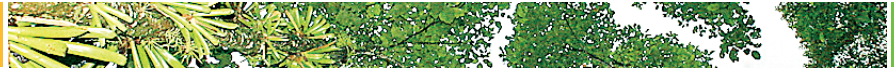


VIEW FROM THE CANOPY



IN THIS ISSUE ■ Belief in the Organization ■ Preview of Annual Meeting
 ■ Upcoming Graduate Courses ■ OTS Student Reflections

BELIEF IN THE ORGANIZATION

Two years into our strategic plan, we find ourselves both pleased and worried. Our strategic plan has provided a clear vision for the organization in three programmatic areas – Education, Science, and Global Partnerships – and, as a result, we have reached key benchmarks and are on track to achieve our goals for the decade ahead. In addition, we have created a four-year financial plan to help guide us. Operationally, our strategy is fairly straightforward: expand those revenue sources that play to our mission and strengths.

Unfortunately, like other organizations, we are feeling the squeeze of the economic crisis gripping the U.S. and the world. OTS senior management and the board-led Budget Review Committee are working closely together to manage our resources. It is critical that we as an organization live within our means, and, to do this, we have asked staff members to take whatever steps possible to carefully safeguard our resources, including freezing salaries for the year ahead.

Like many nonprofits, we have had to downsize by reducing our workforce. Every single OTS staff member contributes importantly to OTS, so even the loss of a single position is painful. However, we are entering a new economic climate of unknown duration and impact. Therefore we have eliminated and restructured several administrative positions that we hope will not affect the core mission of the organization.

Even during a global recession, aspiring students and scientists still need OTS. Our educational model is recognized worldwide and we continue to draw students from around the world. In fact, this year we have received substantially more applications to our courses than ever before. At the same time – due to the economic climate – we have also received more requests for financial aid than ever before. OTS takes pride in the fact that we have been able to offer aid to students and researchers. Yet our ability to meet this increased need is ever more limited. OTS has always been about opportunities, but these opportunities are now in jeopardy.



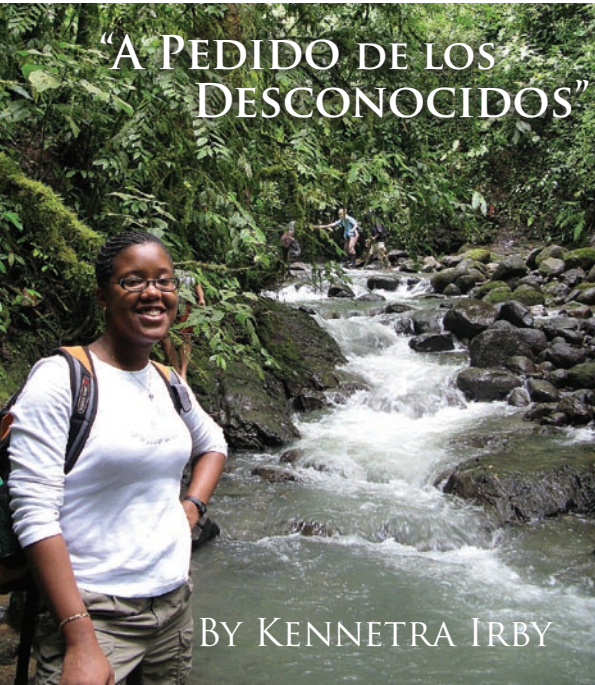
BY ELIZABETH LOSOS
 PRESIDENT AND CEO
 OTS@DUKE.EDU

We realize that in these tough times, everyone needs to safeguard their resources. We are too in our own lives. However, your continued support for OTS students and young researchers is critical. We survive based on your belief in our programs. We hope we have earned your support. We are very hopeful that with your continued support, we will be able to weather the current economic storm and continue to provide students and young researchers with the opportunity to participate in an OTS course and work at our field stations.

So, if you have not done so this year, please contribute to our efforts to ensure that the same opportunities are available to hundreds of students and researchers this summer as have been in years past. If you have already made a contribution, thank you and we ask you to consider making a second donation to support these students and researchers.

Feel free to contact me directly if you have any specific ideas or questions. OTS has made it through difficult times in the past and each time has come out stronger. I know, working together, we can do so again. We owe it to you, to future generations of students, researchers, and natural resource managers and, most importantly, to more than 70% of the world's biodiversity that can be found in the tropics.

"A PEDIDO DE LOS DESCONOCIDOS"



BY KENNETRA IRBY

AT THE REQUEST OF THE UNKNOWN

Overview of my experience: In August 2008, as part of the Organization for Tropical Studies ethnobiology program, we spent a day on Isla Carenero, a small island of the Bocas del Toro Archipelago in Panama. The island is home to the Ngöbe, an indigenous population currently struggling with land rights issues. The Ngöbe was the last indigenous population we visited during our program. I wrote this poem after seeing the struggles of indigenous minorities in Costa Rica and Panama and being deeply affected by their stories.

Both countries are home to breathtaking wildlife and landscapes. While experiencing their natural beauty, I also discovered

their hidden treasures – the inhabitants. Each population had its own history and the people we met proudly shared their experiences. By the end of the course, I came to understand that culture is not static. It's fluid.

As a student, I had romanticized expectations of indigenous people. While some had experienced drastic changes, others had not. In each region, I learned more about the people's struggle to maintain their culture despite modernization and governmental regulation. This cultural preservation manifested itself in art, dance, and even medicine.

Stars flittered across my vision as I walked along the shore,
 Wondering what happened to the paradise Bocas del Toro was slated to have in store.
 Eyes squinted by the light, intensifying my emerging migraine,
 I focused on the trash sprawling the sandy terrain.
 On tires and purses buried in the sand,
 On children running barefoot,
 On white doll heads left abandoned.
 Left abandoned.
 Left alone.
 Fending for themselves without limbs.
 Staring into a future that was markedly grim.

The shrill of drills cutting through plywood, amplified,
 Wardrobes hanging from tied bits of twine.
 Distorted images of driftwood bridges.
 Houses filled beyond their limits,
 Overflowing with people sheltered only by tin.
 Somehow bursting from love within.
 Yet the hope without etched the lines of their faces.
 Smiling was difficult but still they're determined to make it.

"Tell what you see,
 Because there's a possibility
 That when you return
 No longer will we be
 Here on the shores that for generations we've called home.
 Tell what you see,
 Because tomorrow isn't known."



Their coast may be sprinkled with debris,
 But the tourists who roam their seas
 Don't see their struggle to manage what rightly belongs to them.
 Since 1904 the constitution has granted land ownership to the government.
 Captivated by wildlife and aquatic wonders,
 You may stay for a week and never realize the nightmare above water.
 Panamanian law says you own it, after living and working the land for one year.
 Sadly, limited resources and capitalist ambitions make that reality disappear.

The Ngöbe have no way to fight against the powers that be,
 Unless they enlist the help of people like you and me
 Who can give voice to their silent cries
 Give eyes to injustice plaguing their daily lives.
 How such things can still go on today
 Bewilders and amazes me to this day.
 Perhaps the auras and sound sensitivity
 Heightened my connection to their heartfelt plea:

"Tell what you see,
 Because there's a possibility
 That when you return
 No longer will we be
 Here on the shores that for generations we've called home.
 Tell what you see,

Because tomorrow isn't known."



SCIENCE AT OTS: WHAT TO EXPECT AT OTS ANNUAL MEETING IN APRIL.

The annual meeting of the Assembly of Delegates, Board of Directors, and Board of Visitors will have a special focus on science in OTS. We will take this opportunity to highlight the science being conducted at all three stations, introduce our new available infrastructure for biological research, and, most importantly, develop and flesh out plans for new science initiatives identified by the Science Committee.

As established under OTS' strategic plan, now is an important time to take a more proactive role as an organization in tropical science. Over the last several months, the newly reinvigorated Science Committee has been working on identifying critical research frontiers in tropical studies for OTS. OTS will not conduct research in these areas *per se*, but rather use its resources and member institutions to catalyze work by scientists and students in this area. OTS can catalyze work in critical areas through expert workshops, graduate research fellowships, and the collaborative proposal development. In April, we will circulate a series of proposed frontiers in tropical science and invite you to join in the process of developing them further. OTS has now a newly appointed Science Director, Dr. Carolina Murcia, who will lead our efforts in advancing OTS' science agenda. This will be an opportunity to brainstorm with Carolina and the Vice Chairs of the Science Committee, Dr. Greg Gilbert and Dr. Jim Beach.

In addition, at the April meeting all participants will be invited to tour the newly installed canopy towers and bridge. These towers not only provide an unprecedented (and breathtaking!) access to the canopy, but they will also support a sensor network for monitoring environmental and biological variables, on a real-time basis. All meeting participants will learn about the opportunities this associated embedded sensor network offers for tropical ecologists.

Finally, the meeting reception will be held jointly with a poster session to highlight research at OTS stations and by OTS members. We invite everyone to bring a poster to share their current work to stimulate discussion and interactions across the consortium. Posters will remain up through the duration of the meeting, so everyone will have the opportunity to view them at their own pace, or use them to aid in networking.

Although my research project aimed to determine whether teens readily practice and rely on traditional medicine, I found that their replies were multidimensional. In most instances, they were balancing their identity as an indigenous youth and a teen in today's society.

I thank my teachers: Luis Diego Gomez, Hector Castaneda and Claudia Lizana. I thank the organizations that helped fund my trip: Undergraduate International Studies Fellowship, Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc., and OTS. I am humbled by and grateful for my study abroad with OTS.

Personal Information:

School: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Classification: Senior

Major: Spanish

Minor: Medical Anthropology

Hometown: St. Petersburg, Florida

STAY INFORMED!

Awareness makes you a stronger advocate for the tropics! Sign up for OTS' **E-Canopy**, a monthly English language electronic newsletter for friends of OTS by going to our website www.ots.duke.edu.



SUPPORT OTS! Payment Information

CHECK ENCLOSED MASTER CARD VISA or DONATE ONLINE at www.ots.duke.edu

CARD NUMBER _____ EXP DATE _____

NAME ON CARD (PLEASE PRINT) _____

SIGNATURE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

Mail this with your check or credit information to
Organization For Tropical Studies Box 90630, Durham NC 27708-0630
 Phone: (919) 684-5774 | www.ots.duke.edu | ots@duke.edu

Direct my gift: Where needed most La Selva Las Cruces Palo Verde

Membership levels:

- Heliconia \$1,000+ Quetzal \$500+
- Macaw \$250+ Tanager \$100+
- Motmot \$50+ Other \$ _____

Please send me:

- Tropical Frogs Calendar (\$50) Or
- AMIGOS T-shirt (\$100+)
 - S M L XL XXL

Please send information on:

- Planned Giving
- OTS Travel Programs

REC _____

CHECK NUMBER _____

CHECK DATE _____

OTS GRADUATE COURSES IN COSTA RICA 2009-2010

Nothing can replace the hands-on experience of a field-based course in the tropics! This is what the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) offers through its broad range of Tropical Biology and Ecology graduate level courses in Spanish or English in Costa Rica. OTS graduate courses are open to students enrolled in graduate degree programs, with preference given to students at OTS member institutions.

For more information, please visit us online at www.ots.duke.edu.

Traditional Courses

Tropical Biology: An Ecological Approach

June 7 – July 29, 2009

*Application Deadline:
March 16, 2009

Sistemática de Plantas Tropicales (in Spanish)

June 10 – July 13, 2009

*Application Deadline:
Enrollment closed

Ecología Tropical y Conservación (in Spanish)

January 13 – February 22, 2010

*Application Deadline:
June 19, 2009

Tropical Biology: An Ecological Approach

January 21 – March 16, 2010

*Application Deadline:
October 15, 2009

Tropical Plant Systematics

June 10 – July 13, 2010

*Application Deadline:
March 1, 2010

Specialty Courses

Global Change and Tropical Ecosystems

April 22 – May 13, 2009

*Application Deadline:
February 20, 2009**

Ecology and Conservation of Neotropical Birds

May 14 – 27, 2009

*Application Deadline:
February 16, 2009

Inquiry in Rainforests: an in-service program for teachers

July 8 – 21, 2009

*Application Deadline:
March 16, 2009

Plant-Animal Interactions in the Tropics

January 8 – 15, 2010

*Application Deadline:
September 30, 2009

The full list of 09-10
Specialty Courses will be
announced in May 2009.

* Notification date is within 30-45 days after the application deadline for traditional courses and within 15-20 days for specialty courses.
All courses will maintain open enrollment until filled.

** Priority + open enrollment

About OTS

OTS is a non-profit consortium of over 60 research institutions, colleges and universities from the United States, Latin America, Africa and Australia. OTS' mission is to promote education, research, and the responsible use of natural resources in the tropics.

The View from the Canopy is produced by the OTS Development Office. To receive it electronically, or to submit comments or news items, please contact Cathleen Lemoine at 919-684-6969 or via e-mail at cathleen.lemoine@duke.edu.



45TH ANNIVERSARY

North American Headquarters
Box 90630
Durham, North Carolina 27708-0630 USA

Presorted Standard
US Postage
PAID
Durham NC
Permit No. 60