

My adventures in the rainforest of Costa Rica

frank menius

"Today I search for monkeys," I said to myself as I headed out across the wobbling suspension bridge, camera in hand and goal in mind. I descended into the forest along the nice paved trails of the research station just looking for something a little more rugged. On my right was a rough mud path with a little marker that said SSE 100. It seemed as good a place as any to begin my search.

The rain fell gently upon my face as I walked through the forest. It was pleasant really, much better than the torrential downpour of the day before. The patter on the leaves and the little orbs of water added even more magic to a place that already had me in awe. The rain was practical too, it muffled my steps increasing my chances of actually seeing a monkey.

Along the ground the red and blue of poison arrow frogs hopped away from my slushy steps.

They caught my eye as they added a rainbow's color to the green of the forest floor. But I found myself also looking at the ground for danger, because only the day before I had spotted two deadly snakes in my path. It was

a battle really, between watching where my feet were being placed and watching the mag-

nificent world that surrounded me. The trees, and flowers, and ferns, and fruits, and insects, and lizards, and small animals all cluttered my mind with images as my brain also tried to take in sounds.

In the trees the tanagers and flycatchers sang their musical songs as the parrots and toucans competed for volume high in the canopy. The distant "Whoot Whoot" of some bird unknown to me seemed to follow me for kilometers. And I did walk for kilometers too, as I passed marker 1000, marker 1500, marker 3000, and finally marker 4000. But in the distance the whole time was the ever-increasing howls of the monkeys that I sought. It was a growl that made my heart race with excitement, justifying the hard and rough path that I had taken.

To my amazement Trail SSE followed a small stream at the edge of the station property. I was thankful that I had decided to wear galoshes instead of hik-

overhead seemed to laugh as I struggled to wade through the large expanses of mud. Now not only did it cover the ground, but it covered me also.

However, the sound of the monkeys drove me forward. About halfway through my journey I actually thought that I would get a good picture of the elusive howler. I was walking along a foot wide cliff that clung to the side of the mountain, praying that I would not slip and end up in the water down below. As I slowly placed one foot in front of the other I heard it; a grunt and a rustle in the bushes above me on the hill. My excitement rose. There were monkeys overhead now, but out of my view, and I thought maybe one had come down from the tree to investigate me, or maybe he just wanted his picture taken. I turned slowly, ears perked and camera on and headed up the hill overhead towards the bushes. It took me several grunts and a smell of the most awful stench to realize that this

and I pressed on until I was face to face with the beast. Having taken the picture I returned the trail and my quest. As soon as I did so, I heard a loud rustle in the bushes behind me. I turned just in time to see a huge male peccary charging at me tusk first, apparently a little vexed about that whole picture thing. Taken aback I fell clumsily from the narrow cliff and into the ravine six feet below. Soaked and robbed of my

pride I acknowledged the fact that the score in this big jungle game of mine was now pigs one, humans zero. After a few minutes I climbed back to the trail and continued on, disappointed and disillusioned.

In the river a Jesus Lizard walked across the water, startled by my steps in the mud. As I climbed the hills my mind thought of my hunched posture and how I must resemble the monkeys that I hunted in this forest. At a distance of 4 kilometers, soar and tired, I climbed a hill

where a tree had fallen during the last rainy season. There in the clearing about 40 feet ahead

of me sat an old howler. His graying black coat rested gently on the old stump of a once magnificent tree. His dark eyes



Frank Menius stands next to a very large tree in Las Selva research station, Costa Rica.

emily kachergis



The Costa Rica group sits on the edge of the Paos Volcano lake in Costa Rica.

jewel miller

ing boots as I sank knee deep into muck as close to quicksand as I had ever seen. The parrots

was not a howler, but rather a foul smelling peccary. It still warranted a picture however,

didn't seem to notice me as I crouched in the bush. Slowly I raised my camera and shuffled forward. There it was, the perfect picture, ripe for the taking. I focused and then gently depressed the button. Then I listened horrified at the sound of the rewinding camera. After a few minutes of reflection, and knowing that the next role of film was now eight kilometers away, I turned and headed back to where I came.

To learn more about our trip, and some of our projects, visit our web site at:

<http://Phywww1.ncssm.edu/abio>

~IMSA-P1~

theatre. One of the popular hangouts is Eagle, the grocery store in walking distance.

"IMSA's social life is definitely not as strong as NCSSM's. Students don't participate in activities and most go home on the weekends," said Senior Audrey James.

IMSA dorm life is great in most aspects. Students have their own private bathrooms (of course, students do

have to pay for their own toilet paper) and internet and telephone connections. However, such luxuries do have a dark side: Internet and telephone wiring does make life convenient, but as a result, IMSA students are often hibernating in their rooms - in fact, sometimes holding telephone conversations with people living next door.

"The sense of community that NCSSM fosters is missing from IMSA. The students are

more isolated from one another and the different social groups are more exclusive," said Dr. Steve Warshaw.

I was very impressed with the IMSA Student Council. Most IMSA students are satisfied with their Student Council, the general consensus being that the council members are capable and industriously working on policies. One policy that the Student Council is working on is the I-Viz policy at IMSA.

The IMSA I-Viz policy works such that students can invite one person per day for one or two hours into their rooms. Doors must be open at least at a 45 degree angle. IMSA does not have the open-hall I-Viz that NCSSM has.

My mini-term project was a great experience. I tremendously enjoyed it. I learned about ethics and leadership in education and about the differences between IMSA and

NCSSM. I even had a chance to visit Chicago. I also learned something that I did not expect to learn: Just how wonderful NCSSM is. I have never been more proud to go to NCSSM. IMSA is a wonderful school and all, but when it comes right down to it, NCSSM is my home away from home. The people, the campus, the classes here at NCSSM do not compare to IMSA's. In the end, I am all about some UNI pride!