

HOW TO READ ATENAS TODAY

Many of the pages in Atenas Today are in two column format, and the default “view” in the *Adobe Reader* will present these pages in a large size that requires you to scroll up and down to read the whole page.

By changing the “view” to “**Full Screen**” you can fit the page to your screen and avoid the scrolling.

When in “Full Screen” view, left click to advance to the next page, or right click to go back a page.

If the text is too small for your taste, push the “escape” key to exit the “Full Screen” mode, and change the “zoom” level to get the size you want.

THE NEW YELLOW PAGES

Don't forget to download and save the latest version of the Yellow Pages. Many new businesses have been listed. This section will help you find the goods and services you need.

ATENAS TODAY



Celebrating Our 100th Issue!

ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 500 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Marietta Arce at atenastoday@gmail.com.

Compositions from back issues are archived on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then Atenas Today on the business page.



DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to atenastoday@gmail.com

Issue No. 100

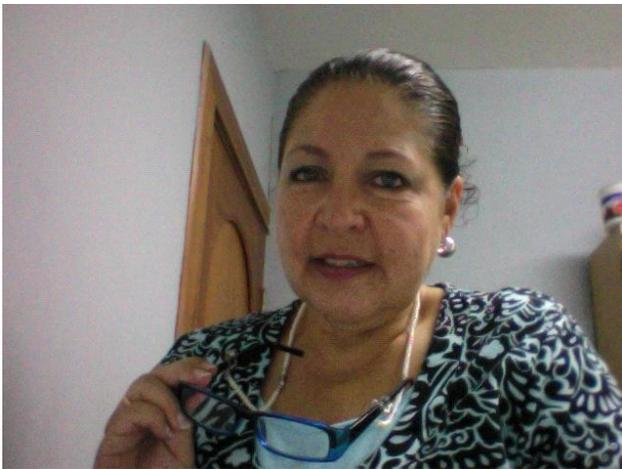
April 23, 2013

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Publisher's Note



When Fred MacDonald published the first issue of Atenas Today in March 2007, neither he nor I could have imagined the importance the publication would have on the community.

You are about to read Issue # 100! I consider arriving at this point to be an incredible achievement. It would not have been possible without the generous, amazing and talented contributors who take time each month to send new material.

We are equally indebted to you, our loyal and dedicated readers. We know many of you feel strongly that Atenas Today is a vital link to the community and spread the word to others. Thank you all for enriching my life with your feedback and suggestions.

April in Atenas has always been one of the busiest months on the community calendar of events. The annual Climate Fair and Oxcart Parade are coming up. All program details are included in the following pages.

I hope that you will take time to come and see all the new offerings your favorite artisans have produced. While you are at it, you might also enjoy the delightful culinary treats all around the park.

The Climate Fair allows us to meet and greet people from all over the region and country. It is a wonderful time to show off what we residents enjoy in Atenas today and every day.

Happy reading!

Marietta Arce
marietta.arce@gmail



COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

This space is available for posting community activities for the following weeks. Please provide information about your activity or event to atenastoday@gmail.com by the 15th of the month.

April 26-28th – 8TH Annual Climate Fair, Program attached.

April 28th – Traditional Oxcart March 31st - Happy Easter!

March 31st, April 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th Buddhist Book Discussion at Roca Verde. (SEE FLYER)

May 8th & 22nd (to be confirmed) - **Recycling** in Atenas from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Plaza in front of the Central School, near the volleyball court.- Recycling of aluminum, metal, plastic, paper, cardboard and tetrapak - NO ELECTRONICS, STYROFOAM or EGG CARTONS Please rinse and separate your recyclables before dropping them off. Thank you.

April 24th, (Please confirm with Sara or Kay 2446-0664) and
May 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th

Atenas Wednesday Women
informal get together at Kay's Gringo Postres
every Wednesday afternoon at 12.30 PM

April 23rd, 30th -- Atenas Bridge Club meets at Don Yayo's Restaurant
May 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. No partner required.

May 3, 4, 5th - Atenas Film Festival at Club de Leones, article following pages

May 4th – 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. HOGAR DE VIDA'S Anniversary Celebration. Please RSVP to Helen at hogardevida@yahoo.com

May 8th - Writer's Club meets at Colinas del Sol, at Noon. Contact L. Michael Rusin @ crcaseyboy@gmail.com (2451-8063) for more information. Please confirm.

May 14th - 3 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting at Kay's Gringo Postres. Please contact Virginia 2446-5343 or Sylvia 8868-1386 for more information. Volunteers are needed and welcome.

May 20th - PLEIN AIR - Contact Jan Yatsko at 2446-0970 or janyatsko@ice.co.cr to find out where the next activity will be held.

April 26th, 27th & 28th, 8TH ANNUAL CLIMATE FAIR AND OXCART PARADE



Buddhist Book Discussion

Every Sunday

Meditation (optional) 1:30pm

Book Discussion 2:00pm

218 Roca Verde, Atenas

A gathering for those interested
in Buddhism and Buddhist writings.

ALL ARE WELCOME,

from non-Buddhists to experienced Buddhist
practitioners, whether you have read the book or not.
Current book: "The Art of Happiness" by the Dalai Lama

Please telephone or email
for directions or information:
Adrienne and Richard Baksa
2446-8509
adriennebaksa@me.com
rbaksa@mac.com

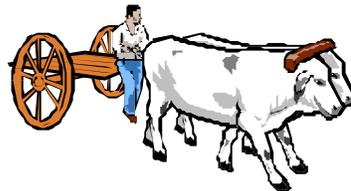


Invites you to Save the Dates for the 8th Annual (Best) Climate Fair

April 26th Noon – Activities begin in Central Park of Atenas

April 27th – Entertainment, food, music all day in Central Park.

Family-oriented, alcohol free.



April 28th – Traditional Oxcart Parade

Begins at the National Monument to the Oxcart Driver in Los Angeles.

This year's Grand Marshal: Manuel Obregon, Minister of Culture.

For information or to participate please write to:

atenas.catuca@gmail.com

TENTATIVE PROGRAM CLIMATE FAIR 2013
26, 27 & 28 April in the Central Park of Atenas and Hogar de Ancianos
(This Program is Subject to Changes)

FRIDAY APRIL 26 2013

8 AM – tent distribution and set up
12 MD: Músic and entertainment by Torrejita, face-painting, etc.
1 P.M: DJ music, etc.
2 P.M. – 4 P.M. Marimba de Balsa Music
4 P.M. – 5 P.M. Bryan Rojas and his group
5 P.M. – 6 P.M. Grupo Targúa (reggae)
6 P.M. – 9 P.M.: Concert with Pedro Capmany, Yecson Carvajal and Alonso Solís

SATURDAY APRIL 27 2013

8 AM Hike: “ATENAS LIVE YOUR LIFE” (t-shirts and refreshments sponsored) Begins from the park towards Concepción on the old road and returns by foot or bus on the access road (radial)
Route subject to changes...

10 AM: Percussion workshop until 1 p.m. in the **Municipality**. Open to students or other interested musicians.
10 A.M. in the park, Dennis Castillo (UNED) will hold paint workshop for children
10 A.M. music, food, entertainment with Torrejita Clown, facepainting, etc.
1 PM: Roy Chacón, classical and jazz pianist
2PM: **Storyteller Gilda Benavides Bonilla Patrocina UNED, (in Spanish)**
3PM: **Percussion Ensamble (UNED) in the park**
4:30 P.M. **Christian Amador Quesada (puppeteer) UNED, in the park**
6 PM: MASS **(Silence in the park!)**
6 PM: Reception at Hogar de Ancianos for ox carts and families with Luis Gerardo Villareal
7- 9 P.M.: “La Kompañía” in concert in the park

SUNDAY APRIL 28 2013

Yolking oxen and ox-cart driver breakfast at **Hogar de Ancianos** 7 a.m.
10 AM: Oxcart parade, anticipated route: Hogar de Ancianos, to Los Angeles Monument
Going through the main streets in town: Grand Marshall: **Manuel Obregón, Minister of Culture and Youth, musician**
En el parque habrá puestos de comidas, artesanías, etc. todo el día + payaso + pintacaritas
10 a.m. Los Sorpresivos, etc. And/or music with DJ
11 a.m. EMHA presentation (childrens dance)
11:30 Los Sorpresivos, etc.
12:30 Childrens’ Choir, School of Music
1 PM: Sorpresivos, marimba, Luis Gerardo Villareal or DJ
2PM Tina Newton’s dance group
3 PM Concert with Oscar Espinoza and his Group (Sponsored by Municipality)
4 PM **Luis Angel Castro and his group, Sponsored by UNED**
5:30 PM If necessary, DJ music
6 PM: MASS **(Silence in the park)**
7:00 - 9:00 Final concert: “Decibel”

Atenas Film Festival - Challenging, Informative, and Inspiring Films



The 1st annual **Atenas Film Festival** will be held May 3 - 5 at the Lion's Club (beside the Police Station) with a lineup of exceptional feature and short films in English and Spanish. The theme for this **FREE**, inaugural Festival is to Inform, Inspire and Challenge. Many of the films were made by Costa Rican filmmakers about issues that affect Latin America. Mario Araya Producer, Costa Rica Filmworks, will attend the screening of "*Gangs, 'Ninis' and Thugs: an unofficial war*" on Friday evening and Luciano Capelli, Producer-Director will attend the Sunday screening of "*The Sky Is Burning*". Discussions will follow most of the films at the Festival.

Saturday afternoon offers an hour of engaging and educational children's short films. Other films being presented during the 3-day Festival include the highly acclaimed, award winning dramatic feature film, "**Amal**", and documentary film, "**Genetic Roulette**". Sunday afternoon will feature enlightening films about seeds and GMOs with local expert, Eric Semeillon (Kokopelli, LaVidaOrganico) leading the discussions.

The **Atenas Film Festival** is presented by **The Forerunner Project Costa Rica**, a nonprofit, charitable organization that has been producing films festivals in Canada and Costa Rica for 5 years. A group of expats and Atenas residents has eagerly come together to bring this exciting, new Festival to the people of Atenas and surrounding area. The **Atenas Film Festival** hopes to inform and engage the community in conversations about important and sometimes under reported local and international issues. Join us and become informed, inspired and challenged!

Check here for more information (Spanish/English): atenascine.com

SCHEDULE

Friday, May 3

6:30 - 9:00 "**Gangs, 'Ninis' and Thugs: an unofficial war**" (50 min.) Spanish with English subtitles

Synopsis: Gangs are forming all over Latin America because of the lack of opportunity for young people. The arms industry is literally dumping hand guns into communities - buying a pistol is as easy as buying a quart of milk. This film investigates how gangs are affecting communities and how offering purpose and opportunity to youth could minimize gang activity. **Gangs, 'Ninis' and Thugs: an unofficial war** was screened at the UN to underscore the need for an international Arms Trade Treaty.

Guest Speaker: Mario Araya, Producer Costa Rica FILMWORKS

Saturday, May 4

2:30-3:30 **Children's Educational Films** Spanish or with Spanish subtitles

4:00-6:00 **“Genetic Roulette: The Gamble of Our Lives”** (85min) English with Spanish subtitles

Synopsis: Monsanto's strong arm tactics, the FDA's fraudulent policies, and how the USDA ignores a growing health emergency are all laid bare. This sometimes shocking film may change your diet, help you protect your family, and accelerate the consumer tipping point against genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Guest Speaker: TBA

7:15- 9:00 **“HOME”** (93min) Spanish

Synopsis: We are living in exceptional times – we are destroying and depleting the earth's natural resources at catastrophic speed. The stakes are high for the survival of the planet, and for us and our children. HOME was conceived and created to take a message of mobilization out to every human being.

Discussion to follow.

Sunday, May 5

2:00-4:00 **“Semillas Criollas - Personas Libres”** (25 min) Spanish

“Semillas de Libertad” (30 min) Spanish with English subtitles

“Las Malas Semillas Argentinas” (27 min) English with Spanish subtitles

Guest Speaker: Eric Semeillon (Kokopelli, LaVidaOrganico)

4:30-6:45 **“AMAL”** (101 min) English

Synopsis: AMAL is a multi-layered portrait of contemporary India that follows an auto-rickshaw driver who is content with his small, but vital role in city life. An eccentric billionaire, disguised as a vagabond, is searching the streets for the last morsel of humanity and as fate would have it, meets Amal. This modern day fable questions the meaning of wealth and ultimately reveals that sometimes the poorest of men can sometimes be the richest.

Discussion to follow.

7:15-9:00 **“The Sky Is Burning”** (57 min) Spanish with English subtitles

Synopsis: An ecosystem that was once disappearing from the map is resurfacing out of the old pasture of Santa Rosa National Park. “The Sky Is Burning” tells the amazing effort made by the Guanacaste Conservation Area to rescue the dry forest and other tropical environments. Photographer and filmmaker Luciano Capelli delves into the secret spots where park scientists and officials are fighting to preserve 300 000 species.

Guest Speaker: Luciano Capelli, Producer-Director, Ojalá Comunicación



Cave Reconstruction at the Bar

Paul Furlong

This story begins another trip to Nicaragua with my friend Ric. Its early 2013, my first trip north in a couple of years. The intimacy of long distance riding is as close as your helmet; what goes on inside and the view one has behind the bars, on and off the bike is what motorcycle touring is about. There's almost always a theme, something you weigh and dissect as you ride; a thread you're anxious to pick up after a fuel stop or at the beginning of a new day leaving town. This particular trip is dedicated to my cluttered shop and how to turn it into a proper man cave; a place to escape a full moon or leave a project that needs fermentation on the bench without comment; a place that, like a smell, only carries my vibe.

Introduction

As our clock ticks faster, the things we just bought are suddenly old. Take these boots for instance;



Preparing for a ride can be done with glue or money. I already have the glue.



The family Bike gets an oil change and a trip to RTV. My shop too, has become a hobby in itself and is in the early stages of cleaning and removing everything not part of a wavering image.

The term *man cave* became popular about the same time “economic downturn” appeared on TV. Men without privacy or drive sought to find themselves in that last bastion of manhood; a shop with tools. Pictures I've seen in motorcycle magazines have bars, lounge areas and hundred thousand dollar Snap-On Tools collections. My goal is a funkier place with potential; an orderly shop/office with an air that brings out that rascal muse.

Story

Age trumps youth every time; but when I began to brush with Preparation-H this morning, I admit there are drawbacks. Just a simple habit, brush out of the medicine cabinet, tooth paste over here, all go to hell when using my kit on the road.

Ric takes this stuff in stride; he's toured with me from the beginning with Fred and later with Wayne. He was my first customer when I began touring Central America and slept soundly in Mexico as I roared exponentially in the bathroom. We've become friends over the years, he's a solid rider and he's funny; never missing the irony of life as it unfolds (or unravels) before us. It's now the morning of our second day. Ric's gone for a walk while I make notes in bed about yesterday's ride.

Back to my notes in bed on the second day: hungry for breakfast, I shower and navigate tricky stairs down to coffee. Ric is back from his walk and we sit for breakfast.



One does not see three-masted schooners every day.

Over eggs, we agree the town isn't fun as it was and a certain seediness has crept in. Still, we're here to relax and plan another day here. We walk the town, buy a bottle for evening sustenance and have a late lunch at a Mexican establishment half way to the beach. Time passes slowly with the heat, but as the sun begins to slide down the pole, we're at our upstairs bar for wine and a snack.



People love their despots

Day three finds us packing our bikes and heading out of town with, for me, a trace of relief. Ric and I have a mostly non-spoken agreement, I'm the guide, speak the Spanish and fix whatever goes flat, Rick navigates and I lead. I'm the protagonist, he's the straight man, waddia expect from an engineer? We head North West towards Leon.



Red paint thrown at a happy red president.

As we skirt the edge of Managua, I reflect on the heart of a man cave. It's a shop primarily because if you can't fix things it's just a den or TV room. It needs to be well lit. Tools should have a place and be put away. Later, in the madness of a project, subliminal memory will keep them at hand. But to be a real cave there needs to be a softer element somewhat apart, maybe with a couch to have a nap or sit and have a beer. I have the office fridge and working sink already. Yes and a coffee table with a laptop, poised for that random thought. Flickering ideas won't make it past two doors, a kitchen and an office; even if no one is home. Yes, the Man Cave; a house of muse and a giant step from the dog house or yore.



It's A Dogs Life...REALLY!!



Stories from Mr. BudBud, Primero Perro of Lighthouse Animal Rescue. They were written 8 years ago when he first came to Costa Rica for a house sitting job.

6/23/2004

Hola!!! Y'all!!

Well we had a pretty good time today.

We hiked up to the chili house to see how things were progressing. The chili house is a thing Mom calls a "green house" where chili plants grow. This one is brand new so the plants are still babies. It belongs to the people whose house we are sitting and the tico down the road manages it for them.

I sat outside cause Mom said if I step on a baby plant it will kill it.

THEN we took off to Santa Ana. It is near Escazu.

Escazu is a town where LOTS of gringos live. There are so many there that they have tried to make it just like the United States.

Mom says why the heck move to Costa Rica if you want to live like that?

There are all kind of American "chain" restaurants there Mom says.

I never ate a chain but I bet they are pretty tough!!!!

People sure do eat strange things!!!

Anyway, in Santa Ana there is a place called Price Smart where they sell lots of gringo groceries and stuff.

Mom wanted to get some grits but they didn't have any of that.

She had already looked there for cornmeal. They don't have that either.

Anyway, before we left Dad said "We might not be able to take BudBud into Price Smart" so Mom got out my vest and put her old animal control badge on it.

When we got there they stopped us at the door even though I was riding in my stroller.

They sent for the manager and he came out to see us. He was the only one who understood a little English so Mom explained to him that I am a service dog and that I should be allowed to go in with her.

He looked a little concerned but when he saw the badge on my vest he said "Okay, but we have had trouble with animals before in the store. Please be very careful with him."

Mom assured him that I am a HIGHLY TRAINED animal and would cause no problem at all. And of course I didn't!

In we went!!!!!!!!!! Of course I used my BEST manners and everybody LOVED me!!

We ran into some gringos we had met in the park in Grecia and talked to them for a while. The tico lady that was with them was all over me!!!!

Man!!! It can be really rough being so darn cute!!!

When we got home Mom and Dad went out to sit outside in the beautiful weather for a while.

I have a special place I like to sit or lay when we go out there.

The weather here is so nice. It is never too hot or too cold!!!! It stays between 65 and 80 degrees here... YEAR ROUND!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The land is all very lush and green and if you stick a stick in the ground it will GROW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Well, more tomorrow if anything interesting happens.

Tailwags to everybody!!!!

BudBud the HIGHLY TRAINED ANIMAL

Tropics Play Pivotal Role in Climate Change



By Shannon Farley

Take a deep breath. Now imagine your lung capacity reduced by one-fifth. Find it a bit harder to breathe? What if that lessens?

Now take your focus out to a global view, and you have a clear picture of what is happening in the Amazon Rainforest. The Amazon is the largest contiguous tropical forest in the world, and releases 20% of the world's life-giving oxygen. Today in 2013, due to mostly slash-and-burn deforestation, nearly one-fifth of the Amazon's forest has been cleared.



Amazon rainforest cleared in deforestation
(Photo: Amazon Conservation Team)

Often described by scientists as the “Earth’s lungs” (albeit in reverse), tropical rainforests take in vast quantities of carbon dioxide and through photosynthesis convert it into clean, breathable air. Tropical forests like the Amazon, spanning 5,500,000 km² across 40% of South America (including Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, French Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia), also play a critical role in regulating the Earth’s climate and temperature and store a massive amount of carbon.



Circling the Earth’s middle like a webbed green belt – between 23.4° latitude north and south of the equator – the Tropics occupy approximately 40% of the Earth’s land surface with widely diverse ecosystems, including some of the driest deserts and wettest forests on the planet. “Containing great stores of biomass, tropical ecosystems represent the largest reservoir of terrestrial carbon. The Tropics also cycle more carbon dioxide and water

than any other biome and play important roles in determining Earth’s energy balance, which drives global systems of temperature and precipitation,” states an October 2012 report by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science & Office of Biological and Environmental Research, entitled *Research Priorities for Tropical Ecosystems Under Climate Change*.

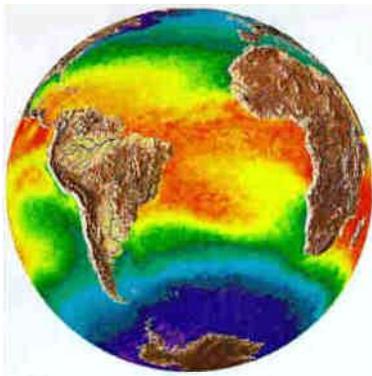
(http://tes.science.energy.gov/sites/tes.science.energy.gov/files/Tropics_Report_2012_%28HLowRes%29.pdf)

Tropical forests comprise about half of the Earth's total forest area. Over the past five years, Brazil has managed to reduce its rate of deforestation by 80%, according to Amazon Conservation Team (<http://www.amazonteam.org/>). Scientists, however, believe we are at a tipping point of deforestation in the Amazon – if we lose much more, the damage may be irreversible. The next 10 years is critical, they say.



Despite the negative impact of widespread worldwide deforestation, tropical ecosystems continue to benefit the Earth's atmosphere and climate system by mitigating climatic warming through storing carbon and evaporative cooling, states the U.S. Department of Energy's report. Of great concern, however, is the vulnerability of tropical ecosystems to rapid shifts in climate change.

Home to two-thirds of all of the living species on the planet and nearly half of the medicinal compounds we use every day that come from endemic plants, tropical forests are thought to be especially vulnerable to climate change compared to other regions on Earth. Unlike in temperate forests where temperatures fluctuate widely in different seasons, temperatures in tropical forests maintain a relatively narrow thermal range of 24-38 C (75-100 F). Tropical forests also require sufficient moisture to exist, receiving anywhere from 70-400 inches (1.7-10 m) of rain per year. Mess with that, by increasing atmospheric temperatures or changing precipitation patterns, and tropical forests may be pushed into climates never experienced by existing forests ... or worse, extended droughts could cause catastrophic death of trees, accelerating global warming even more, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's climate change report.



The U.S. Climate Change Science Program

(<http://www.climatechange.gov/default.php>) defines climate change as “a change in the climate (for example, in temperature or precipitation) that takes place over a few decades or less, persists for at least a few decades, and causes substantial disruptions in human and natural systems.” The National Research Council (NRC) in the U.S. reports that abrupt climate change can be regional, hemispheric, or global. (<http://www.nationalacademies.org/nrc/>)

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts Amherst Climate System Research Center indicate in a 2008 report that highland forests in Costa Rica could be seriously affected by future changes in climate, reducing the number of species in a region famous for its biodiversity. They predict that the area will become warmer and drier as climate change accelerates.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_resources_management_in_Costa_Rica#Potential_climate_change_impacts)

In the early 1980s, Costa Rica had one of the worst deforestation rates in Latin America. Like the rest of the Central American Isthmus, Costa Rica was once 99% forest, but forest cover steadily diminished from 85% in 1940 to an astonishing 24% in 1985 (mostly cut for timber and cattle production), according to studies by the Tropical Scientific Center and the University of Costa Rica. Through education and government intervention, by 1997, forest cover increased to 40.4%. Today, a heroic popular tree-planting effort, among other measures, has brought that number up to nearly 47% (2,391,000 hectares), according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation's *State of the World's Forests* annual report. (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/sofo/en/>)



Costa Rica's rainforest is vital to the Earth's climate.

However, while deforestation rates of natural forest have dropped considerably, Costa Rica's remaining forests still face threats from illegal timber harvesting in protected areas and taking land for agriculture and cattle pasture in unprotected zones. The big business of ecotourism has become one of the country's most important sources of revenue and will hopefully push reforestation and greater protection measures. Costa Rica's leaders have set forth an ambitious goal to become the first country to be carbon neutral by 2021.

José Salazar, Research Coordinator and Herpetologist at Veragua Rainforest Research & Adventure in Costa Rica's Caribbean mountains, says he's already seeing distressing signs of climate change. "Last year was the driest in 50 years in Limón (main port city on Costa Rica's Caribbean Coast)," Salazar said. "In 2011 we noted drastically the effects of the warming of the planet. The rainforest around Veragua took on characteristics of a tropical dry forest instead of a rainforest for lack of rain. We're already seeing the change in the climate."



Tree frog at Veragua Rainforest (Photo: J. Salazar)

Veragua Rainforest (<http://www.veraguarainforest.com/>) is a 1,300 hectare (3,212 acre) biology research center and adventure center, located about an hour inland from the historic Caribbean port town of Limón. It is an area of breathtaking tropical rainforest in the foothills of the Talamanca Mountain Range bordering the La Amistad ("Friendship") International Park, the country's largest and most remote national park that is shared by both Costa Rica and Panama.

Salazar and his team of biologists, in partnership with the University of Costa Rica, study and work to preserve the area's population of frogs, snakes, lizards, iguanas, insects, butterflies and birds. "We use the park as a model for a pristine (forest) site in excellent conditions," Salazar said.

Studying the area's 55 species of frogs – the most diverse in the entire country – will indicate any early warning signs of serious climate change, remarks Salazar, a specialist on amphibians and reptiles. “The principle group that measures any climate change is the amphibians, because they absorb any chemicals by their skin,” he said. “Rain cycles affect frogs’ reproductive cycles. Some frogs only reproduce one or two times per year, usually in rainy season and with a full moon. If it doesn’t rain like it should, they don’t reproduce.”

In 2012, it didn’t rain like it normally does, but Salazar said the species are tolerating the drop in moisture for now. It may reach a limit if temperatures continue to increase, however, hitting a breaking point when species begin to die, he said. To help sustain the frogs and other species, Veragua has created artificial habitats with all natural elements so the animals can thrive and reproduce. Using natural plants, earth and water, it’s like they’ve taken a real section of the forest and put a bubble over it.

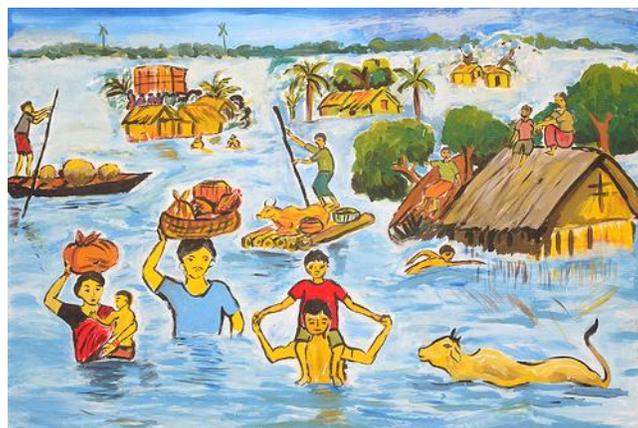


Frog habitat at Veragua Rainforest near Limon. (Photo: Veragua)

The pivotal player in climate change still remains the Tropics. Climate scientists at Texas A&M University have been studying past temperature changes in the tropical Atlantic Ocean's subsurface to help uncover an important climate connection between the Tropics and the high latitude North Atlantic. Their new findings are in this issue of *PNAS* (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*).

<http://www.pnas.org/content/109/36/14348.full.pdf+html?sid=2a8d5a06-7531-435f-9889-e6e48f09c54b>

“Evidence is mounting that the Earth's climate system has sensitive triggers that can cause abrupt and dramatic shifts in global climate,” said geological oceanographer Matthew Schmidt of Texas A&M University, who co-authored the report. “When the tropics warmed, it altered climate patterns around the globe.”



Artist's rendition from “Climate Change Canvas” by Oxfam International

Yoshii Sasaki's Secrets to Having an Enriching Life



by Dennis Easters easters3@msn.com

I remember it as if it were yesterday, the first time I saw Yoshii Sasaki in Atenas. I was having lunch with my mother at Antaño's restaurant in downtown and a group of ladies walked in, one of which stood out in the crowd. She was dressed to the nines in a traditional Japanese kimono. Her face was so perfectly made-up that you would have thought she was a life-size porcelain doll. Her hair was a true work of art; jet black and not one strand out of place. As you can imagine in our small Costa Rican town, this is not a common sight. I did not want to be rude but I found myself staring. I was mesmerized. I said "hola" to the group as they made their way to a large table in the corner and continued the conversation I was having with my mother.



Sitting there I realized that I "knew" Mrs. Sasaki's daughter, Hisano. Hisano owns a successful local bed and breakfast and we had corresponded via e-mail on several occasions. Recently, Hisano decided to put her bed and breakfast up for sale and I finally had the opportunity to meet her mother, the fascinating lady that I had seen a few years earlier and often thought about. During our short visit, I learned that Mrs. Sasaki was an avid painter, singer of traditional Japanese folk music and loved to garden. That was enough to peak my interests and make me want to learn more. I asked Mrs. Sasaki (via her translator, Hisano) for an interview and with a smile it was granted. However, Mrs. Sasaki said I would have to wait a few weeks because she would be embarking on a cruise with her family.



How did a 91 year old Japanese lady end up in Atenas, Costa Rica? To answer that question, we must find the story and start at the beginning. I asked Mrs. Sasaki to tell me about her life in Japan and she responded "I was born in

Hokkaido, Japan. My father was a farmer. I was raised on a huge farm which was the size of two villages. Specifically, we were potato farmers, but on a larger scale. Not only did we grow the potatoes but we produced products from the potatoes like potato starch. September was the potato harvest. We had many workers and there was nice communication and camaraderie between everyone.



When I was 19 I was married to a man that my father chose and I moved to Baro to be with my new husband. My husband's family were also farmers and the region they were from was famous for its mint. Unfortunately my husband died when I was 39 and I was left with 5 children and had to take care of them alone. When my husband died my children and I left the farm life and moved to the city. In the city, I got a job at a large hospital where I worked for 10 years.

As my children grew older some of them went to school and others began working. At that point I was living alone. My oldest son was working for the postal ministry in Tokyo and one of his friends said to my son that it was not good that his mother was living alone. He suggested to my son that he could

find a nice husband for me. So, his friend introduced me to Mr. Sugiyama who was from Shimizu, Japan. From that introduction and the recommendation of my children I married Mr. Sugiyama. I was married to him for 26 years but then he also passed away. I then left the Sugiyama family and decided to live alone on my own after many years.”

Costa Rica is a long way from Japan, so naturally, I wanted to know how Mrs. Sasaki ended up living in Costa Rica? Mrs. Sasaki continued “In 2008 my physical condition started to go down. I went to my general doctor and he told me I had a serious health issue. He sent me to the hospital. At that moment I thought ‘this is the end of my life’ but at the Red Cross Hospital they saved my life. I had a heart attack. At the hospital they performed an operation to correct the problem using stents to open my arteries. The procedure was successful.



I went back to my home but my oldest son who was living in Tokyo said to me that I could no longer live alone and I should come and live with him. One day my daughter Hisano who had moved to Costa Rica with her family said to me

that Japan was too cold and that Costa Rica's weather was always like spring time and would be good for me. So in November of 2008 Hisano and her family welcomed me into their home here in Atenas, Costa Rica.

I was skeptical at first but I decided to try it. After a while I realized that the weather was so healthy that I felt I was getting better and my health was improving. The neighbors here are so kind and treat me like I am a family member. Even though I don't understand their language I feel I know them in my heart and am very happy living here." Mrs. Sasaki looks at me with a big smile and laughs saying "I hope I am doing ok because I have never been interviewed before." I assured her that she is doing just fine, shining like a super-star.



I think it is at the core of human nature to be curious about the differences in our cultures, but at the same time to want to find the similarities that bind us to this world. I ask if there are any similarities between the two cultures and living in Japan and Costa Rica. "Yes, I

would say the focus on family. Both cultures are family oriented and you have a lot of help from with-in the family. I think that is a great thing.

In Japan, order and cleanliness are very important. Unless everything is in order you loose time. To the Japanese, time is also very important. In Costa Rica there is time, but it's not the same as time in Japan. For example, when we say we will arrive somewhere at 10:00 a.m. then we will show up before that time."

As we continue to talk and I learn more about Mrs. Sasaki, I completely forget about her age. Why you may ask? I think it's because this dynamic lady is a 'doer'. How many people do you know move to a foreign country and take up painting with water colors at age 87? Her daughter Hisano says to me "When my mother moved to Atenas, she wanted to take up a new hobby and there was a lady named Mary living in Atenas who would give weekly water color classes at Kay's Gringo Postres. I encouraged my mother to attend and she did, for 6 months. After that she just started painting on her own." I can tell that painting is not just a hobby for Mrs. Sasaki, it's a passion. In my humble opinion, she is really good! Most recently Strive and Thrive, a mastermind group I co-founded here in Atenas hosted a benefit for the local nursing home. When asked if she would be interested in displaying and selling her artwork, Mrs. Sasaki said yes. She set up a stand with many of her water colors and sold them, donating the money she made to the nursing home.

At 91, Mrs. Sasaki still tends to her flowers and raises a good part of the vegetables that the family eats. She tells me “I have many hobbies and in Japan belonged to many clubs. My first hobby was singing. I sing in two styles, Shigin, which is a style of singing old Chinese poetry and Minyo which is the art of singing old Japanese folk songs. In Japan I was in many different singing competitions as well as being on T.V. I also was a singing instructor. It was fun for me.”

I have always had a fascination with the elderly and longevity. Having seen and experienced Mrs. Sasaki's vitality first hand, I was curious to know her secrets. Has she found the fountain of youth? Mrs. Sasaki's most important tip on living a healthy life is to “Eat everything you want and love to the degree that your stomach is happy. Your stomach is happy when it is 8/10th full. Also live everyday with smiles!” The idea of eating until your stomach is 80% full, *hara hachibu-me*, is an idea I have heard of before. The philosophy of *hara hachibu-me* was the subject of a bestselling book on longevity and diet called *The Okinawa Program*, by Drs. Bradly and Craig Wilkcox and Makoto Suzuki.

As we all know, diet is not the only factor to living a long, healthy and prosperous life. There are other factors such as purpose, so I pursued the topic further. I asked if there was an idea, philosophy, or message that has benefited Mrs. Sasaki in her life that she could pass on to the rest of the world? Mrs. Sasaki states “What I want to say

is that I was born on a farm and our principles were that we had to create and produce products that are better than the average. The best possible, otherwise we would not be considered professional farmers.”

She continues “To create the best products you must start with the best. You must create a quality base. In the case of farming that base is soil. You must start with compost. Everything in life is like that. We must make efforts and research in the jobs and businesses that we do. For example, our potato farm. Once we had the harvest we would then make potato starch. To create quality starch you must do research and make trials. We had to figure out the drying process, the proper temperature for drying and the duration it would take for the starch to dry. Then you must check for quality.”

“By doing all these things our goal was to produce a first grade product. This was the only way we could get the shell mark (a local grading system of quality) for excellence. After the production was over and the products met the highest standards we would make sure everything was clean. Now everywhere things are much messier than before and to us from my generation this is not as good. The young generation is not used to struggle and they get things quickly. For them this is normal and the way things should be. To be first grade and achieve excellence, you must use your mind, think and work hard and that is not always easy. We were always seeking excellence.” For me, in Mrs. Sasaki's mind, this was not just a philosophy, it was a way of life, just

I acknowledge to Mrs. Sasaki that this is how I was brought up and that the world seems to have changed in that respect. I can also imagine that the world has changed considerably in her lifetime. On the topic she says "When I was young and we saw foreigners, they were like aliens to us. We were fearful, especially of black people. However, my daughter lived in the United States and she invited me several times to visit. I saw and experienced many different races of people on my visits and realized this did not matter. By having those experiences I realized we are all the same. I have changed."



She continues, "For those of us in my generation, it was normal that we had to walk everywhere, no matter how far, carrying heavy packs. Now everything is by car, train, and airplane. That is a big change for me. Electricity, telephone and the computer were also big advances. Before we did things in person. Now you talk and communicate with one another using the computer and you have access to the entire world instantly. That is a great change. I am happy I was born to see all these changes."

We had been talking for well over an hour and I did not want to wear out my welcome so decided to wrap things up.

I asked Mrs. Sasaki if she had any final thoughts or a message that she wanted to leave us with and she responded "We cannot live alone, we must help one another. When we see people suffering or having problems in their lives we should, if we can, help these people. Since I have come here to Costa Rica I have been helped by so many people. If I want to leave any idea in this world it would be "Help one another."

I am always amazed at the diverse and wonderful people that we meet in our little town of Atenas. There is a special draw to Atenas, an energy that connects all of us who live here. The richness of these people and the experiences we have with them make living here such a pleasure. It is people like Mrs. Sasaki who inspire me and make me want to be a better person, strive for excellence and live a long, happy and healthy life. To all those who enrich my life I say 'domo arigato', thank you very much!



Atenas Holds Its First Heritage Festival:

Atenas of Yesteryear!

By Don Davis

don@casacostarica.co

On Saturday, 23 March, an event was held on the Campo Ferial fairground at the Hogar de Ancianos to honor and display Atenas' heritage with proceeds benefiting the Hogar de Ancianos. The Atenas Heritage Festival organized by Strive and Thrive of Atenas, was open to the public and held from 10 AM to 4 PM. It featured folk arts, traditional foods and drinks, music and dance as well as artists, craftsman and ox-drawn cart rides for the children.

Marietta Arce, member of Strive and Thrive of Atenas said they hoped the event would grow to become an annual benefit much anticipated by the Atenas community. "This was our first effort at staging an event of this size and we were very pleased that we were able to raise over \$600 for the Hogar de Ancianos," Arce said. "Not only were we able to provide much-needed funds for the Hogar, but a number of booths and stations at the festival were rented by local schools and organizations that were able to sell traditional foods and drinks to raise money for their treasuries as well. I really need to thank all of our participants and volunteers, who helped us make this a first time success. It was a true community effort."



A wide variety of foods were sold including traditional rice and bean dishes featuring beef, chicken and pork along with Costa Rican-style

rice and pork stuffed tamales. Traditional maranon juice made from the cashew fruit, Costa Rican tropical mixed fruit drink and horchata drink made from ground dried nuts and grains. Also available was a delightfully sweet drink, a granizado, made from as best as I could surmise shaved ice, fruit syrup, dulce crema and sweetened condensed milk plus vanilla ice cream. In addition, traditional, locally made traditional breads and sweet rolls were for sale.



Also on display and for sale were: traditional herbal, plant and fruit medicines and remedies; lovely orchids, succulents and African violets; as well as handcrafted jewelry made from stone, shell, quartz, amethyst, and bone; handcrafts made from non-traditional objects such as mission roof tiles and bottles. Three local artists had their creations on display as well in oil, watercolor, mixed media and prints with some artwork also available as note card sets and placemats.



A local band also performed a variety of songs, followed by Latin tunes played in duet on a marimba and closed with melodies from a keyboardist and accompanying drummer.



Orchids for Sale



Children enjoying an oxcart ride



Jewelry on Display



Yummy !!!

However, two of the biggest hits involved the children. First was a young troupe of colorfully adorned lady dancers performing traditional Mexican dances including, of course, the Mexican Hat Dance.



And in the afternoon, local farmers brought two pair of oxen and along with colorfully decorated carts and ox-cart rides were provided.

All-in-all, the first Atenas Heritage Festival proved to be as advertised- fun, tasty and educational. I look forward to coming back to see what's new in 2014.



A Cashew on the Tree

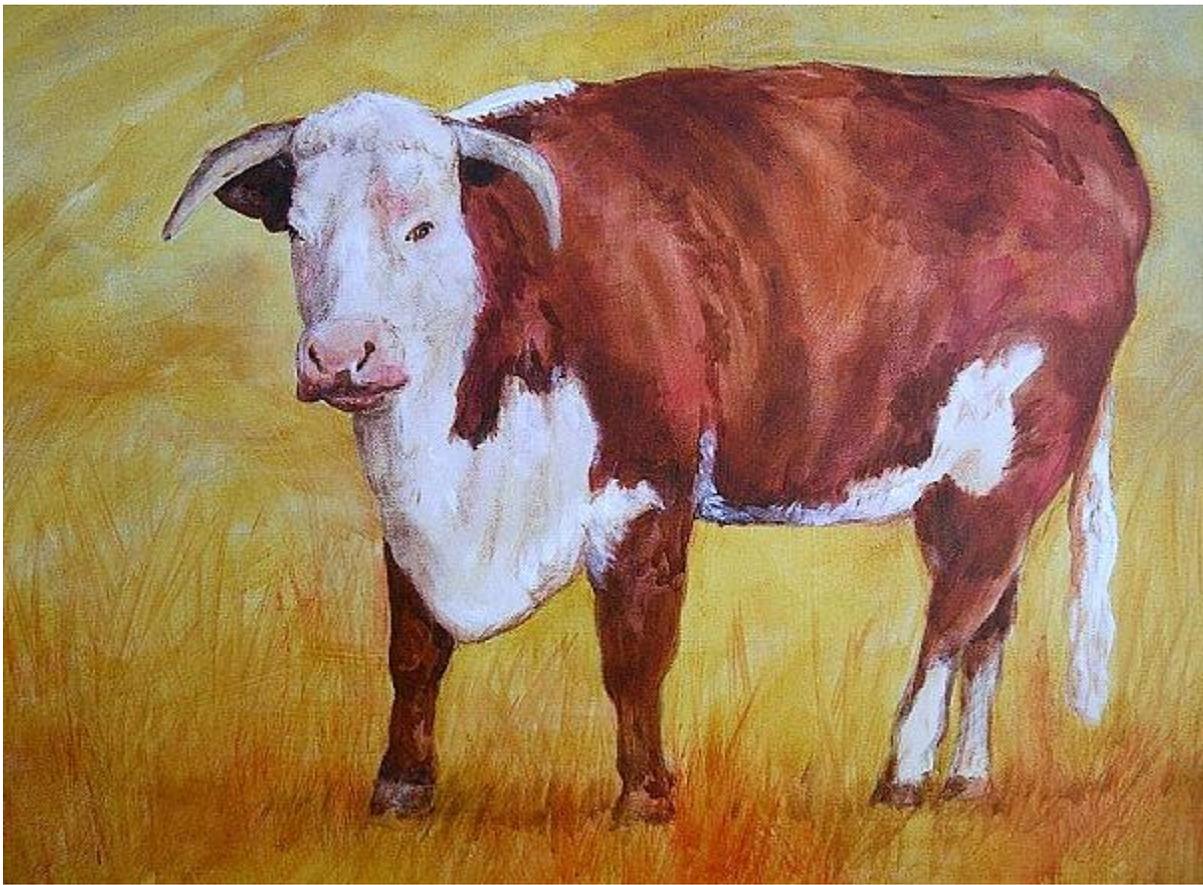
The Atenas Today Art Gallery

The Art Gallery is a regular feature of Atenas Today. Local artists are encouraged to submit photographs of their works to be included in the gallery, and to send a new picture each month. The artists may be contacted via the email addresses shown.



**Young Girl from Palmares
8" x 10"
Oil on Wood Panel**

Al Alexander
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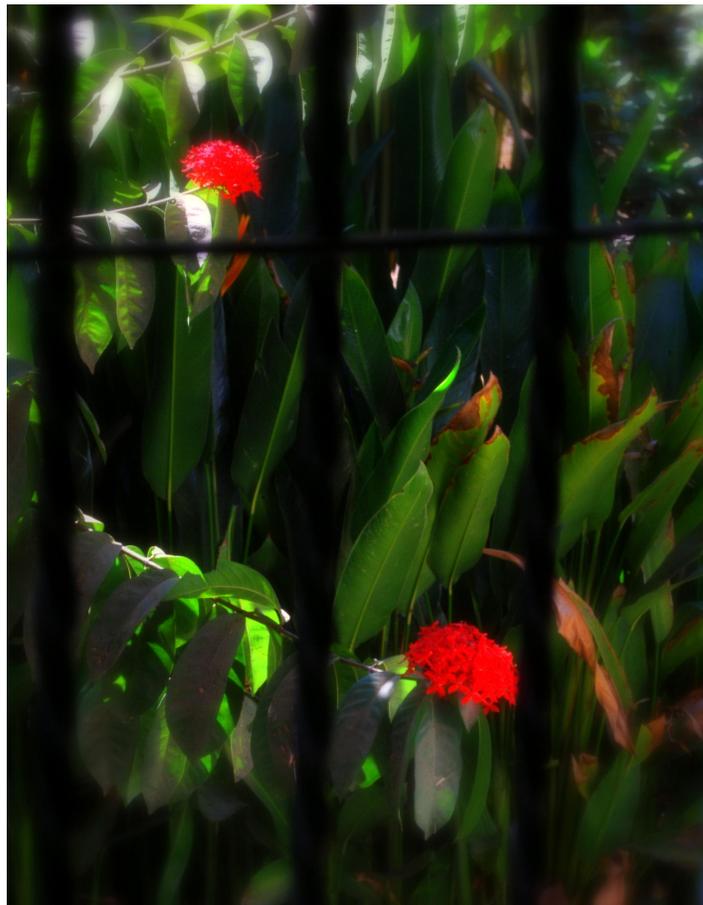


Yellow Nose Tiger

Jocelyn Farquhar, Squibbles Designs
jocelyn@squibblesdesigns.com



Humminbird
Photograph: Peter Boyer
pebo2@me.com



"My Window"
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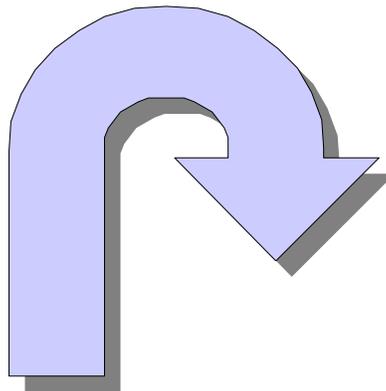
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