

Roatan 16

G. Joseph Wilhelm - Roatan Honduras



First and foremost, everyone here (the entire Compass Rose Ranch domestic menagerie of humans, horses, dogs, cats and birds), sincerely wishes everyone “out there” a very healthy, happy and Merry Christmas! Our prayers are for goodness, wisdom and common sense to prevail among this world’s inhabitants. Amen.

Occasionally, there come some recurrent times in a writer’s life when inspiration takes over and allows one to express truly important aspects of this existence in a personal, meaningful way. This isn’t one of them.

It is still raining. Many of my readers have implored me to expound upon the flora and fauna naturally found within the ranch’s boundaries (which is a total lie but a good segue). But, before I do, let me voice a declaration of gratitude to Dr. Markus Balint in Hungary! He sent me the Zeiss manuals for both versions of the inverted Zeiss Winkle microscopes mentioned in the last article (Petrographic epi-phase contrast and the plankton counting incident lit model). These have confirmed all the suppositions opined there about the model I have. I have yet to hear a reply from anyone about the P.A.C.O. accessory.

Moving on;

All progress on the lab that involves being outdoors for any prolonged period has come to a rather frustrating comprehensive halt. Despair not my friends, I shall sally forth from these damp doldrums with camera in hand during the next available recess in the precipitation beat-down. I will document the essence of some of the environmental performances displayed here and the possible specimen candidates for study. I have nothing else worth offering this month.

OK, here we go:

Out onto the deck,



The main deck, looking south into the rainforest about 40 feet beyond the deck. As you can see, everything grows well (and fast!) here. On our last visit to the tropical conservatory in Cincinnati, Bri and I realized that of all the plants on display there, we have about 90% of them growing on the property.



Looking east from the same spot, showing the east slope of Cha-Cha's "valley" as we call it. Cha-Cha, the horse, keeps the greenery trimmed. The property line is out of sight over the hill. She is becoming more like a dog every day and alerts us to anything that flies, crawls, walks or slithers from or in the rainforest.



This is our friend Roscoe, a South American Great/Broad Tail Grackle we rescued from drowning in Cha-Cha's water bucket. Since then, he is there to greet us anytime we step outside. Before his timely aquatic emancipation, I had dropped a box of stainless-steel washers over the rail. After regaining freedom, over a period of several weeks, he dutifully retrieved every washer and left

them as a gift where you see him standing now. I am told this is relatively normal behavior. These birds have migrated to most every city in the continental United States.

To quote Audubon magazine reporter Asher Elbein's article "In Praise of the Great-tailed Grackle, a Bird That Doesn't Need Your Respect":

"In the beginning, the Mexican legend goes, Zanate, the Great-tailed Grackle, had no voice. This would not do. Being a tricky and striving sort of bird, he stole himself seven songs from the sea turtle, leaving the turtles silent and himself bursting to the brim with chatter: tunes of joy and sorrow and rage. There is the tinkling, liquid murmur the birds make while bedding down on transmission wires and parking lot trees. There are the complex and tapping whistles, and the calls like the rending of sheet metal. And then there's the showstopper: a looping crescendo that pleasantly combines the cock of a shotgun with the tones of an interstate car crash. It is a remarkable repertoire, and one that a subset of the human population hates."

The entire very entertaining and informative article can be found here:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/in-praise-great-tailed-grackle-bird-doesnt-need-your-respect>

Turning around to look north down the driveway:



You can see the inner security gate in the center and the property line fence just above it down by the road. Note the yellow coconuts on the tree to the right. We have a plethora of both yellow and green coconut trees. The yellow ones are good to cook with. Blend the inner "water" with

the coconut pulp and you have a coconut milk to use as a base for a killer curry. The green ones you can eat the coconut pulp raw, drink the liquid or just bore holes in them and fill them with rum which automatically generates a “cease and desist” order for any further constructive activities. The tree on the lower left Grew from a fencepost.



Our man Juan built us a wood fence atop the driveway wall from fallen tree limbs and branches. The first post on the left was cut from a live tree. He stuck it in the ground and it grew with no help from us. About 18 months of growth is what you see. Almost all of the fenceposts Juan put along the front road are sprouting.

Moving further down the driveway:



Juan put these elephant ear thingies in the ground about four months ago when they were about 8 inches tall.

That pretty much covers the eastern acres, which is where we keep Cha-Cha. From here we head under the house to the west acreage. It has been a constant task to clear the land. When we first got here the growth was so high and dense Bri would disappear about six feet into it. You literally had to hack into it with a machete. After about six months we had the stumps dug up, holes filled and the dangerous thorn trees (Acacia I think) recycled into hard labor duty as a fence.

Juan has single handedly groomed the entire western three acres and built a thousand feet of ranch style fence from naturally fallen trees on our property. Juan is proud of the property and the work he has done as are we. With just a weed whacker and machete he made it look like a fine lawn.

Take a look



This is looking due west from a hill about 100 feet from the house. At different times of the year, I've seen these hills completely carpeted with butterflies during the day and fireflies at night. Both a beautiful sight. The property ends behind the tree line. Plantain trees are to the right. Plantains are a delicious non-sweet starchy cousin to the banana. Fry them, bake them or boil them. Now, when you turn around



Looking east. This is the banana tree grove Juan planted. Kathleen's Casita is on the left and ours on the right. The bananas are fingerling size, about three inches long and super sweet. We consume them as if they were fine Bon-Bons. Best banana bread ever! Turn left.....



On the hill Looking north at the fireplace and lime tree (Darker spot, center).



This is our Key lime tree with a Guava tree (lower left) growing among the boughs. It produces 2000-3000 limes over a 3-4-month period. This daily harvest below will soon triple. 3-4 of these makes a large pitcher of limeade.



Now, turning around and looking south past the fireplace....



These are Coco Plum trees. They are huge! 75-80 ft tall. We have eight.



They produce tens of thousands of these “Plums” which are a huge pit surrounded by about a sixteenth of an inch of very sweet pulp. It’s a lot of work to get a useable amount of juice from these but, when you do, it’s a great drink or marinade and we are still experimenting



This is the western bottom land where the ground gets almost marshy during the rainy season. The ground gets so soft trees will just fall over, but keep on growing. This one has been down and growing since we arrived,

To close....



The compound looking southwest from the road.

I hope you enjoyed the tour. With the wet weather, not many insects out and about but abound when just a bit dryer. Samples from the wetlands should be interesting, can't wait.

Cheers until next time.

Joseph.

Comments to the author G. Joseph Wilhelm welcomed, email – gjw8844 AT gmail DOT com

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