

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 29: May-June 2012

Introduction

Summer has arrived in Quito, and although the change is minimal in comparison with the dramatic changes in season in other countries further north, it is definitely sunnier for longer during the day and a few degrees warmer.

Of course, the days are of equal lengths throughout the year!

The altitude of 2,800 meters keeps the temperatures steady and relatively cool all the year round, which can be a little deceptive and dangerous as we frequently see new students getting sunburned after a relatively short exposure to the sun!

We were sad to learn that "Lonesome George" had died (see right). Many of our students and volunteers who had visited the Galapagos had seen him in at the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island.

For the Spanish school, after the relative quiet of May, which actually was quieter than past years, June saw student numbers rise dramatically for the beginning of summer.

C o n t e n t s	Page 1	Intro & News
	2	Special Volunteer Report
	3	Project, Intern, & other news
	4	Photo Gallery

During these two months our students have ranged in age from just 4 years old up to retired individuals and couples in their 60s. At the end of June the school was hosting over 30 students, mostly in individual classes.

Our principal focus in the foundation for the past two months has been to launch a project funded by a UN fund for indigenous communities. The project will work with a group of youth and women in the Tsa'chila community of Bua, working to develop their self-esteem, organizational abilities and entrepreneurship skills, with the aim of developing small crafts-related businesses in the future. We have commissioned an expert from the ethnographic museum Mindalae to visit the Tsa'chila communities to engage in a process of evaluating their traditional craft production and identifying new possibilities for commercial applications.



Lonesome George, the last of the giant Pinto tortoises died in June. An icon for conservationists, he was believed to be over 100 years old.



Staff discuss lesson plans at break time...



while students enjoy the sunshine!

Learning Spanish in the Amazon Jungle!

One of Yanapuma's most enduringly popular "Study and Travel" programs is the week at Yachana Lodge in the Amazon region.



Set among a mix of primary and secondary rainforest, Yachana offers a great opportunity to experience the ecology and culture of the Amazon. Our students study Spanish around a program of activities that keep them busy with excursions and hikes for the whole week. On finishing the program they have the option to spend the week-end in the town of Tena where they can go white-water rafting.

Yachana's own foundation supports local populations in improving their living standards in a sustainable manner, work that we are happy to support!



Volunteering with the Tsa'chila:

Lisa Hoffman and Jennifer Wilson

(abridged from blog: <http://www.yanapuma.org/>)

We are a family of three people (Jennifer, Lisa, and our 6 year old son, Zay) originally from Oakland, California, U.S.A. Having lived in a large city for many years, we had become disillusioned with the fast-paced, consumer life-style and concrete. As parents, we wanted to show Zay that there are different ways of living in the world and that those of us who live in the global north have a responsibility to educate ourselves and work in solidarity with those who live in the global south.

While doing some Internet research, we came upon the Yanapuma Foundation and wrote to see if there might be volunteer opportunities for our family. Thus we ended up living in the indigenous community of Los Naranjos (near Santo Domingo de los Tsa'chila), teaching English and computer skills at the local school. We were thrilled to collaborate with the Foundation.

After shopping for food and kitchen supplies in Santo Domingo, we headed out to Los Naranjos, one of the most remote of the seven Tsa'chila communities. Driving along the dirt roads, it felt like we were moving into a different world. We saw fields of plantains interspersed with bits of tropical rainforest, a herd of cows, a few small rivers. Arriving at the Los Naranjos cultural center, we met Rosa and Alejandro dressed in traditional Tsa'chila clothing (a bright, striped skirt for Rosa and the red "achiote" hair dye for Alejandro). They and their family turned out to be some of our main support people during our time in Los Naranjos.

We ended up dividing our time between volunteering in the school, helping to create a booklet about plant medicine for the cultural center, helping to translate some



Tsa'chila folk tales, and generally spending time getting to know our neighbors and the community. Zay spent most of his time learning how to play "futbol"!

We gained so many insights and experi-

ences during our month-long stay in Los Naranjos. A few highlights:

- Teaching songs and games to all the children at the school – and doing a small project where the children interviewed their elders about what life was like when they were younger.
- Going on a walk through the jungle with Alejandro and his granddaughters and listening to them point out all the different plants and trees and what they are used for.
- Spending time with Wilmer, our 21-year old neighbor, translating Tsa'chila folk tales from Tsa'fiki and Spanish to English and hearing his dreams for the future.
- Daily futbol games with the neighborhood kids!
- Watching Zay learn how to identify jungle fruits and cut them down with a machete. After he and his



friends found some cacao fruits, our neighbor Esperanza taught us all how to make chocolate – yum!

- Spending time with Esperanza as she taught us all the different ways to cook plantains and how to catch fish with our hands in the river.
- Doing a "charla" (small workshop) on gender roles with some of the older students, and then cooking black beans and rice together.

- Learning about the health needs of Los Naranjos from Maria Isabel, the only health promoter in the community, and talking with the teachers about the challenges of bilingual education.

- Attending meetings of the "cabildo" (governing body of the community) and learning more about their deeply held values and vision for the future, including how to unite more with other Tsa'chila communities.

- Hanging out at the cultural center learning Tsa'fiki and traditional ways, resting in the hammocks and playing with the children, and learning about shamanism and nature-based healing with Alejandro.

- Watching Zay paint his hair with achiote with Sandro and feeling that this friendship he has with the Tsa'chila will last for a long time.

- Our final "despedida" good-bye ceremony, where the children dressed up in traditional clothing and achiote and performed some beautiful dances while the adults cooked traditional food.

Throughout our time in Los Naranjos, we were touched by the kindness of community members, who opened their lives to us and shared generously of their time and food. Neighbors would often come by with plantains, yucca, fish, oranges, and corn to share with us. Everyone was very patient with our limited Spanish!

Our family's journey will continue as we strive to live in ways that honor our interconnectedness with the earth and recognize the impact of our choices. We are grateful to share the journey with Yanapuma and the Tsa'chila, and hope that we will have the chance to return to Los Naranjos.

We would be happy to be in email contact with others who are interested in volunteering in a Tsa'chila community:

lisahoffman@earthlink.net;
jjwzane@earthlink.net.



Volunteers and Interns . . .

Kelly leaves . . .

Volunteer coordinator **Kelly Schussler** left us at the end of May after working first as a group leader and later as coordinator. She returned to the US for an MA in Social Work. We are grateful to her for all her hard work for these last 2 years and she will be missed.

New volunteer coordinator **Angela Winston** has taken over from Kelly, and was joined in late June by **Victoria Allende** from Argentina (*right*). Together they will be working to improve and expand our volunteer programs during the rest of the year.



Dutch intern **Laura Zuiderma** continues to work with us in the volunteer department and has been especially effective in helping with transition between coordinators.

Lara Cygan, a German student intern, has also been extremely valuable, helping us by leading volunteer groups in addition to her regular tasks in the Spanish school.

Nick Haitel, from Holland, continues to work on promotional campaigns for the Spanish school.

A group of 13 volunteers from the **Leap UK** spent nearly 3 weeks in May in the Tsa'chila community of Los Naranjos where they worked on setting up vegetable plots for women to learn to grow vegetables, as well as sowing over 4000 cacao plants for a project in Los Naranjos.

Following this, they spent a few days relaxing in Montañita before travelling up the Andes back to Quito, stopping in Baños to go white water rafting, Chimborazo to climb up to the snowline, and Quilotoa crater where they kayaked on the spectacular lake.

At the end of May some of the group went to the Galapagos to volunteer in the Hacienda Tranquila on an environmental project while the others went to the coastal community of Estero de Plátano.

A group of 12 students from **Vanderbilt University** volunteered in several locations during May in Quito and left donations for each project at the end (*see right*).

We also hosted a group of 5 students from **Leiden University** in Holland with their professor **Veronica Davidov**. The group spent two weeks in Estero de Plátano learning about ethnographic research.

Another group of school children from **Eastside Prep School**, Portland, went to Chilcapamba to do a week of volunteer work before going on to the Galapagos for a week of adventure and exploration.

Also in Estero de Plátano, volunteer **Lisa Masselus** from Holland has been helping us by tutoring the scholarship students as they settle in to the high-school year.

In addition, interns **Alina Gluckstadt** and **Solveig Schroeder** finished working on a tourism development plan in Estero de Plátano as part of their studies for NHTV university.

Project News . . .

Giovanny has continued with mapping farms and boundaries in the community of El Poste at the request of the community. He has also been investigating a strange root disease that has killed off many of the cacao saplings that were sown in May. We need 4500 plants for the Onaway project in Los Naranjos, and may have to buy some extra from external sources.

Meanwhile, the 8000 mixed local variety saplings that are being grown in Los Naranjos to be planted out by the Thinking Beyond Borders group in October are growing nicely thanks to plenty of unseasonable rain.

We are also continuing to arrange these studies by local students, funded by National Geographic and Shell. One study will focus on marketing opportunities for Tsa'chila cacao, while two students will look at community tourism options for other Tsa'chila communities.

We are also very pleased to see that a project that we carried out with the cultural center Shinopi Bolón in Bua has spread to other Tsa'chila communities. Sponsored originally by Sotogrande International School, the project funded members of the cultural group to teach various aspects of Tsa'chila culture in the local school. Now, the local bilingual education authority has funded cultural groups in other communities to carry on the same program of cultural education.

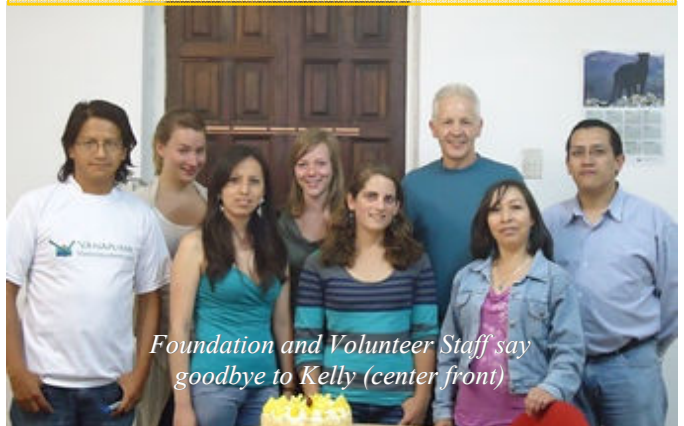
Projects coordinator **Silvia Perugachi** left us at the end of June to take up another post in Quito that did not require as much travelling as she was obliged to do with Yanapuma. We wish her well in her new job!

We realize that it is always hard on staff to have to travel and work irregular hours in the foundation, and we have all experienced more late nights on buses and odd eating hours than we would ideally like!

Donation News . . .

Victoria Rolfe donated \$75 to the scholarship fund for children to study at high-school in Estero de Plátano and Quingue—Thank you!

The students of **Vanderbilt University** left donations totaling \$270 for several of the projects that they worked with in Quito in May, including INEPE (\$120), Camp Hope (\$50), Clinica Jerusalén (\$50) and Dental Clinica (\$50).



Foundation and Volunteer Staff say goodbye to Kelly (center front)

Yanapuma Foundation Newsletter
May and June Photo Gallery

