



INKATERRA: A suite in three movements

By Héctor Méndez-Caratini, HSPR President

The Incas

Twelve Heliconia Society International members participated in the Pre-Conference Tour to Machu Picchu and other Inca ruins. On the first day of our guided tour (Thursday, June 19th) we boarded tourist buses in Cuzco and headed for the Temple of the Sun (the



The ruins of Machu Picchu in the midst of the towering Andean peaks.

Convent of Santo Domingo sits atop the Qoricancha – the main astronomical observatory of the Incas), the impregnable fortress of Saqsaywamán, Tambomachay, Pukapukara and O’enqo.

The following day we visited the Sacred Valley of the Incas. There we had the opportunity to appreciate the Urubamba River (the earthbound counterpart of the celestial Milky Way), the ancient ruins of



Intricate Incan stonework found at Cuzco.



Winter solstice at the solar observatory in Machu Picchu.

Pisaq and its cultivated terraces overlooking the green valley; as well as the massive temple-stronghold of Ollantaytambo with its dozens of rows of incredibly



Precipitous stone terraces carved into the hillside at Pisaq.

steep stone terraces carved into the hillside. In the afternoon we boarded the train and headed to Aguas Calientes,



Pictograph (possibly of a heliconia) etched in stone at Ollantaytambo.

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Dates to Remember

- HSPR Meeting, 9:30 am, Sunday, September 14, 2008. Home of Migdalia and Raymond Jerome, Canóvanas, PR.

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The Heliconia Society International pre-conference tour group enjoys the majesty of Machu Picchu.

where we stayed overnight in different hotels located inside the Historical Sanctuary preserve (named a UNESCO natural and cultural World Heritage Site).

The next morning we woke up at 4 o'clock and headed for the jam-packed tourist lines and boarded one of the 22 buses to the citadel of Machu Picchu – Cultural Patrimony of Humanity.



A Peruvian woman in native dress with her llama.

The ruins of the “lost city of the Incas” sits majestically among the massive Andes and is one of the most spectacular sites on Earth! We got to the sacred temple before sunrise and experienced the magical winter solstice (June 21st), when dramatic rays of light creep over the mountaintops and illuminate the ruins. In the afternoon we happily returned to Cuzco (at a daunting altitude of 3,400 meters or 11,000 feet above sea level), the capital of South America’s archeology.

Heliconia Society International Conference, Iquitos

The HSI Conference was held (from June 24th to the 27th) at the Dorado Plaza Hotel, in Iquitos, Perú. HSPR/HSI members Dr. José “Falín” Abreu-Deliz, Dr. Raymond Jerome (and



Typical architecture in Iquitos, Peru.

his wife Migdalia) and Héctor Méndez-Caratini (and his wife Annette) represented Puerto Rico at the convention.

During the first morning of talks (Tuesday, June 24th), Anders Lindstrom,



The piranha is one of the most famous fish of the Amazon region.

Plant Curator from Nong Nooch Tropical Garden (Thailand), gave the presidential address. He was followed up by taxonomist Dr. David Lorence, from National Tropical



Passenger boats docked outside Iquitos.

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Low lying houses near the river in Iquitos need to be built on tall stilts to avoid flooding in the rainy season.



A small alligator waits for its next meal.

Botanical Garden (Hawaii), who gave a report on the eleven worldwide HSI Conservation Centers – including nine

private ones located in Puerto Rico (which count as two)!

Renowned Australian traveler Bruce Dunstan presented his discoveries of “Zingiberales of Nusagandi Province, Panama”.

After a brief coffee break, Shirley Alejandro (México) gave her report on “Eradicating pathogens in controlled experiments of in vitro fertilization”. Jan Hintze (Australia) followed her with a presentation entitled “Cut Flowers – that’s my excuse”.

In the afternoon session, noted explorer Carla Black (Panama) gave her illustrated lecture on “Heliconia adventures in



A beautiful form of *H. chartacea* with a cream colored rachis.

Panama, Part 1”. Ray Baker, from Lyon Arboretum (Hawaii), spoke on “The Zingiberaceae”. After a short break, I gave a talk about “Professional tips on how to photograph heliconias for publication”. Costus specialist David Skinner (Florida) gave the last presentation of the day, titled “Neotropical *Costus*”.

On the second day (Wednesday, June 25th), Anders Lindstrom, HSI President, started out the morning by informing us on “Little known heliconias”. Our HSPR member Dr. Raymond Jerome then presented his study on “*Heliconia caribaea*

variations and propagation from seed”. After the customary coffee break, Sergio Pinedo (Perú) gave a report on the findings of his study on “Geographic distribution and agricultural management of heliconias”. He was followed up by Sandra Barnes (Trinidad & Tobago) who talked about the “Balisier as a political symbol in the Caribbean” (balisier is the generic name given to heliconias in Trinidad). Norberto Maciel gave his presentation titled “Tropical cut flower research at the Universidad Centro-occidental Lisandro Alvarado, Barquisimeto, Venezuela”. In the afternoon, after lunch, Carla



The gorgeous scarlet macaw is a native of the Peruvian Amazon.



Exploring a portion of the vast Amazon rainforest.

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Black gave her Part 2 presentation and afterwards, I gave a hands on workshop on digital photography.

During both days there were two poster presentations; one by Norberto Maciel and the other by Jan Hintze.



Carla Black (above) and José Abreu (below) exploring the Amazon on the Tucunaré.



A native hunter.

On Thursday (June 26th) we had a one-day field trip down the Amazon River. The HSI participants were able to mingle with the San Rafael Indian community and see their butterfly farm; as well as observe heliconias growing in the wild. There we saw a rare variety of *H. chartacea* that resembled a giant ‘Sexy Pink’ but with a unique, yellowish-cream rachis.

On the final day (Friday, June 27th) of the convention, we had another day long field trip to Exótica, a heliconia/ginger commercial flower grower, where members had the opportunity to purchase endemic Peruvian heliconia rhizomes. Among the rare gems we bought was a golden colored *H. rostrata*, as well as a very slim, unique, green tipped red rostrata and *H. vellerigera* ‘She Kong’. Later on, we had lunch at the Zungaracocha Lodge, where we sampled a diverse variety of exquisite Peruvian dishes. The farewell banquet was held, later that evening, at the Dorado Plaza Hotel.



A striking red and green *Costus*.

Amazonia

Afterwards, several HSI members decided to stay for three days at the Heliconia Lodge. Another international delegation of ten took the Amazon River tour and explored the exotic tropical flora and fauna of the region.



The beautiful Amazon pink dolphin.

The group boarded the Tucunaré (name of a fish found in the Amazon), a small wooden boat, and navigated for five days down the Napo, Zapote and Amazon rivers and their many tributaries. One night we slept in the middle of a placid lake and bathed among three pink dolphins (and piranhas, as well). The impressive cloudless, pris-



Cleaning heliconia rhizomes in the river.

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The author, Héctor Méndez-Caratini, enjoying a jungle hike.

tine, night-time sky (remember, there are NO lights in the jungle, nor electricity, nor running water) allowed us to see Jupiter and its two moons, as well as an infinite array of stars, galaxies and the Milky Way.

We always had two daily field trips to the jungle; one in the morning for three hours followed by a two hour one in the afternoon. During one of our jungle expeditions, we walked up a trocha (trail) until we were 22 kilometers from the frontier with Colombia – FARC rebel territory, where 3,000 hostages are currently being held. Ingrid Betancourt (and 14 other hos-

tages) was liberated the day after we returned from the jungle. On this particular trail I encountered an armed native with a rifle and machete.

Among the many heliconia species we saw growing at Rio Mazan and Aucopoza region were: *H. tenebrosa*, *H. lasiorachis*, *H. timothei*, *H. velutina*, *H. silvestris*, *H. juruana*, *H. schumanniana*, *H. hirsuta*, *H. irrasa*, *H. stricta* and *H. orthotricha*. Along the river banks we spotted endless rows of *H. rostrata*, *H. episcopalis*, *H. stricta*, *H. standleyi* and *H. marginata*; as well as, renealmias, costus, gingers, calatheas, bromeliads, anthuriums, cannas, ferns, palms and the unique, extraordinary round leaves of the *Victoria amazonica* (endangered water lilies).



A native Amazon girl with her pet sloth.

Previous to the conference, pioneer Panamanian explorers Carla Black & Angel Rodriguez and Australian world travelers Jan Hintze & Bruce Dunstan explored separately,



Amazonian mother and baby travel by canoe.

on their own, the outskirts of Cuzco (Manu and Pilcupata region). There they were able to collect several rhi-



Anacondas, which can reach 20 feet in length, are common in the Amazon.

zomes from eight different specimens of: *H. penduloides*, *H. robusta* (an impressive deep yellow and burgundy-red pendent), *H. ap-paricioi*, *H. carlei*, *H. lingulata*, *H. aemygdiana*, *H. subulata* and other beautiful forms of *H. stricta*.

During the numerous expeditions to the Peruvian jungles, a total of twenty-five different heliconia species were identified growing in the wild. Some of these were exported and are now growing in Panama and on our Island.



Heliconia lasiorachis is one of the many native heliconias.

Even though I, and my wife Annette, had been to Cuzco and Machu Picchu before (34 years ago), the unique experience of traveling together with so many international friends - who shared our same interests - became a once in a lifetime, unforgettable, adventure filled trip.

HELICONIA SOCIETY OF PUERTO RICO, INC.

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HSPR

*Promoting Zingiberales in
Puerto Rico since 1996.*



The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico, Inc. was founded in 1996. The objectives of the society are to stimulate and promote the enjoyment and understanding of Heliconia and related plants of the order Zingiberales through education, research and communication, and to interact with the Heliconia Society International and other institutions which share similar interests, purposes or objectives.

From Our Last Meeting

The HSPR's June meeting was a success. It was held at Gildreth and Bob Castro's beautiful farm in Adjuntas. At 3,900 feet high above sea level, this farm is a natural reserve located next to Cerro Guilarte - one of the highest peaks in the Cordillera Central. A bright sunny day was enjoyed by the three dozen members who hiked admiring the different varieties of heliconias, calatheas and costus found in this neatly manicured HSPR/HSI Conservation Center.

Judy Nelson, HSPR member from legendary Marín Alto Tropicals (Patillas), lectured us on the "Early Days of Exploration". She recounted the personal experiences of Susan and Kelly Brooks' nine trips throughout Central and South America. During these pioneering voyages they collected heliconias in the wild, which they later introduced into Puerto Rico. Our sincere thanks go to Susan & Kelly not only for inspiring all of us, but also for making their treasures available. Vicariously, we all lived their experiences from listening to Judy's anecdotes.

During our customary "Show and Tell" session, Judy also brought a unique bouquet of heliconias. A full array of *H. bihai* "Halloween types" (more commonly known as Lobster Claw One and Two), whose gama of colors went from deep red to light orange, passing through a wide variety of shades. She also showed us the differences between a *H. bihai* 'Giant Lobster Claw' and her unique lobster claw 'Surprise' - a new seedling variation, which spontaneously sprung up at Marín Alto. It is a much bigger and vigorous inflorescence than the common one. The new varieties of heliconias, which are sprouting all over in our local farms, are unbelievable. ¡Muchas Gracias Judy!

I would like to welcome the new members and personally thank everyone who brought plants for the raffle. Our last RAFFLE was a feat! There were more than enough plants for everybody to enjoy. Everyone who bought a ticket won a heliconia and/or precious plant. Sergio brought new varieties of heliconias recently acquired in Panama and Judy also contributed some rare red palm seedlings (said to be worth over one hundred dollars when adult), among others.

Héctor Méndez-Caratini

President's Corner

Our September meeting will be held at Migdalia and Raymond Jerome's lovely home in Canóvanas.

During the up-coming meeting Ray, Dr. José "Falín" Abreu and myself will do a brief report to our members about the latest developments presented at the Heliconia Society International's convention, held last summer in Iquitos, Peru. Falín and I will also share humorous incidents about our personal experiences collecting heliconias in the wild, deep down in the Amazonian jungle - along with Angel and Carla Black (Panama), Bruce and Jan - the Australian peers - and other international friends.

As always, we're asking our members to bring refreshments, snacks and covered dishes to share in our traditional "pot-luck" lunch ("La fiesta del sorullo - donde cada cual trae lo suyo."). Don't forget to bring plants and rhizomes for the RAFFLE, for sale, or for our customary "Show and Tell" sessions. Plants for the raffle do not necessarily have to be rare heliconias. Orchids, as well as bromeliads, anthuriums, fruit trees and other rare palms can also be brought to expand our growing collections. It is always very exciting to WIN. So don't forget, our society needs the money generated from the raffle to thrive and to be able to carry out future projects.

New and exciting events are rapidly brewing up and will be presented at our next meeting. I invite you to come, become involved in our society and participate in our events. Please contribute to make them a reality!

Saludos a tod@s,

Héctor Méndez-Caratini
President, HSPR



Judy Nelson displays beautiful heliconias.