

May 2011 Newsletter

Spotlight on Emily-Kate Hannapel, Manos Abiertas, Guatemala

"When is this baby going to be born?" This is the fifth time in an hour that I've been asked this question by the same anxious future-grandmother. I look down at my watch. It is 4:30 am. I have been at the clinic helping with this birth for the last seven hours. As the hours tick away, and the sun begins to rise, my Spanish becomes more and more incomprehensible. I repeat what I've said before, "Puede pedir el bebe-- *You can ask the baby.*"

While the labor slowly (slowly) progresses throughout the night I, along with another apprentice, are left in charge while the midwives, Gaby and Hannah, sleep. We check the fetal heartbeat every fifteen minutes and monitor the length of contractions, as well as the space between each contraction. We help the laboring mother breath, find more comfortable positions, and rest between contractions.

Working at Manos Abiertas, a women's reproductive health clinic and natural birth center, I rarely know what a day will hold. This is my first lesson in midwifery: birth (as well as life) is unpredictable. It seems appropriate that my path to Manos Abiertas has been a circuitous one and I am thankful that my journey has taken me here.



From the outside, the clinic's appearance is modest. Manos Abiertas sits on the main street of Ciudad Vieja, about three kilometers outside of Antigua, Guatemala. Every ten minutes or so a local chicken bus will pass in front, the ayudante (helper) yelling, "Antigua, Antigua"-- which echoes inside the clinic. The clinic, painted with informational posters in Spanish and English ("What you put into your body goes into your baby!") is filled with life and a gentle energy.

Today is a Tuesday, one of the two days that free pediatric appointments are offered, and the clinic is full with new life. They look like little bundles; it is 80 degrees outside and every baby is wrapped tightly, wearing knit sweaters and caps. I go from baby to baby, ohhh-ing and ahhh-ing, "Que Bonita! *How beautiful!* Que Guapo! *How handsome!*" I say to the families.



The clinic offers a wide variety of services: pap smears, pre- and post-natal care, ultrasounds, family planning counseling, natural births, cervical cancer screening, and the list goes on. Manos Abiertas strives to keep their services very affordable--a standard appointment, which can last upwards of an hour, costs 35 quetzales, or \$4.50. No one is ever turned away for inability to pay. The mission of the clinic is, "To

offer a safe and welcoming place where health services are provided for women by women, in a respectful and confidential manner without discrimination. We strive to treat the woman as a whole, in an environment where they feel safe to express, think, and make decisions for themselves." With two small clinics (Manos Abiertas II opened last July and is in Guatemala City), and a staff of seven, fulfilling this mission is a continuous challenge.

In a country where machismo is the norm, and violence against women is alarmingly common, health care and family planning options for low income women are limited. I am often surprised by the women who come to the clinic and the stories they bring. Women who have taken the bus hours to come here; couples who are in the clinic together exploring their family planning choices; a woman who had her last child at the National Hospital and had a cesarean-section and still isn't sure why. In Guatemala, clinics such as Manos Abiertas are few and far between.

As an apprentice at Manos Abiertas, I do a wide variety of tasks. I'm currently working on a study to help the clinic better understand the prevalence of anemia in the pregnant women they see. When I'm not doing this, I am working on their website, attending a birth, weighing patients, writing grants, checking fetal heart rhythms, trying to get more donor support,

reaching out to other NGOs in the area, sitting in on client visits, or talking to women in the clinic.

There is always more to do and more to understand and a year here feels like not enough time. When I look at these babies today who are from a day to a month old, I think about what their families will look like. Will they have sexual education and will family planning options be available to them? Will the work we do today affect them in the future? I hope the answers to these questions will be yes.



Spotlight on: Edward Hurme, Amazon Conservation Association, Wayquecha, Peru

A jet flies by, a golf ball is knocked away, and an orange is sliced in two by a machete. This is my signature ending to the video "Birding at Wayquecha" that we have been working on for Wayquecha Biological Station. It is really just a high speed video of me cutting an orange in two with a machete, accompanied by some finely placed sound effects. However, everyone who has seen this video remembers it most for the ridiculous ending. Our aim with the video is to advertise Wayquecha Biological Station as a place tourists can visit on their trips into Manu National Park, one of the largest and most biologically diverse parks in Peru and the world. The common birds video is the first among several videos that will advertise the orchids, butterflies, landscapes, and research. Our aim with the video was to display an accurate representation of common birds one might find on any given morning hiking the trails of Wayquecha.

As a Princeton in Latin America fellow, I have been at Wayquecha, 3000m above sea level, literally in the clouds. This is the highest altitude the cloud forest reaches, making it a unique region where most of the elements are at their extremes. The sun burns fiercely in sky at midday, with all wise animals hiding in the shade, and yet at night temperatures plummet to freezing. Winter is characterized by nonstop rains. Actually, the rain is mostly just clouds at this altitude, whitening out the entire valley with a fine mist.



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The trip to Wayquecha begins at 5am outside a dirty little concrete shop. I stand freezing with about a dozen other Peruvians, mostly carrying chickens in boxes, pigs in bags, and their rewards from smuggling coca leaves into Cusco. We all board the Gallitos de las Rocas bus, named after the Peruvian national bird, bound for the jungles of Manu. On the road the bus quickly swells with more people. Every possible space is filled, including my armrest on the aisle and the space for my feet. After five hours on narrow dirt roads through immense mountains I yell to the bus driver to stop the bus and get off at Wayquecha Biological Station.



Wayquecha is the first stop on the road after entering Manu National Park.

Getting off the bus at Wayquecha for the first time gave me an appreciation for its isolation. The station is just a small collection of cabins along the side of a mountain. Despite working at many research stations before coming to Wayquecha, I had never anticipated living at one for more than a few months. Often I would talk with people who

were staying at the station for an entire year and they seemed to be going a little crazy. Wayquecha immediately seemed like more severe isolation than the other stations. The research community was much smaller to begin with and dwindled to nothing in the rainy season. Yet after six months at Wayquecha, despite focusing most of my time on ways to bring

-ple to the station, I have adjusted to a simpler life with three square meals a day, two hours of electricity each night, and all the freedom to explore the surrounding landscape filming wildlife. It is honestly a biologist's dream to have the freedom to research any topic in a land preserved from influence by the civilized world. The biodiversity of the valley is incredible with over 1000 species of birds, the world's greatest diversity of butterflies and moths, and all the megafauna you would imagine of the Amazon. Living at the entrance to this natural treasure reveals not only the stresses of human encroachment, but also the extremely resilient wildlife that stands at the gate.

Each day is exhilarating as I breathlessly climb the mountainside exploring the landscape and scoping new animal behaviors. For the first few months I was just like any other researcher at the station. My position at the station is Coordinator of Volunteers, but there have been no volunteers during my time at Wayqecha. Instead, I have gone back to my roots as a biology student, designing and planning projects. I am currently working on several projects including hummingbird beak morphology, subterranean army ant ecology, and social information cues in butterflies. Despite padding my resume with a few publications, I believe that adding more publications to the station might encourage more researchers to visit the station. However, this is clearly a long-term goal. As the months rolled on and more clouds rolled in, the researchers returned home, and Wayqecha became a ghost station. Instead of focusing on research, my boss, Daniel, and I decided to make a plan to increase tourism and knowledge of Wayqecha.

While my research projects are still trudging along, we have begun designing a webpage and filming videos for the station. I'm not saying that wildlife photography is easy, but trying to catch videos of fast, fluttering birds on film helped me practice cursing in Spanish. Every morning I spent creeping along the trails, setting up my tripod on a cliff-side and then searching for a tiny bird in the viewfinder. Needless to say, the majority of my videos are of the shaking branch a bird just flew from.

Being a relatively new research station, Wayqecha is suffering from inconsistent management. It is run jointly by the Amazon Conservation Association and la Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica, or ACA and ACCA. These NGO's work off of do-

nations, allowing them to create grand projects like the Canopy Walkway at Wayqecha. Yet, these projects are not grounded in a simple supply and demand mindset, resulting in only a handful of visitors to the canopy walkway in the year it has been open. We have luxurious cabins that remain empty, as researchers prefer to pay less to simply camp. Therefore, Daniel and I have begun working on publicity to draw in tourists as well as securing the mission of the station. Additionally, ACCA has reached out for support, volunteering



Wayqecha to be a project for MBA students from Yale. The hope is to find a middle ground between searching for grants for greater expansion and making the station sustainable by bringing in revenue from visitors.

The greatest threat to the station is that no one knows it is there. The forests of Wayqecha and the surrounding areas have already been conserved. It is now the responsibility of the station to make the most of it. Current research predicts that one of the first areas to be hit by global warming will be montane regions. ACCA has already begun work to alleviate the transition of many animals up to higher elevations by creating a corridor for animal migration. However, without sufficient research now to reveal the undiscovered wonders of this unique place, much of the change may go unnoticed.

Despite the challenges, PiLA has given me an incredible opportunity to really work in the management of a research station. Given my background at several research stations in Central America, I am well aware of the expectations and limitations of a research station. I have sat in on meetings and discussions about the direction that the research station would like to go in.

As I look forward to the rest of my time at Wayqecha, I am excited about the opportunities for starting new research projects, working with local communities to remove their cows from our property, and training volunteers in the ways of monitoring a field station. Recently, volunteers have begun emailing me about working at the station, helping with our orchid garden and collecting data on bird communities. Wayqecha has the potential to become a great research station, and I hope that, during my time as a PiLA fellow, I can get it set on the right track.



Spotlight on: Gabriela Jara, Arias Foundation, Costa Rica

Unscripted: that is one of the first words that come to mind when describing my fellowship at the Arias Foundation. After the eight months I've spent in Costa Rica however, I've learned that some of the best experiences are of the unscripted variety. Throughout my time at the Foundation, I have been able to take on many different projects – everything from an academic journal on peace issues to a large regional project to reduce arms proliferation and address armed violence in Latin America. My responsibilities are in constant flux, depending on where and for what I am needed on a given day. As a result, the fellowship has furnished me with a taste of the versatile and ever-changing environment of a non-governmental organization.



Gabriela, on the right, with fellow interns

Even in the midst of the sometimes technical and complex (but always interesting) task of following the progress of the Foundation's projects, I have also had an opportunity to explore my more creative side – something I wasn't always sure I had! For example, right now, I am elbow deep in reports on illicit arms trafficking in Latin America, trying to figure how to make complex information more accessible. It has been interesting to synthesize the reports into a visual representation of how arms are transported to underscore the epidemic of violence that engulfs the region. Through these types of tasks, I've discovered

how rewarding it is to have visual and tangible products of my work. I found the same to be true of a public awareness event for the International Day of Action on Military Spending. Some of my fellow interns re-

searched statistics on what social development projects could be undertaken in different countries in the region with the money spent on military equipment (i.e.: how many schools could be built or trees planted with the money spent on a fighter jet). The astonishing figures and the school children that participated in the event, added color and concrete meaning to what military spending means. As a PILA fellow, I've learned that after gathering and analyzing information, there is added value and an important opportunity to broaden your impact in making information accessible and easily digestible for a general audience.

After being in Costa Rica, I joke about "Tico time" or about how it seems that people here have a different take on life. I've found that to be true not only in the lazy beach towns where time seems to stand still, but also in a different way here at the Foundation, where advocacy can at the same time be targeted to specific thematic areas like arms control while



while also being varied in its approach – including comparative regional publications, grassroots community intervention, and public awareness efforts using social media platforms and imaginative ideas.

Learning about the different issues in which the Foundation works has reinforced my desire to work in the international community. Whatever interest I had in pursuing further education and a career in international law when I arrived in August has only multiplied many times over after being exposed to the Foundation's advocacy for an Arms Trade Treaty and its capacity building efforts in issues related to arms control throughout the region. After the months spent here, I've learned just a little bit more about the many shapes and forms, scripted and unscripted, that advocacy can take.



Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of PiLA,

Orientation was just last week and it was so exciting to get the group of 2011-12 PiLAs together in one room. I left the meeting feeling energized and enthusiastic about the coming year and I hope the Fellows felt the same way. PiLA's Reunions Reception will be May 27th, 5:00-6:30pm in the Lower Hyphen of Chancellor Green—so if you are in Princeton that weekend, we hope you will stop by to meet this year's amazing Fellows and also our alumni.

This month, we have accounts from Emily-Kate Hannapel, who is working with Manos Abiertas, a midwifery and infant-care NGO in Guatemala, and Edward Hurme, this year's fellow at the Wayquecha Cloud Forest Station of the Amazon Conservation Association; and Gabriela Jara, the Fellow at the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, in Costa Rica. I hope you will find their accounts as riveting and inspiring as I do.

If you have not already donated, and you can see by our list of donors (p.6) that we are off to a solid start, I hope you will take this opportunity to do so: <http://www.princeton.edu/~pila/support/index.htm> We need your support now, more than ever. We would like to offer fellowships opportunities to as many of the qualified candidates that we can and thank you, in advance, for whatever you do to help us achieve this goal. Our fellows bring a lot to the organizations with which they work and enable them to accomplish more with their resources than they would otherwise be able.

Thank you for your support and your interest in PiLA.

Best regards,



Claire Brown '94
Executive Director

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