



Volume 11, Issue 2

Summer, 2007.

Welcome!

To **El Bosque Pluvial's**

Summer, 2007 issue. It is packed with interesting stories about the El Yunque National Forest, America's only tropical rainforest and its staff who conserve this vital resource.



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El Yunque's Nature Guides: a Valuable Resource for Our Visitors

Cynthia Manfred bent down over leaf litter beside the Baño de Oro nature trail; with a magnifying monocular she inspected wasp larvae deposited on the belly of a paralyzed centipede. Nicole Viau, 11, and her brother Jacob, 7, visiting from New Hampshire, knelt next to her. Cynthia handed them the magnifier, carefully explaining how wasps use parasitism to feed their larvae. After questions had been answered, Cynthia continued to lead the kids and their parents along the trail, pausing to describe each new discovery. Nicole and Jacob were delighted with Cynthia's clear



explanations; they couldn't wait to use their new-found rainforest knowledge when they went home.

Cynthia, and her colleagues **Frank Torres** and **Edwin Velazquez** are US Forest Service Information Specialists (Nature Guides) assigned to the El Yunque NF. All three are Interpretive Guides, certified by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). They attend regularly scheduled refresher courses given by Visitor Information Service Operations Leader **Victor Cuevas**, who is an NAI Certified Interpreter Trainer. A large portion of each day is spent guiding visitors on "**Forest Adventure Tours;**" these one-hour nature trail hikes are designed to give visitors a better understanding of the El Yunque National Forest's complex ecosystems. A small fee is charged for the tours; the funds are used to offset the costs of maintaining the Forest's high level of service.

They also give one hour "**Rent-A-Ranger**" nature trail tours to schools and large groups. Information about Rent-a-Ranger tours can be obtained by calling

787 888 1810.

During summer months, Cynthia, Frank and Edwin present a series of "Live Animal" shows at the Forest's El Portal Rain Forest Center. Caged reptiles, amphibians and



exotic species are featured for "close-up" viewing and the guides give talks about the habits and habitats of the animals.

Frank and Edwin work only during the seven month "high" season (February to the beginning of September), while Cynthia works "solo" for the remaining five months. El Yunque's Nature Guides keep extremely busy; the Forest welcomes over 1,000,000 visitors each year!

"El Yunque's Nature Guides provide an invaluable service to visitors from all over the world.

From the Forest Supervisor's Desk



Unusually high temperature and humidity have characterized the weather here in the eastern Caribbean during the summer of 2007.

The onset of summer also signaled the start of the Atlantic hurricane season. University of Colorado expert, Dr. William Gray has stated that storm activity during this hurricane season will be above average.

We began our preparations early in April here in the El Yunque NF. On June 1st, the Forest was certified ready to respond to hurricane incidents. Because our staff are "first responders" when an incident occurs in the Forest, we encourage them to ensure that their families and homes are prepared and ready to cope with potential damage and the inevitable loss of services should a severe storm occur.

Thankfully, the first few months of the season have passed without tropical storms developing, but the season is not over until the end of November so we must remain prepared and vigilant.

The preliminary results of the 2006 National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey reflect an impressive increase over former years in the number of visitors to the Forest; El Yunque received over 1 million visitors over the period of the survey. This is favorable news; it proves that the El Yunque NF has become an extremely popular tourist destination, due in large part to the quality of the ecotourism experience that our dedicated staff provides to our visitors. However, increased visitation poses a tremendous challenge, potentially impacting our ability to manage the Forest recreation venue at its present high levels. I am happy to report that despite our recent loss of the SCSEP senior worker program (Spring, 07 El Bosque Pluvial) our staff and volunteers successfully managed the Forest access control operation

during our peak visitation periods this summer. We will study the results of these operations and use what we find to refine our future recreation management skills.

Our highly motivated firefighters saw a lot of action over the summer. Four firefighting crews and their support personnel were dispatched to combat major fire incidents in the western United States. Both firefighting crews and support personnel performed admirably, executing their assigned duties and tasks professionally. We are thankful for their safe return to the island.

As you see, we have had a very busy summer in the El Yunque NF. I sincerely hope that you and your families have enjoyed a relaxing summer season.

Hasta pronto,

Pablo

El Yunque NF's YCC Summer Employment Program; Another Teen Success Story!

The **El Yunque National Forest** hosted another successful Youth Conservation Corps Program from June through August this year. YCC provides summer jobs for young men and women 15 to 18 years of age; participants gain

greater Environmental awareness, while earning extra money. **Manpower Development**

Specialist Elizabeth Trevino, chose five YCC candidates from a total of 108 applicants by web-based lottery:

Ricardo DiCristina, Joel Diarza-Millan, Frances M. Matos and Jorge L. Cabrera from Rio Grande; Vilma Santos Navarro from Fajardo.

This year the YCC teens learned important conservation lessons by helping **Ecosystem**

Team technicians with a fisheries project with technicians Orlando Carrasquillo, Benjamin Fuentes and Anastacio Gomez.



El Yunque Loses a Friend and Colleague

This Summer the El Yunque National Forest lost a good friend, an esteemed colleague and a dedicated worker.

Miguel Lopez passed away suddenly in July, after serving his beloved El Yunque for more than three decades. He would have been 71 next January.

Miguel was loved and respected by the entire El Yunque staff; his tireless maintenance work on the Forest's trails, shelters, buildings and just about everything else that comes to mind was a familiar sight to staff and visitors alike. He accomplished every task set before him in a most professional manner, setting a high standard for those who



worked at his side. His reputation was such that he was often requested by name to work on special Forest projects.

Miguel was born and raised in Luquillo, Puerto Rico, where he attended elementary and high school. Shortly after graduating, he traveled

to New York seeking employment. Returning to the island he met his future wife Dolores who hailed from Naguabo. They were soon married and shortly after their first child Magda was born, they set out for New York once again. They lived in New York for many years; their three other children; Nelida, Miguel Jr. and Harry were born there. After their return to the island, Miguel joined the Forest Service in 1975, where he continued to work until his death in July.

Miguel will be sorely missed by his family, by all of his friends and colleagues, and especially by the El Yunque Forest that meant so much to him; the land will feel the loss of his loving care.

El Yunque National Forest Celebrates Official Name Change



On April 2, 2007 a proclamation by President George W. Bush officially changed the Forest's name from the **Caribbean National Forest** to the **El Yunque National Forest**.

The Forest celebrated its official name change on Tuesday, August 28th, 2007, acknowledging the historic event with a morning ceremony at the **El Portal Rain Forest Center** followed by the unveiling of the new **El Yunque National Forest** sign at the Forest's entrance.

Forest Supervisor **Pablo Cruz** kicked-off the event, welcoming USDA Forest Service Regional Forester **Charles Myers**, PRFAA Executive Director **Eduardo Bhatia** (representing **Governor Acevedo**) and Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner **Luis Fortuño**, and other distinguished guests along with the Forest's employees and volunteers.

An audio-visual presentation "**El Yunque, a Rain Forest With Many Names**" prepared by the Forest's **Customer Service Team**, was shown next, followed with speeches by the Regional Forester, PRFAA Director and Resident Commissioner; each spoke about the historical significance and cultural importance of the name change to the Forest and to Puerto Rico's patrimony.

As the highlight of the ceremony, the entire assembly was escorted to the

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EL BOSQUE PLUVIAL

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Forest Name Change Ceremony *(continued from previous page)*

entrance of the Forest at PR road # 191, km 9, by the Taino cultural preservation group "**Güatu Ma Cu a Borikén**" to witness the unveiling of the new **El Yunque National Forest sign**.

After the unveiling, the group returned to El Portal, where Regional Forester Myers and Forest Supervisor Cruz recognized the contributions of El Yunque's employees and volunteers during a luncheon event. Each person was presented with a new El Yunque National Forest brass name tag and given a plaque as a memento of their Caribbean National Forest service. The luncheon also included entertainment provided by the exciting University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus' "**Tuna,**" **traditional music group**.

In the afternoon, the event was opened to the public at the Forest's **El Portal Rain Forest Center**, with an **aboriginal Taino culture demonstration** by the **Taino group "Güatu Ma Cu a Borikén"** at El Portal's third level parking area.

A truly memorable day!

FOREST SPOTLIGHT



When an El Yunque NF employee encounters an administrative "glitch," whether it be with payroll, purchasing, ordering uniforms, or just about anything else imaginable, chances are they will take their troubles to Administrative Support Assistant, Delia Gomez.

Delia's cheerful demeanor, coupled with her detailed knowledge of how

the Forest Service works, is a gift to all who ask for her help.

Delia quickly resolves a problem; or if she can't, she hooks-up an employee with the exact person in FS' Albuquerque Service Center or Regional or Washington DC office to provide final resolution.

You never get short-changed, you get your desired results quickly, efficiently and cheerfully when you "deal with Delia!"

Delia is the youngest of four sisters born to Juan Gomez Felix and Aida Jimenez. She was raised in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, where she attended elementary and high school. She married her "military" husband, Roberto Soto Lebron soon after graduating from high school. While living on various military bases in exotic locations such as Germany, Delia found time to raise a son, Roberto, and two daughters, Bianca and Lorna.

Upon returning to the island Delia earned an Associate degree in Business at the University of Puerto Rico; she worked with local manufacturing and pharmaceutical companies until coming to El Yunque, where she began as a receptionist. She was quickly promoted to Support Service Specialist, Accounting Technician and was recently reassigned as Administrative Support Assistant. While working at El Yunque, she completed studies for a BA in Business Administration at the Interamerican University in Fajardo, graduating Magna cum Laude!

Delia says she enjoys working at El Yunque; she is especially happy when she is interacting with her Forest colleagues, helping them to solve their day-to-day problems!