanjoy Bhattacharyya spent time assisting at the

government clinic in Yanashi. Meanwhile medical student Grace LaTorre (New York College of Osteopathic Medicine) spent time at the government clinic in Mazan. The medical students were truly a boost for the short-handed staff of both clinics!

### **April-May 2011**

**Genographic Legacy Fund – National Geographic Society:** We were very pleased to be awarded a grant by the Genographic Legacy Fund (GLF) to implement a project to help document and conserve the Yagua Indian language and culture – while funding for the project is relatively short term, our intention is to continue with these efforts over the long-term and the GLF funding has been a huge boost! The project really got rolling in May, and as part of the project, we have provided Yagua communities with laptops and video cameras, and with the training to use them effectively to document their own language, culture and environmental, social, and political concerns and interests. A number of volunteers have participated to date in this project (noted in later months), and a most recent development (September) is that National Geographic wishes to highlight the project on their website – that would be fantastic, of course! Professor Jim Riach at Florida International University, has been taking the lead on this project, and returned to Peru in June-July, September-October, and December to continue work on the project. *The picture above shows several of the Yagua elders of Comandancia in traditional dress.*



**Vienna Rotary Club, NC** – The Rotary Club of Vienna, NC, generously awarded us a \$1000 donation on behalf of young videographer Will Bryan, who participated in medical service trips in 2008 and produced video footage documenting that experience and the needs of the people of the rivers of the Amazon. We are very appreciative to the club for their support, and for their recognition of the contributions of fellow citizen Will Bryan. To view some of Will's videos, follow the link: <http://www.projectamazonas.org/videos>

**Indigenous Rights Workshop at Florida International University** – April was a banner month with the president of the Yagua Indigenous Federation, Manuel Ramirez Lopez, making the first visit by a Yagua Indian to the USA. We had great fun (NOT...) navigating the visa and passport issues, but Don Manuel was able to participate in an Indigenous Rights Workshop hosted by the Law School and the Latin American-Caribbean Center (LACC) at Florida International University where he was a key-note speaker. It truly was an amazing sight to see a short, bare-footed man,

wearing palm fiber clothing and traditional face paint bring an entire courtroom to tears, and then to their feet in a standing ovation with his emotional closing statements. Don Manuel is a truly eloquent orator and a great spokesperson for his people. We are continuing to work on various projects, initiatives and collaborations that resulted from his visit. We are particularly grateful to the School of Law and The Honors College at FIU for financial support for this event.



*At left: Don Manuel Ramirez talks with Project Amazonas founder Albert Slugocki in the courtroom at the School of Law at FIU.*

**Rotary Club of Vienna, NC** – the Rotary Club of Vienna continued their support of our medical service efforts with an additional donation of \$850. Your local rotary club, wherever you may be, supports many worthy causes and

needs. If you are a business person, please consider joining. Our thanks again to the Vienna Club for all the good work that they do!

***In Memorium: Dr. Cindy Gerstner*** – We were saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Cynthia Gerstner, an aquatic biologist who conducted research on tropical fishes with us in the Peruvian Amazon. Cindy was an enthusiastic field biologist, and when she learned that her breast cancer had returned and metastasized after initial treatment, she directed that a scholarship fund be established in her name to support aquatic and fisheries research by promising Peruvian students in the Amazon. Any contributions to the Cindy Gerstner Amazon Scholarship Fund will be used exclusively for that purpose. Our deep condolences to her husband, daughter and entire extended family. We're honored to be trusted to carry out her wishes, and please, do whatever you can to support the fight against breast cancer. It still kills.

***AidJoy Expedition - 1000's of Hours of Promotional Videography*** - In April and May, Jonathan Shanin, the founder of the non-profit AidJoy, along with videographers Mike Bergen, and Marni Walsh, traveled to the Amazon to document the medical needs that are critical on the remote rivers of the region. In addition to visiting our field stations and urban and rural clinics and hospitals, they traveled remote rivers in search of compelling stories, and came up with plenty! AidJoy is currently working on editing and pulling together thousands of hours of high-quality

video and preparing a documentary on the health challenges of the region. We are very grateful to AidJoy for their herculean efforts to provide us with documentary and fund-raising footage related to the health challenges to be met in the Amazon. Take a few minutes to check out the AidJoy website at [www.AidJoy.org](http://www.AidJoy.org) – their unique and innovative mission is to help organizations such as Project Amazonas meet their full potential and thrive and grow.

***Medical Service expedition to Ampiyacu River*** - In May, the AidJoy team also participated on a medical trip to the Ampiyacu River – a trip that was anchored by Drs. Pablo Ruiz Beteta (Peru) and Paul Kater (California), assisted by Dr. Olivier Drouin (Montreal, Quebec), who graduated immediately after returning to Canada from the trip, and who was back with us after having volunteered at Project Amazonas in 2006. Heading up dental care was Jose Adan Cobos, DDS (Peru). Also assisting were RN Jessica Hardy (North Carolina), volunteers July Sanders and Jesse Taylor (North Carolina), and medical students Lucy Guile (Oxford, UK) and pre-med student Anja Jokela (Minnesota). From the Centro de Salud in the town of Pevas (at the mouth of the Ampiyacu River), obstetrician Rosario del Carmen Ramos Paredes and Technician Max Erick Rojas Mozombite also joined us. Rounding out the group, we were happy to also host French-Peruvian doctoral student Tomas Mouries whose dissertation topic is indigenous governance, and his girlfriend Reagan. The two will be living in the community of San Lorenzo on the Marañon River for the next year, but were collecting information and contacts in indigenous communities in the region prior to their move to San Lorenzo. Also with us for the first week was linguistics graduate student Stephen Fafulas from the University of Florida, who conducted linguistic interviews in many of the households in different communities.

Because of exceptionally high water, we were able to take the boat all the way to the most remote community – Ancon Colonia, inhabited by Bora Indians. Working downriver, we attended in Brillo Nuevo, Nuevo Peru, Puerto Isango, Nueva Libertad and other small communities, all of them inhabited by indigenous Bora, Okaina, Huitoto and Yagua peoples.

#### **June-July 2011:**

***Natural History group and Student Research*** - In June, a small natural history group visited Madre Selva giving the opportunity to bring along 4 students (Cesar Abel Sosa Lazaro, Jae Diana Paredes Rodriguez, Jorge Joel Pinedo Garcia, and Francesco Alonzo Ahuanari Cespedes) from the Universidad Científica de Perú who did practicum work focused on fish diversity and abundance. Linguistics graduate student Stephen Fafulas from the University of Florida was also able to accompany us to continue his research.

**Research Design Course for Latin American Students** – Also in June, a course for designing ecological field research was conducted at the Madre Selva Biological Station. Participating students came from many countries in South America. Directing the course were University of Florida graduate students Ari Martines and Judit Ungvari-Martin.

**Florida International University (FIU) Study-Abroad Program** - Shortly afterward, it was a very diverse group of 10 FIU Study Abroad program students who arrived in Iquitos on 28 June, and spent three days exploring Iquitos, making contacts, finding and/or purchasing resources, and soaking in the tropical atmosphere before heading down to the Madre Selva Biological Station on the first of July to carry out individual service-learning projects.

At the field station, the students rapidly became acquainted with the flora and especially the fauna. Screams were fairly common, and there was one particularly entertaining scream-fest when a tarantula jumped from my shoulder onto the head of the one of the students in the dining hall. After the tarantula was recaptured and the students had been persuaded to get off the tables, it ended well with everyone holding the tarantula and posing for photos (*at right: FIU student Ileana de Cardenas is taking her turn with the new “pet”!*). Our star was then released back where I had found it. If only someone had been taking video, it would have been an instant YouTube classic!



**Student Projects:** A broad array of projects were carried out by the students. Below is a brief summary of projects (in no particular order):

- Dana Mekler – Legal rights pertaining to indigenous and rural communities in the Peruvian Amazon – this work will be continued as an independent project at FIU in 2011/2012, culminating with a presentation in March 2012.
- Daniel Tapanes – Survey of gill parasites in food fishes on the Orosa River, and also the design and funding of a clinic for the Orosa River. The latter project will serve as a senior thesis project for his senior year at FIU, with a oral/video presentation in March 2012. Additionally Daniel was able to obtain funding to outfit the Yanashi clinic with critical supplies, including a portable ultrasound, wheelchair, medical exam bed, and a supply of critical medications. Additional work at the clinic included putting new screening on all the windows, fixing rotten (and dangerous) floor, and putting in skylights for better illumination and rain protection. Our regular field station staff provided the labor and expertise for these clinic improvements.

- Ileana de Cardenas – documentation of traditional beliefs and practices of the Yagua Indians, particularly with respect to the Mayantun ceremony which is unique to the Yagua. This work is part of a larger effort to revitalize the Yagua language and culture before it disappears.
- Andres Wu – video documentation and editing – training of local youth and community leaders in use of video and computer equipment. *At right, Andy takes a picture of Camille Arca and new friends.*
- Fernando Intriago – training with cameras, laptops – part of the cultural revitalization program. Documentation of many aspects of Yagua culture and language.
- Celeste de Palma – heavy metal contamination of fish – collection of fish samples and analysis of those samples – results indicated that large highly migratory fishes did indeed have some mercury contamination, probably acquired from distant river systems where gold-mining or petrochemical activities might be taking place.
- Sylvina di Pietro – water quality analysis and survey of households to determine where they obtained their water, and what treatment (if any) it received.
- Camille Arca – animal health issues in the local communities, treatment of animals and instruction on better animal care given to households with domestic or domesticated animals.
- Yamilet Lorenzo – cultural tourism opportunities with Yagua Communities in the region. Factors to consider in promoting appropriate cultural tourism.
- Amnha Elusta – cultural revitalization efforts and assistance with clinic planning and implementation for the community of Comandancia.



**Volunteers:** In June and July, volunteers Ariel Jagusztyn (Florida State University – linguistics), Ignacio Añon (Uruguay), and Kathleen Chung (Dartmouth U, New Hampshire - medicine) assisted with cultural revitalization and health initiatives.

**Peruvian Student Research:** Iquitos student Christian Nolorbe Pahuaya began his official senior thesis work on fish diversity and abundance on the Orosa River. *At right, Christian proudly shows off his piranha bite (obtained while catching the fish) while FIU student Fernando Intriago provides moral support!).*



Gilberto Fernandez, another Iquitos thesis student from

the Universidad Nacional de la Amazonia Peruana continued with additional thesis work (started in 2010) on woodcreepers and mixed species flocks of birds, along with field assistant Rider Tamani. Gilberto Fernandez is hoping to continue with additional research in 2012.

**Orosa Medical Clinic Project** – The initiative to establish a clinic to serve the population of the Orosa River leapt forward in July. A site has been donated by the Yagua Indian community of Comandancia, and promises have been made by other communities to provide timber and labor. A formal meeting of health promoters and community leaders on the Orosa petitioned the government for staffing of the clinic. FIU pre-med student Danny Tapanes has continued working hard upon his return to the US to look for partners and funders for the clinic. This clinic will be an important addition to our medical activities in the region, and will contribute substantially to the health of the communities on the Orosa.

### August-September 2011:

**Tropical Fish Study Expedition** - In early August, expeditions to the Nanay and Maranon Rivers recorded a number of fish species that we hadn't encountered previously. Nearly 300 species of fish were recorded over the course of the two



one-week long expeditions. By any count, that is an amazing diversity of fishes! Above are pictured some of the gorgeous angelfish (*Pterophyllum scalare*) from the Nanay River – so much more regal than the inbred fish most often found in aquarium shops! Future tropical fish study expeditions are planned for February and August 2012.



*A small sampling of the fish diversity found on the trips. Left: a juvenile peacock bass (Cichla monoculus); center: one of the knifefishes (Steatogenys elegans); right: a pair of Loricariid catfishes.*

**Santa Cruz Forest Reserve Construction: The Taj Mahal II** - In late August, we finished building a new field house near the Mazan River at the Santa Cruz forest reserve (work started in June). Our thanks to Board Member Don Dean for pushing this through and for finding the resources to make it a reality. The house will serve as a base for researchers and students, as well as being useful for courses and for individuals or families seeking peace and quiet for varying lengths of time. Informally, we are referring to the building as “the Taj”. Perhaps our next structure there will be referred to as “Taliesin South” (with full apologies to Frank Lloyd Wright!). *The picture at right shows the completed house as of August 2011.*



**Rio Nanay Medical Service Expedition:** At the start of September, medical students Marianne Safe and Josie Ibrahim (both of Monash University, Victoria, Australia) and biology student Stephanie Waters (University of Birmingham, England) joined our crew and medical team leaders Dentist Adan Cobos and MD Pablo Ruiz Beteta in providing medical care to the isolated communities along the beautiful Nanay River. Our thanks to the Safe family, to Carolann Terceira, and to the participants themselves in helping to ensure that we had the funding to make this medical expedition a reality.

***Student Mural depicting the Yagua Experience:*** Back in the US, meanwhile, a student mural highlighting the story of the Yagua People and the flora and fauna of the Amazon took shape in the student center art gallery at Florida International University (FIU) where it was exhibited for nearly two months. The finished mural was 64' long by 4' high, and painted on removable wood panels. It is currently slated to find a permanent home in the School of Medicine at FIU. Our thanks to art professor Gretchen Scharnagl and her class for taking on this ambitious project. *At right, students work on the yet-unfinished mural.*



***Yagua Artifact Exhibit at the Frost Museum of Art:*** An exhibit of Yagua Indian artifacts was exhibited from 28 August to 15 September in the Patricia and Robert Frost Art Museum (on the campus of Florida International University, Miami, Florida). This was a great way to introduce the Yagua people and Project Amazonas to the university at large, as well as to the visiting public. The university's board of governors visited the museum on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, so they also had opportunity to see this great exhibit. Visit the museum website ([http://thefrost.fiu.edu/new\\_building.htm](http://thefrost.fiu.edu/new_building.htm)) to see just what a fantastic venue this was! A virtual video "tour" of the exhibit can be found at <http://www.vimeo.com/29394967>, or it can be accessed directly via our website ([www.projectamazonas.org](http://www.projectamazonas.org)).

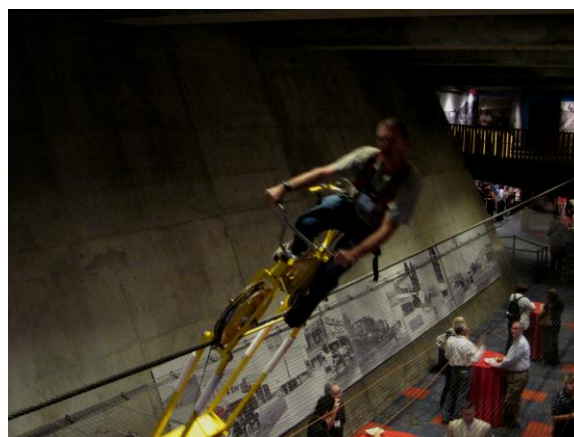
### **October 2011:**

***In Memorium: Dwight Smith*** – It was with sadness that we learned that Dwight Smith, of Silver Springs, Maryland; a pioneering underwater photographer and explorer had passed away. Dwight was a generous supporter of our Santa Cruz Forest Reserve initiative, and also played an important role in our obtaining of the Nenita riverboat. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to get to know Dwight through his daughter Claudia Dickinson, who has traveled to the Amazon with us on two occasions, and through whom Dwight was able to vicariously experience it as well. Due to his health, Dwight was unable to visit the Amazon himself, but he wished to contribute to its conservation in honor of his daughter who is involved in many research and conservation initiatives. His generosity and love of science and exploration will live on through in the Santa Cruz Forest Reserve.

**Clinic Development Meetings in Peru:** I traveled to Peru to meet with US and Peruvian representatives of the major company that has expressed interest in helping us build and fund a modern clinic (discussed at length in the first part of this report). Also at the meetings was a representative of the non-profit organization – AidJoy – which has been assisting us with our website, and which will be handling the Lion’s share of the marketing and promotion of the clinic project. The meetings were lengthy but highly productive and we’re excited to be engaged with this effort to make a quantum leap forward in health care in the Peruvian Amazon.

**National Collegiate Honors Council Conference –**

**Phoenix, AZ:** In late October, I had the pleasure of taking four students from the FIU Amazon program (who worked at Madre Selva) to the annual national conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council. The students – Amnha Elusta, Dana Mekler, Daniel Tapanes, Silvina DiPietro and Yamilet Lorenzo led a round-table discussion on student service-learning, drawing on their experiences in doing research projects in



the Peruvian Amazon. With over 800 colleges and universities represented at the conference, this was great exposure for Project Amazonas. *It wasn't all work though...at a reception in the Phoenix Science Museum, I had the fun of trying out the sky-cycle (above).*



**Historic Journals of Theron Wasson**

– We had a special treat in October when we were contacted by Peter Bergstrom, who offered us access to his grandfather’s 1921 journals. Why the “treat”? Well his grandfather, Theron Wasson, was one of the first geologists to explore the upper Napo River region of Ecuador in search of evidence for oil and gas deposits. Together with fellow geologist Joseph Sinclair, the two men spend a good part of 1921

traveling through the region, not only collecting geological data, but also making notes on the people, the towns, modes of travel and the flora and fauna of the region. We now have scans of all the pages of Wasson’s journals, and although it is sometimes amazing to note how much the region has changed while reading through them, it is equally astounding to see how much has stayed the same over the past 90 years. Although Wasson’s work took place in Ecuador, it is only a short distance away from “our” area of the Peruvian Amazon.

The black gold of oil has been a very mixed blessing for the Amazon, but the journals themselves are a true gold-mine of information and perspective. We thank Peter and the entire Bergstrom family for being willing to share them with us. The original paper journals themselves are quite fragile, and are being archived at Carnegie Mellon University, the Alma Mater of Theron Wasson and Joseph Sinclair. Carnegie Mellon will also be making the digital versions of the journals available through their library website.

**Medical Volunteer Service** – We were happy to arrange medical service at the Mazan Medical Clinic for Eyal Robinson, a medical student from the University of Ben Gurion, Israel.

### **November 2011:**

**More Clinic Development work and visit to Diospi Suyana Hospital in the Andes:** In mid-November, I had opportunity to travel back to Peru for clinic project related work. First off was a visit to an impressive private hospital – Diospi Suyana - located in the Peruvian Andes. This was a visit to boldly steal great ideas and to learn from Diospi Suyana's experience in operating a private and very well-equipped hospital in Peru. My thanks to Dr. David Brady for taking time out of his busy schedule to show me all the in's and out's of the hospital. In the Iquitos area, a lot of time was spent evaluating potential clinic sites, in making contact with local and regional authorities, and in documenting the medical needs of the region.

**New Board Members!** At our board meeting on 20 November, we were delighted to welcome two new board members to Project Amazonas. Both have been involved with Project Amazonas in various ways for several years and have made many important contributions to the organization, so it is a pleasure to be able to formalize their involvement and to publically recognize their efforts.

**Dr. James Riach** of Florida International University, Miami, Florida, is an anthropologist/ecologist by training, and will be taking the lead on projects and initiatives related to indigenous and mestizo communities in the Peruvian Amazon. Dr. Riach has also co-led the FIU Amazon Study-Abroad trip for the past 4 years, so he is very familiar with our organization and efforts in Peru.

**Mr. Don Dean** is a science teacher in New Jersey. He became involved with Project Amazonas several years ago and was instrumental in obtaining several parcels of land at the Santa Cruz Forest Reserve, as well as in the construction of the "Taj" and the reservoir at that site (as noted earlier). Don has also been very active in establishing a fruit tree garden at Santa Cruz. He will be taking the lead on developing facilities, educational programs and volunteer activities at Santa Cruz.

**Santa Cruz Reservoir:** At the Santa Cruz Forest Reserve, a reservoir/fish pond in located near the inland facilities was completed in November. The resulting reservoir will ensure a reliable source of water even during the dry season. A professional well-digger had previously determined that soils at the site were not good for putting in a well (too little sand, and too much clay), so the reservoir was the next best option. The reservoir will double as a fish-raising

pond, and a location for recycling of food scraps (fed to the fish). The area of the reservoir will be approximately 1 hectare (2.5 acres) with a maximum depth of about 2.5 meters (~8').

Thanks to Don Dean and Margarita Tours for helping with the financing of this essential project!



*Different stages of the reservoir construction: Left: completing the dam structure by packing earth between board “walls”; center: some of the work crew with the nearly cleared reservoir area; right: the completed dam just starting to fill with water in November. All the work was done without the use of any heavy machinery.*

### **December 2011:**

***Heart transplant for the Nenita!*** Just in time for the holiday season, we were fortunate to find a donor heart for our “little girl”, the Nenita. Our Nenita riverboat has been operating with the old Perkins 135 HP motor that came out of the boat that she replaced – the trusty old Tucunare. While the Perkins motor has served valiantly, a more powerful motor capable of pushing the heavier Nenita along at a faster rate was really desperately needed. The Perkins simply wasn’t built for that kind of work load. *(Below: The Nenita cruising on the Napo River at dusk).*



Our organization founder, Albert Slugocki located a used 210 HP marine Caterpillar 3160 motor for sale in southern Florida. After taking a marine engine mechanic to see if the engine was sound, Albert was able to negotiate a sale. This wasn’t easy as there were language and distance barriers (over 100 miles each way) involved, but negotiations with the owners wife (who was doubtless tired of the engine sitting in her garage) eventually produced a deal – we could have it for \$1,500. This was a true bargain– a new 210

HP motor would be between \$55-65,000! The hitch? We had to pay cash and have the motor off the premises within 24 hours.

Albert immediately went into “attack mode”, put in \$1,500 out of his own pocket, plus another \$1,000 advance towards motor maintenance and upgrades, and drove down and bought the motor. Hall Engine Company of brought the motor up to Ft. Lauderdale and then went over the engine with a fine-toothed comb, changing all the gaskets, hoses, filters, rings and any parts showing signs of wear, and basically bringing the engine up to tip-top condition. The total of the work and upgrades came to \$9,117. We are currently making installment payments for the upgrades, and Hall Engine is graciously storing the motor on their premises until we can make arrangements to ship it to Peru early in 2012. We will need to raise additional funds for shipping and installment in the Nenita, but at the end of it all, we will have acquired and installed an all-but-new motor for about 20% of the cost of a new motor – considerably less actually, once the old Perkins motor is removed and sold in Peru. Our thanks to Albert and Margaret Slugocki for their generosity and to Hall Engine Company for being so helpful and accommodating in servicing and storing the motor!

***Indigenous Community Registration and Legalization*** – Prof. Jim Riach of FIU is currently in Peru working with indigenous communities to enable them to be legally registered under Peruvian law, thus entitling them to certain benefits and legal protections which they currently do not enjoy. This is a critical step in ensuring that the people of the Amazon are able to determine their own path and future. Our thanks to Jim for his investment in this undertaking.

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## **THANK YOU!**

I’d like to end with a tribute to our faithful supporters and friends. It has been my special pleasure to get to know many of you personally over the years – either in Peru or in the USA. Your trust in us and belief in the importance of what we are doing in the Amazon is priceless, and we keep that in mind with every initiative, program and expenditure. Please know that you are ALWAYS welcome to send inquiries and suggestions our way, and especially to visit us in the Peruvian Amazon as well. We hope that each of you will have the opportunity to do so – it is truly a special and magical place.

In the current economic climate, we know that most people do not have extra cash lying about waiting to be spent, so we especially appreciate your on-going support. Whether you are able to donate \$10 or \$1000, we value any donation and will continue to manage those funds in our best penny-pinching fashion. I think my maternal grandmother (who had thrifty Scottish heritage) would be proud of what we accomplish! Our additional thanks to those of you who have elected to make automatic monthly donations – either through your bank or via PayPal (automatic credit card deductions). Regardless of the amount donated, it is a great stress-reliever to know that we can count on “X” dollars coming in monthly. Those small donations also add up quickly!

So, thanks again for all you do for the people and environment of the Amazon. We wish you a wonderful holiday season, and may 2012 be a good year for each of you – with happiness, health, and family in full measure, first and foremost, and financial health as well.

See you in the Amazon in 2012!

Sincerely,

Devon Graham, Ph.D.  
President/Scientific Director  
Project Amazonas, Inc.

*Right: Yours truly on the bow of the  
Nenita, together with Jimmy, who  
received successful surgery for club-foot,  
and his mother and younger sister.*

