

The background of the entire page is a lush, green rainforest scene. In the foreground, there are large, vibrant green leaves and several bright red flowers with yellow centers. The background is filled with a dense canopy of various shades of green, creating a sense of depth and a natural, serene atmosphere.

**Rainforest of the Austrians**  
[www.regenwald.at](http://www.regenwald.at)  
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**Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**  
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**A Report on Activities in  
Piedras Blancas National Park  
and the Community of  
La Gamba, Costa Rica**

**1991 - 2005**

# Piedras Blancas National Park

## Land Acquisition in the Esquinas Rainforest, Costa Rica



Piedras Blancas NP is the missing link in the biological corridor around Golfo Dulce which stretches from the Osa Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula to the Reserva Forestal Golfo Dulce and the Rifugio Fauna Silvestre Golfito. The nature reserves included in the corridor have a combined area of 800 km<sup>2</sup>.

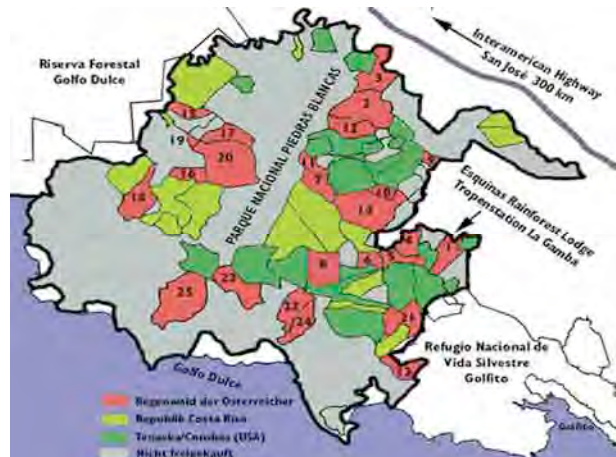
The Esquinas Rainforest was the last unprotected lowland tropical rainforest on the Pacific coast of Central America. All other rainforests on the coast had either been destroyed or were already incorporated into national parks or reserves.

Severely endangered by logging, gold mining, and hunting, the Esquinas Rainforest was declared a national park by government decree in 1991. Approx. 140 privately owned properties, partly with valid logging concessions, had to be purchased before being incorporated into Piedras Blancas NP.

The biodiversity of the Esquinas rainforest is one of the highest in Costa Rica and includes many endemic and endangered species. It is home to 2700 species of plants, 140 of mammals, 100 of reptiles and amphibians, 370 of birds. On four one-hectare plots, botanists have counted a total of 2444 trees belonging to 328 different species!



Satellite photo of the Esquinas Rainforest with park borders which were drawn at an altitude of 20 meters, enabling those living on the coast to remain outside the park. 80% of the area is primary forest, the rest is secondary growth or pastureland.



Land purchase until the end of 2004.

- Rainforest of the Austrians
- Tenaska.
- Republic of Costa Rica
- not yet purchased

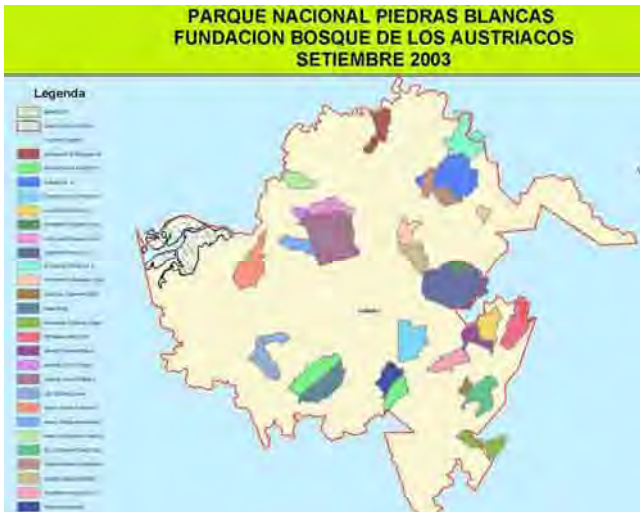


Environment Minister C.M. Rodriguez and Michael Schnitzler sign the donation of properties from Rainforest of the Austrians to the Costa Rican government.

Rainforest of the Austrians was founded by classical violinist Michael Schnitzler in 1991 with the purpose of saving the unique biodiversity of the Esquinas rainforest by selling symbolic shares. It is registered in Vienna as a non-profit organization named „Verein Regenwald der Österreicher“. Thousands of Austrian individuals, including many schoolchildren, have donated more than \$1.800.000 towards land purchase.

Piedras Blancas NP has a total area of 14.617,78 Hectares. By the end of 2005, 65,06% of the area had been purchased with funds from Rainforest of the Austrians (3.374,68 ha.), the Costa Rican government (3.413,85 ha.), Tenaska (2.1123,18 ha.) and The Nature Conservancy (596,09 ha.). The properties were donated to the Costa Rican National Park Service and became part of Piedras Blancas National Park.

## Land purchase by Rainforest of the Austrians 1992-2005



The map does not include the properties purchased in 2003, 2004 and 2005. These are situated in the northern part of the park near the Rio Esquinas.

### Properties and Area in Hectares

Hermanos Moya S.A.	116,77
Canaima S.A	230
El Paraiso Pacifico S.A.	148,85
William Castro Mora	80,26
Marcos Herrera Parrales	60,15
Julio Cesar Villalobos Araya	71,15
Edwin Umana Chavarria	70,79
Francisco Castro Guardia	124,38
Olga Fernandez Valladares	18,07
Eulalia Cespedes Vargas	28,94
Olga Fernandez Valladares	65,39
Dagoberto Trejos Madrigal	85,62
Jorge Hernandez	77,89
Comercial Rayro S.A.	299,31
Federica Nieto Concepcion	56,53
Maximiliano Lopez Ortega	63,97
Javier Miguel Chavarria	77,37
José León Lopez Ortega	130,97
Edgar Jiminez Quiros	17,34
Edgar Jiminez Quiros	299,47
Sulay Alvarado	94,99
Inocente Villareal	66,61
Louanna Lee Clausen	109,84
Marcelino Rodriguez Nieto	60,22
Roy Elwood Clausen	232,82
Aserradero El Progreso del Sur	81,24
Eduardo Chavarría Estribí (2003)	116,84
Erasmus Sobrado (2004)	150,72
Máximo Chavarría (2005)	56,87
Mario Rojas Zamora (2005)	132,62
Hermanos Porras (2005)	148,68
<b>Total area in hectares</b>	<b>3374,67</b>



### Future Plans

- In 2005, Rainforest of the Austrians made a pledge to donate \$300,000 for land purchase over the next three years. The Robert Wilson Foundation has agreed to match this pledge on a 1:1 basis with another \$300,000.
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will be in charge of finding legally cleared, registered properties and negotiating with the owners. It is expected that the total donation of \$600,000 will enable the purchase of approx. 500 hectares of land.
- The Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation has agreed to purchase an additional 1250 hectares in the Esquinas forest through TNC and donate them to the Costa Rican National Park Service.
- Properties near the Esquinas river and near towns have priority since they are endangered by illegal loggers and hunters. Those with buildings and cultivated land are up to twice as expensive as primary forest. The average price is expected to rise to \$1500-2000 per hectare.
- It is hoped that more than 75% of the Esquinas Forest will have been purchased by 2006.



Aerial view of a plot of land in near the Rio Esquinas which was purchased recently. It should be over-grown with secondary forest within a few years.

## Prevention of Logging in the Esquinas Rainforest



Logging roads bring irreparable damage to the forest.



Even if only a few trees are logged, 40% of the plants within one hectare are affected.



Loggers are still active in unprotected areas.



Alvaro Ugalde, one of Costa Rica's foremost environmentalists, founder of the Costa Rican National Park System and director of ACOSA from 2002 to 2005, at a meeting at Esquinas Lodge.

- The Esquinas forest contains up to 179 species of trees per hectare, of which approx. 15% are economically important tropical hardwoods mainly used for building or firewood.
- Logging is secondary income for local farmers. Logging permits („planes de manejo“) are issued for a specified amount of trees during the „dry“ season which lasts from Christmas until Easter. Lumber companies are not present in the area.
- By law, logging concessions must be granted to land owners even if the land is within a designated national park. Expropriation is not allowed. The only way to prevent logging is to purchase the land from its owners, who are all willing to sell. Since most of the land is passed on from generation to generation, most properties do not possess valid documentation and are not registered.
- Since 2002, the local park administration ACOSA (Área de Conservación Osa), with a grant financed by the CRUSA foundation, has been preparing detailed inventories of each property. Legally clean properties are purchased through The Nature Conservancy and donated to the National Park Foundation, from where they are turned over to the Costa Rican government.
- Owners receive fair compensation for forest, buildings, grazing land, orchards and even fences as stipulated by government evaluations, which can be readjusted every five years. Since 1991, average prices pro m2 have risen from \$0.35 to \$1.50. Coastline property is much more expensive.
- 26% of the surface of Costa Rica is protected as parks or reserves. Since the creation of the National Park System, no protected areas have ever been dissolved.



The rugged, mountainous terrain of the Esquinas forest has made access difficult for loggers, which is the reason why 90% of the forest is still intact. Primary forest stretches all the way down to the coast of Golfo Dulce, where rare Pacific coastal reef formations with countless species of tropical fish can be found.

## Prevention of Hunting in the Esquinas Rainforest



### Coordination of activities

Ana Catalina Torres (manager, Esquinas Lodge), Michael Schnitzler (director, Rainforest of the Austrians), Luis Sanchez (director, Piedras Blancas NP) and park rangers at a meeting at Esquinas Lodge



### Michael Schnitzler in discussion with hunters

Many young men from La Gamba say they must hunt to feed their families because they have no other income. On the black market, a paca sold by poachers fetches up to \$20. Although illegal, paca meat can still be purchased as appetizers in bars throughout the area.



### Dialogue between hunters and functionaries

In 2004, Rainforest of the Austrians invited hunters from La Gamba to a meeting with representatives of the National Park Service, Fundación Corcovado, Fundación Neotrópica, and the people of La Gamba. A dialogue was begun with the goal of preventing illegal hunting by finding alternative sources of income for the hunters within the national park or the community. Since then, park guards have reported that hunting has decreased significantly.

- To enforce laws against illegal logging and hunting, park rangers are required. Until 2004, only six rangers protected an area of 140 km<sup>2</sup>.
- The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has donated funds for the employment of 16 more park rangers in Piedras Blancas NP until 2007.
- Rainforest of the Austrians has pledged a yearly donation to Fundación Corcovado to pay the salaries for two park wardens.
- The park rangers paid by Rainforest of the Austrians patrol the forests around La Gamba and the vicinity of Esquinas Lodge. Hunting activities have decreased and animals such as monkeys, coatis, anteaters and curassows have been sighted since.
- Esquinas Lodge has assumed an important role in the prevention of hunting and the coordination of activities of park wardens.



### Park rangers on a trail near Esquinas Lodge

Since 2003, Rainforest of the Austrians has been raising funds to pay the salaries for two rangers, which total approx. \$17,000 per year, including social security and insurance.

### Peccary skins and skulls confiscated by park wardens

Rangers also confiscated firearms, ammunition and hunting dogs and arrested several poachers (Piedras Blancas NP, 2004).



### Park rangers after raiding an illegal poachers camp

The number of patrols tripled between 2003 and 2005. Wardens now also patrol the coastline of Golfo Dulce which used to provide easy access to poachers. Not only animals but also illegally logged wood, palm fronds and even trucks have been confiscated.

## Austrian Development Aid Project „Ecotourism in La Gamba“



The property of Esquinas Lodge before construction began



Construction site, April 1994

- In 1992, the Austrian government made a commitment to finance 140 sustainable development projects in tropical third-world countries. Rainforest of the Austrians was appointed to oversee and direct an ecotourism project submitted in the name of the people of La Gamba and titled „Project 1554/93, Ecotourism in La Gamba“. The lodge was named Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.
- The idea was to create a sustainable alternative to the destruction and exploitation of the forest by providing jobs and supporting local projects. The long-term goal is to improve the economic, educational, and health standard of the whole community.
- Originally, the lodge was to be run by a local cooperative. After problems with family clans in La Gamba, the Austrian government took charge of the lodge in 1995 and passed it on to Rainforest of the Austrians in 1998. Large debts were accumulated until the lodge reached an average occupancy of 30% and a break-even point in 2001. In 2005, it was purchased by Michael Schnitzler. Loans were paid back and the surplus of \$200,000 from the sale was deposited in a fund for community projects in La Gamba.
- The property at the end of the valley had been swampy grazing land surrounded by rainforest. No trees were felled. Construction and impact on the environment were monitored by Rainforest Alliance. Great care was taken to choose environmentally safe building materials and avoid the use of tropical hardwoods wherever possible.
- The concept of Esquinas Lodge is to provide comfortable accommodation to guests wishing to experience the rainforest without encountering masses of fellow tourists. To keep the environmental impact on the forest at a minimum, all trails departing from the lodge are within an area of 120 hectares, which in turn is surrounded by a buffer zone of almost 1000 hectares of untouched primary forest. No more than 30 people at a time can be found in an area larger than Manuel Antonio National Park, which receives 150,000 tourists per year.



Esquinas Lodge, July 1995



Construction site, July 1994



Construction site, November 1994

## Esquinas Rainforest Lodge: Development Aid and Sustainability



The pool area, July 1994



The pool area, February 1997



Costa Rica's president Abel Pacheco with manager Ana Catalina Torres, resident biologist Sabine Will and staff during his visit to Esquinas Lodge in 2004.



All members of the kitchen staff are from La Gamba. Emphasis is placed on local products.

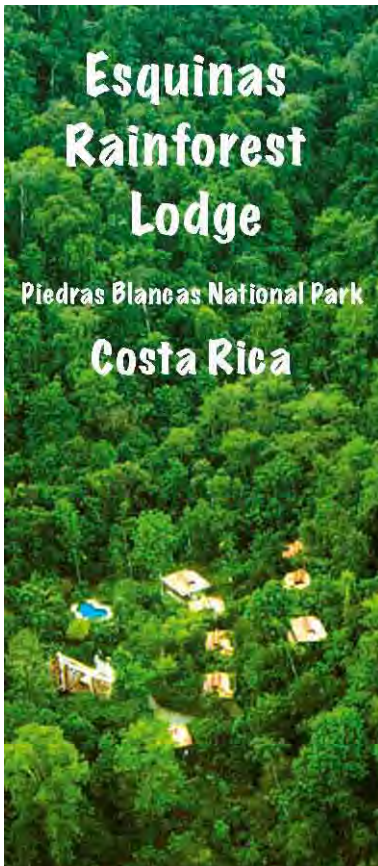
- Esquinas Lodge has a strong commitment to sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.
- Biodegradable septic tank system
- No air conditioners
- Chlorine-free pool fed by a spring
- All food waste is composted.
- Non-degradable garbage is burnt, buried or taken to the waste dump in Golfito.
- Organically grown vegetables and fruits
- Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT) \*\*\* rating
- Founding member of SMART (Sustainably Managed Association of Responsible Tourism)
- Cooperation with International Fauna Society) and Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
- Environmental impact was monitored by Rainforest Alliance during construction

*„En nombre de mi Gobierno, en el mío propio y en el de cada uno de los costarricenses deseo expresarle un especial agradecimiento por su colaboración y por creer como nosotros en la conservación de los recursos naturales. Por su dedicación, esfuerzo y amor a la naturaleza, Costa Rica le estará eternamente agradecida.“*

Abel Pacheco de Espriella,  
Presidente de la Republica de  
Costa Rica (2002-2006)



„Ecotourism in the truest sense“ (Lonely Planet Guide to Costa Rica, 2004)



- Esquinas Lodge is the largest employer in La Gamba, providing permanent jobs for 3 cooks, 3 day and night guards, 2 gardeners and maintenance workers, 2 room cleaning and laundry ladies, and a chauffeur. The offices at the lodge and in Golfito have a staff of two.
- During the high season, extra workers from La Gamba are employed on a daily basis. When the lodge is full, it has a staff of up to 20. Besides, the lodge employs carpenters, bricklayers, roof builders, plumbers, electricians and trail maintenance workers from La Gamba when required.
- All employees are insured by CCSS, the Caja Costarricense de Seguros Sociales (pension fund, health and accident insurance). They receive wages every two weeks and are eligible for Christmas and vacation bonuses as well as severance pay.
- The lodge provides four-month volunteer jobs to trainees from tourism colleges in Austria. Two young men from La Gamba have been trained as English-speaking nature guides.
- Average occupancy levels vary from as high as 75% in February to as low as 10% in June. The lodge has 14 rooms in 7 cabins and can accommodate up to 42 guests.



Aside from the manager, the office assistant, and the volunteers, all employees are from La Gamba



Mother's day party at Esquinas Lodge for the employees and their mothers

## Activities at or near Esquinas Rainforest Lodge



The boat trip to Casa Orquidea passes along the steep Golfo Dulce coastline



Casa Orquidea Botanical Garden has an important collection of tropical plants.



Horseback tours bring guests to Valle Bonito and to Chorro Waterfall



Boat trips through the mangrove swamps of Rio Coto offer great birding



Tourists can bathe in a natural pool below the Chorro Waterfall or swim in the Rio Bonito



Hikes with trained biologists and nature guides



The Quebrada Negra waterfall, a ten-minute walk from the lodge



Lorenzo, the resident caiman



Birdwatchers on the road to La Gamba

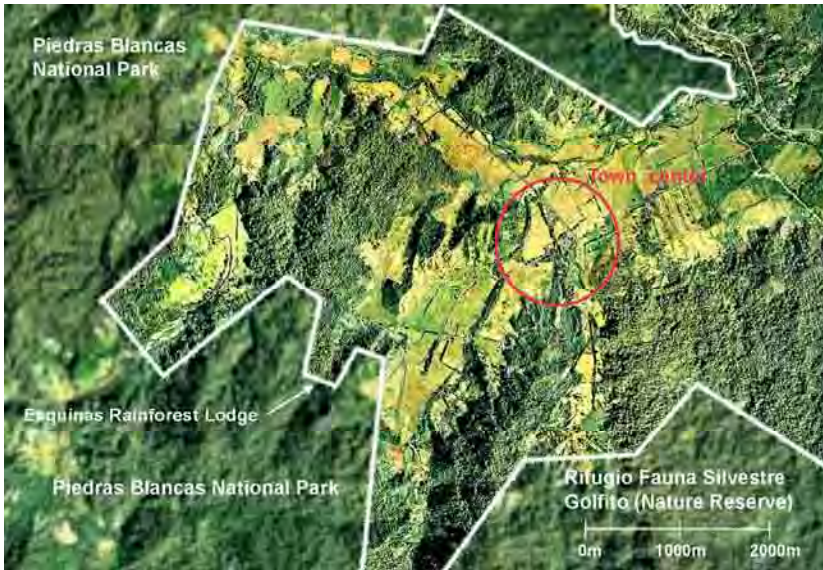


Kayaking along the Golfo Dulce coast provides close-up views of the rainforest

[www.esquinaslodge.com](http://www.esquinaslodge.com)

Esquinas Rainforest Lodge is the only lodge bordering Piedras Blancas NP which is accessible by car all year around. Trails into the park depart directly behind the lodge; hikes last anywhere from 30 minutes to 5 hours. Besides, the lodge offers horseback and mountain bike excursions, kayak and boat excursions in Golfo Dulce and to the Rio Coto Mangroves, and an adventure tour combining a horseback ride, a hike through the center of Piedras Blancas NP to the coast, and a boat trip back to Golfito.

## La Gamba: Cooperation between the Oficina Regional de Cooperación Técnica de la Embajada de Austria (Managua), Fundación Neotrópica, Rainforest of the Austrians, and Esquinas Rainforest Lodge



### The Austrian Government Project 1995-2005

**Aim:** to transform La Gamba into a self-sustainable community by focusing on organization, production, and community outreach in order to improve social, economic, and environmental conditions.

**Components:** self-management, sustainable production, and the generation of small businesses, all developed consecutively.

**Objectives:** consolidation of the development of the community of La Gamba beginning with the participation of the inhabitants, the improvement of production, and service of small businesses.

- La Gamba, founded in the 1950's as a social housing settlement of the Instituto Desarrollo Agrario (IDA). Population of 375 habitants (around 70 families). 56% have not completed elementary school and only 4% have completed high school. Politically, La Gamba belongs to the town of Golfito.
- Main problems: lack of education, medical facilities and public transportation; sub-standard housing; mass unemployment; no sewage system; frequent flooding
- Sources of income: tourism, agriculture, cattle farming, logging and carpentry
- Chief employers: Esquinas Rainforest Lodge and La Gamba Tropical Field Station (offering 17 permanent jobs to citizens of La Gamba)
- The Asociación Probienestar de La Gamba (ASOPROBI), founded by the Fundación Neotrópica, is La Gambas first democratically elected village council. It is divided into subcommittees for agriculture, health, women, security, roads, youth, education and water.



José Angel Montiel, nature guide at Esquinas Lodge, has turned to breeding agouti-pacas, the animals which he once hunted.



Garbage bins in La Gamba, one of the programs initiated by Fundación Neotrópica.



Farm in La Gamba

## Health and Education in La Gamba



The Health Committee of ASOPROBI with Michael Schnitzler and Ana Catalina Torres in front of the Puesto de Salud. The building has a waiting room, a surgery room, a doctor's room, a toilet and shower.



The primary school in the center of La Gamba houses three classrooms for 80 students.

- Until 2003, La Gamba had no medical facilities and doctors never visited the village. The next hospital in Golfito is 8 kilometers away and only reachable by walking or biking over a mountain through the rainforest.
- The Health Care Center, initiated by Fundación Neotrópica and ASOPROBI and completed in 2004, was constructed with financial help from the „Junta de Desarrollo de la Zona Sur“ and donations from Rainforest of the Austrians. A lot next to the town assembly hall was donated by the community of La Gamba.
- The Caja Costarricense de Seguros Sociales (CCSS) sends a doctor to La Gamba once a month. The La Gamba Fund has offered to pay the salary for a doctor to visit La Gamba twice a week. Medical equipment has been donated by Austrian doctors and companies.
- The school in La Gamba was constructed with funds from the Austrian Development Aid Corporation. Guests at Esquinas Lodge are encouraged to visit the school and donate towards school projects. Schoolchildren visit Esquinas Lodge for lectures on environment and guided tours through the botanical garden.
- Donations from Austria for materials, uniforms, and transportation enable children from La Gamba to attend secondary school in Golfito or other towns.



Families in La Gamba have an average of three children. Many drop out of grade school before completing their compulsory 6 years.



Guests of Esquinas Lodge participating in a folk dance with children at La Gamba school



Sabine Will, resident biologist at Esquinas Lodge, with schoolchildren from La Gamba



All three classes from La Gamba pay regular visits to Esquinas Lodge

## Cultural, Social and Economic Development in La Gamba



Soccer game between guests of Esquinas Lodge and children of La Gamba

- Establishment of a democratically elected town council (Asociación Pro Bienestar de La Gamba), which publishes a monthly newspaper.
- Investment in infrastructure, construction, electricity, hygiene with funds from the Austrian Development Aid Corporation.
- Setting up an integral approach for farming; improving the environment by making the maximum use of available resources.
- Educational campaign about rational use of natural resources and the importance of a healthy environment.
- Strengthening of small businesses: crafts, ecotourism, bakery, farms, cosmetics from medicinal plants, and a tree nursery.
- Cultural exchange between citizens of La Gamba and citizens of Austria .
- Esquinas Lodge purchases local products from farmers and the local cooperative COOPEGAMBA and rents horses from farmers in La Gamba



With funds from the Austrian Development Aid Corporation, the women of La Gamba learned how to grow their own medicinal plants (aloe vera, tuna, rosemary) to produce organic shampoo, liquid soap and hair gel in their laboratory.



Through the „La Margarita Project“, women and children of La Gamba learned how to produce jewelry from rainforest seeds and wood litter, paintings of rainforest animals, mirrors, and other souvenirs which are sold at Esquinas Lodge.



„Felo y Camacho“, a self-taught guitar and singing duo from La Gamba, play for guests at Esquinas Lodge. A recording of their songs was produced, Profits from the sale of more than 200 CDs have enabled the musicians to buy new guitars.



Michael Schnitzler, director of Rainforest of the Austrians and a classical violinist by profession, plays Mozart for the people of La Gamba.

## The La Gamba Fund



Most houses have corrugated-iron roofs and clay floors without foundations



The „pila“, the wash-basin and sink, is usually situated outside the house.



Firewood is used as fuel for cooking rice and beans, the standard meal. .



Half of the population of La Gamba is under 14 years.



Until 2005, meals for 70 children at La Gamba school were cooked on a camping stove. The La Gamba fund enabled the purchase of a four-flame gas oven.

- Created by Michael Schnitzler in 2005 with the goal of bettering the living standard of the people of La Gamba by supporting community projects. The founding coincided with the end of the 10-year Austrian Development Aid program in La Gamba.
- The initial deposit of \$ 200,000 stemmed from the sale of Esquinas Lodge. Rainforest of the Austrians also donated \$16,000. The fund is in search of further sponsors and donors.
- Project drafts submitted by the community council ASOPROBI and its sub-committees are evaluated by representatives of Esquinas Lodge, Rainforest of the Austrians, and the Biological Station. Emphasis is placed on projects which will benefit the whole community. Applications are approved on a project-by-project basis. Individual projects or private loans are not financed by the fund. Implementation is carried out by the community committees, which are responsible for accounting.
- The first three projects totalling approx. \$80,000 were the renewal of the water system, the renovation and refurbishing of the school, and the repair of the community meeting hall. Further plans include a childrens playground, a new sewage system and wastewater treatment plant, a garbage collection and recycling program, ecotourism, reforestation and agricultural projects.



Founding meeting at Esquinas Lodge in August 2005, with lawyer Andre Wells and representatives of ASOPROBI, the Junta Educativa, the Comité de Acueducto, Rainforest of the Austrians, Esquinas Lodge, and the Biological Station La Gamba.

Until 2005, only 50% of potable water reached the center of La Gamba, and water pressure was very low due to holes in the tubes and cracks in water tanks. Under the supervision of water engineer Werner Klar and with aid of a grant from Señor Experten Service, the water system for 62 houses in the center of La Gamba was restored. New sources were tapped, reservoirs and bridges were repaired or rebuilt, old tubes were replaced with tubes of wider diameter, a warehouse was built.



New water tanks and pipes



Left: Werner Klar and the water committee at the inauguration of the new water system.



## Rainforest Research: La Gamba Tropical Field Station



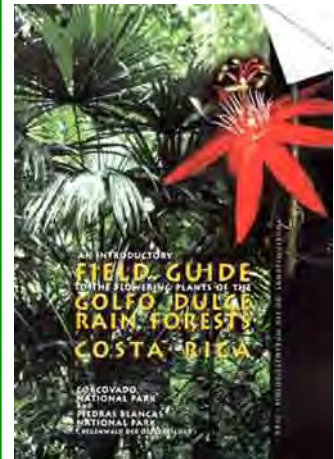
The station has computers, a research library, scientific equipment and an experimental garden.



The four buildings contain dormitories, laboratories, a kitchen and a canteen.

The „Estación Biológica La Gamba“ or „Tropenstation La Gamba“, situated next to Esquinas Rainforest Lodge, is an Austrian research, teaching and further education institution whose target is to contribute to the investigation of tropical rainforests, arouse interest for the conservation and investigation of the rainforest and give amateurs and people interested in nature the possibility to deepen their appreciation of nature in the rainforest. Founded by Rainforest of the Austrians and the University of Vienna in 1993.

- Since 1993, Rainforest of the Austrians has donated more than \$500,000 for infrastructure, property, furnishing, scientific equipment, scholarships. The station has 5 permanent employees from La Gamba and accommodates 14 persons. It has laboratories, a library, and a kitchen and dining area.
- In 2002, Esquinas Rainforest Lodge donated 5 hectares of land to the station for the extension of its botanical garden. In 2006, the station was turned over to the non-profit Austrian organization „Friends of the Biological Station La Gamba“, which is run by the University of Vienna with aid from the Austrian Ministry of Education.
- More than 30 Bachelor and Master theses in botany, zoology and ecology by Austrian, German, Swiss, and Costa Rican students. Publications in international magazines and newspapers. „The Field Guide to the Golfo Dulce Rain Forests“, a joint project by the University of Vienna, INBIO, and the Costa Rican Museum of Natural History with detailed descriptions of 700 common flowering plants, has become a standard work of reference worldwide.
- Botanical garden with 100 kinds of cultivated vegetables and fruits, orchid garden, educational courses, seminars in tropical biology with professors from Austrian universities. Close cooperation with the community of La Gamba. Reforestation plans for a biological corridor through La Gamba valley.



[www.lagamba.at](http://www.lagamba.at)



Students stay for up to nine months to study the fauna and flora of the Esquinas rainforest



Up to 25 university students at a time participate in field courses in botany and zoology.

## Release Project for Endangered Animals



The largest aviaries measure 40x6x4 meters, enabling birds to learn to fly and form social groups before being released.

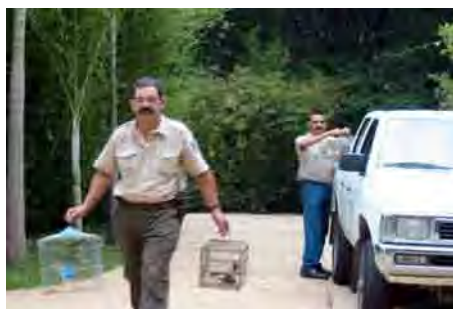


Volunteer ornithologists live at the rescue center which can only be reached by boat.

- In 1997, The Fundación Restauración de la Naturaleza, which is in charge of Zoo Ave in San José, chose the Esquinas rainforest as the ideal place to liberate scarlet macaws and other endangered birds and animals. Rainforest of the Austrians donated 13 hectares of land bordering Piedras Blancas NP for the construction of a release site.
- In 1998, the Rescue Center at Playa San Josecito was opened. The infrastructure consists of several large aviaries, a house for the resident zoologist, and a kitchen-living area.
- Macaws are raised in captivity at Zoo Ave and are isolated from the public so that they don't become accustomed to humans before being transported to San Josecito and liberated. By 2005, 52 scarlet macaws had been reintroduced into the Esquinas forest, from where they disappeared in the 1950's. Many have radio collars so their position and activity can be monitored. 80% of the birds have survived in the wild and have begun to breed. It is hoped that a healthy population of at least 100 macaws will have been established within 15 years.
- Hundreds of confiscated parrots and parakeets as well as monkeys, coatis, turtles, caimans, and other animals have been released since 1998.
- Since 1998, Rainforest of the Austrians has donated \$36,000 to Zoo Ave for maintenance of the rescue center, purchase of radio collars, living expenses for volunteer biologists.



Scarlet macaws near San Josecito



Officials from the Ministry of Environment bring in confiscated birds to Zoo Ave.



Many birds were held under cruelest circumstances



Coloring book distributed to the primary schools on the coast near the release site.

Every year, hundreds of parrots, parakeets and other smuggled or illegally kept animals are confiscated in raids or at road blocks by officials of the Ministry of Environment. Mostly in terrible condition, they are brought to Zoo Ave or the rescue center at San Josecito, where they are revived and released into the Esquinas forest. Many Costa Ricans voluntarily bring in animals which they have been keeping as pets.

## Fauna of Piedras Blancas National Park



The biodiversity of Piedras Blancas NP is similar to that of nearby Corcovado National NP on the Osa Peninsula. Because of its easier accessibility and smaller size, the park has become popular with illegal hunters and poachers and its animal population is in danger.



- In a study made in 2004, zoologists confirmed 96 different species of mammals in the Esquinas rainforest, including 53 species of bats

- 14 species of Carnivores were counted, including ocelot, margay, tayra, olingo, kinkajou, jaguarundi, coati. Jaguars and pumas have been sighted on rare occasions.

- 3 species of monkey: white-faced capuchin monkey, mantled howler monkey, squirrel monkey.

- Other mammals included in the study: red brocket deer, two-toed sloth, collared peccary, agouti, paca, silky anteater, tamandua, raccoon, bottle-nosed dolphins.

- Scientists have registered 43 species of reptiles and 47 species of amphibians in Piedras Blancas NP, including caimans, American crocodile, fer-de-lance snake, bushmaster snake, glass frogs, 5 species of poison-dart frogs, basilisks, ctenosaurus, common iguana .

- 370 species of birds are assumed to exist in the area, of which 220 have been counted at or near Esquinas Rainforest Lodge. These include the chestnut-mandibled toucan, several species of parrots, hummingbirds and trogons, northern jacana, spectacled owl, currasow, crested guan.

