

THE GRAN PACIFICA WAVE

NEWS FROM THE EDGE OF THE SEA

APRIL 2015



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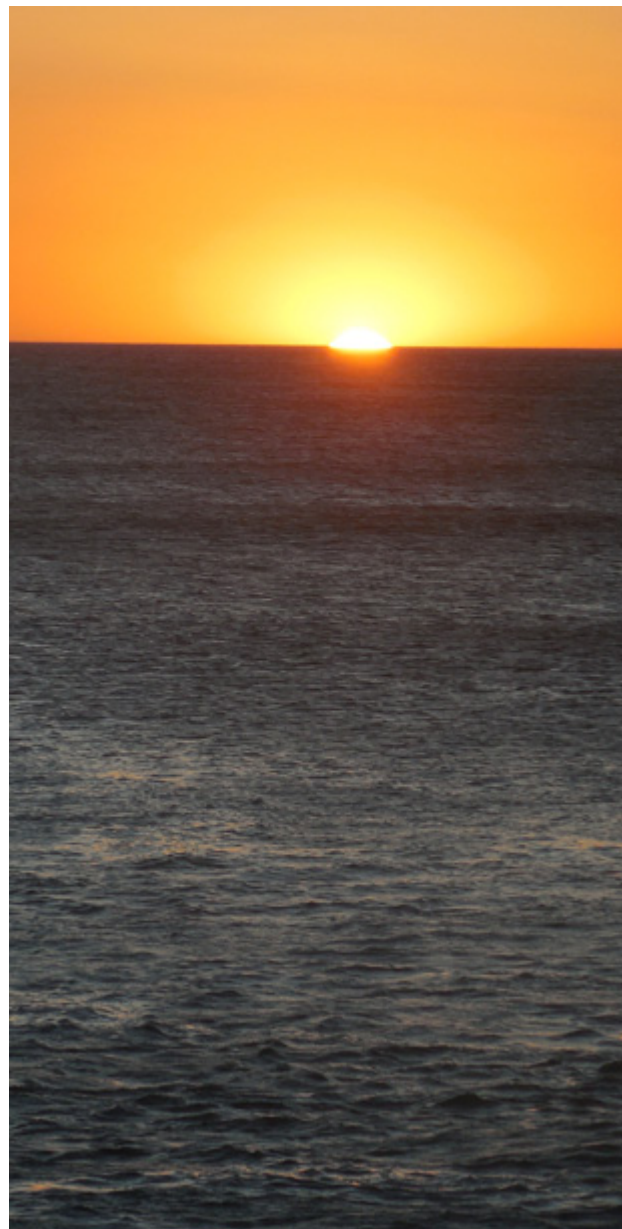
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

CHERYL NICHOLAS



Welcome to the third issue of The Gran Pacifica Wave. In this issue, you will find more gems from Gran Pacifica Resort.

The guest feature on Marianne Lidstone and her volunteer teaching leads to an article on the Anexo Rafael Herrera School and the children in El Jícaro, a small community just a few miles from Gran Pacifica. Please have a look at the description of eager children and the benevolence shown by people from Gran Pacifica and elsewhere in order to develop a program of education for the children.

The Surfing Corner has a riveting account from one of our guest residents, Mitch Lettrich, on his near drowning experience, and on conquering the surf.

I learned about the turtle sanctuary at Gran Pacifica, which led to learning about the three sea turtles found on the beaches at Gran Pacifica Resort. The article describes the olive ridley, hawksbill and leatherback turtles. An inspiring experience was guarding the nests while the baby turtles hatched, then protecting them as they made their journey to the sea. See the video of the hawksbill turtles making their journey.

The Property Update this issue contains a profile on Ruth Vado, project coordinator for Gran Pacifica, one very important cog in the wheels of Gran Pacifica building projects.

The Happenings section includes information on the Property Owners' meeting to be held on April 25th. This section also describes the fun times for all the children during Semana Santa, including coloring eggs and an Easter egg hunt along with a sand castle competition and a bouncy bounce house.

Employee training took place, in which they learned CPR, First Aid and how to handle fire extinguishers. There is also an update on activities with plans on the new clinic and a review of Mitch Lettrich's performance in spinning fire.

And, I must say Happy Birthday to my best friend:

HAPPY SEVENTH BIRTHDAY
April 4, 2004 CEE CEE!



Cheryl Nicholas, Editor

SURFING CORNER

■ MITCH LETTRICH



Conquering the Wave.

So here I was in Dominical, Costa Rica for a midday surf session. After hearing all the talk about this place, my expectations were pretty high, and I wasn't disappointed. The waves were consistently overhead, peeling perfectly to the right on beautiful blue waters.

Unfortunately, all the talk about hundreds of people in the water was also true. Despite how perfect the waves were, the majority of them were almost un-rideable because of all the people.

Out on the water I heard stories of people bumping shoulders, broken boards, and broken bones. I became discouraged as again and again I paddled as hard as I could to catch a wave, stood up, and then had to bail in order to dodge some dude sitting like a duck in the water!

My excitement to ride amazing waves was soon followed by disappointment: Too many people and not enough waves. So I decided to wait. Soon, the midday sun would be too hot and people would eventually clear out. Sure enough the sun rose in the sky, it got hotter, and as it neared noon, people paddled into shore for lunch. My plan worked. The crowd dwindled from one hundred people to maybe around twenty, and I managed to catch a few good waves. Although the waves were a bit smaller than earlier, I had them to myself.

So I caught a couple good rides, no barrels though. The wind was onshore all day, but I paddled back out after riding a couple good, long, exhausting waves. Pushing past the white water closer to the shore is always the hardest part, but I managed it. I sat up on my board and looked to the horizon.

The waves started to stack up, growing a lot bigger than earlier. I could feel uneasiness building in the pit of my stomach. If I was going to do this, I needed to paddle farther out so that the waves didn't break right on my head.

I went for it, paddling out farther to dodge this monster of a wave. This one wasn't like the others. As it started to close on me, I saw the form of it curl over right in front of me, reaching what looked like 10 ft. high. It crashed right on top of me. I felt it rip the board right from underneath me. I felt the leash from the board rip off my right ankle from the power of the wave. Without the board, the crash of the wave pushed and spun me deep under water. After figuring out which way was up, I swam for what seemed like ages. My lungs felt like they were going to burst. Finally reaching air, I began gasping as a panic started to hit me. I was way too far out from shore--boardless and breathless. I got control of the panic and started to swim back into shore with nothing but pure adrenaline keeping me from going under.

Exhaustion began to overcome me as I realized the riptide was not going to let me make a straight shot for shore. I needed to swim parallel to shore to escape this rip tide, and if my exhausted panicking muscles could hang in there maybe I wouldn't be swept out to sea. After pushing my arms and legs for what felt like ages and continuing to fight panic, I still hadn't gotten any closer. My head was bobbing underneath; I tasted the crude salt water. I could barely keep my head above the water as I yelled for help.

In the distance was one man who had heard my cries for help and paddled toward me. Breathless, I clung to his board. I didn't need to say anything. He could see it in my face. He hopped off his board, told me to get on, and together we started to swim out of the riptide to where the almost average sized waves were breaking. We both caught our breath, and another surfer came to check out what was up. I gave them my winded story, and dead seriously they both told me to ride the next wave in. It was the only way not to be permanently scared by the harshness of the sea. By now the waves were averaging about four and a half maybe five feet. We were in the perfect spot, and they told me to go for it. I did. The waves picked me up, and with the last bit of strength I managed to push myself up and ride. By the time I bailed I was close enough to shore to stand up. Now the waves just washed over me with a sense of relief and thankfulness instead of a panic. When the guy who saved me made it back to shore, all I could do was hug and thank him. I am alive. And I conquered the wave.

No longer traumatized by the ocean, I picked my board up off the beach along with the rest of my dignity and paddled back out.



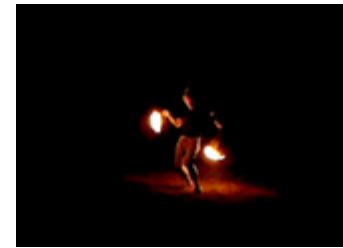
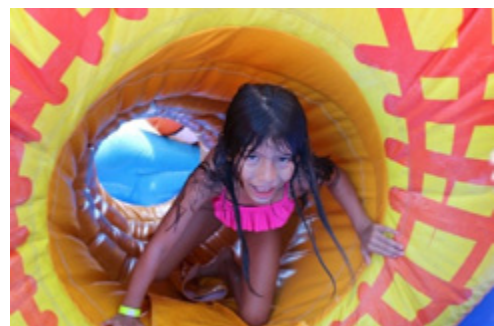
HAPPENINGS AT GRAN PACIFICA

The beach at Gran Pacifica has been home to turtle hatchings and release. Over the Easter weekend, more than 25 olive ridley and hawksbill baby turtles made it from their nest down the beach to their home in the sea. See article for more information.

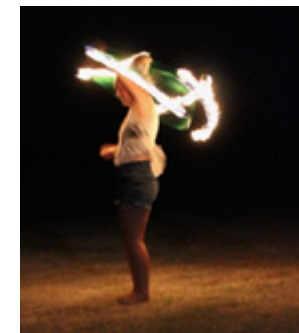
Gran Pacifica's community picnic held on the 21st of March was another bang up success with delicious original Spanish food. During the picnic, Casa Pellas organized an ATV race along the coast. It looked like a great time, and Gran Pacifica had no problem hosting the two large groups simultaneously. It is always great to get old friends together and meet new faces at these picnics, and the next one will be held toward the end of May. Stay tuned as specific details become available.

A great time was had by all during Semana Santa at Gran Pacifica Resort. Among the guests were many happy children bouncing from the pool to the various activities such as horseback riding and building sand castles while the adults relaxed by the pool and participated in selected games with the children. The children also had great fun in the bouncy bounce, coloring Easter Eggs, then hunting hidden eggs.

Friday April 24th will be the annual ECI Shareholders meeting, and the Gran Pacifica Property Owners meeting will be the following day, April 25th.



Mitch Lettrich spun fire for Gran Pacifica guests for two nights by the bonfire. The crowd enjoyed his performance. The picture below is Mitch's partner, Melissa Boyles as she performed at Gran Pacifica Resort on New Year's Eve.



Clinic Update: Grant applications are in progress as well as research for other resources to assist in building the clinic. There is equipment being collected and contact made with several physicians, dentists and nurses willing and ready to volunteer their time.

Employee training took place, led by two fire professionals. They learned CPR, First Aid and how to handle fire extinguishers.

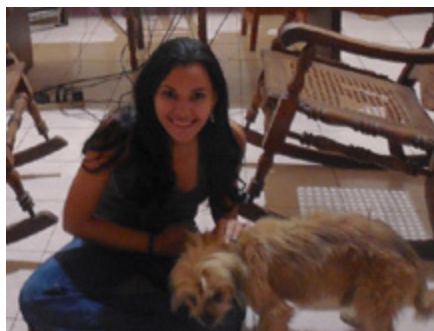


The Property Owners' Meeting is on Saturday, POA meeting April 25 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm in the meeting room next to the restaurant at Gran Pacifica Resort. See announcement.

A fashion show is in the plans and there is another wedding planned at Gran Pacifica Resort in May. Stay tuned!

PROPERTY UPDATE

FEATURED PROFILE – RUTH VADO



The Gran Pacifica Wave would be remiss if it didn't introduce its readers to one of the cogs that make building production, security, projects and utilities at Gran Pacifica continue to operate smoothly.

Ruth began working at Gran Pacifica Resort in 2009, and expresses pride in being involved in the first projects developed at the beach at Gran Pacifica Resort. A very busy young lady, she seems never to tire of all the different projects in which she is involved.

After finishing her studies in architecture, she continued with post-graduate studies in finance at the Latin American University of Science and Technology, and completed those studies in November 2014.

Besides her busy work at Gran Pacifica Resort, Ruth has volunteered her time for many years with the International Rotary, involved in health projects and building bridges and other needed structures for the impoverished communities. She has gained respect from her community and was awarded "Rotaract of the Year" for her dynamism, fellowship and productivity. She says now that she has turned 30 years of age, she will be part of the Managua-Tiscapa Rotary Club and continue with her volunteer activities.

Besides her busy professional life and volunteer work, Ruth spends time at home with her mother and her 15 year old terrier, Nooky. She had lived with her mother and her grandfather until last October, when her grandfather passed on.

Ruth makes time for fun and has taken astronomy, guitar and swimming lessons, as well as learning how to dance the 'salsa casino.' She says she also likes the theater and loves to sing.

Remember this: Ruth Vado is your go to person for any building or other projects going on at Gran Pacifica Resort. She is a wealth of knowledge and never seems to run out of energy.

FEATURED GUEST

MARIANNE LIDSTONE



Rick and Marianne Lidstone from, Victoria, BC, Canada, have been guests at Gran Pacifica Resort since February, renting a resident's home.

Rick, a high school science teacher, is in training for the Boston marathon that occurs on April 20th. Marianne is training for a half marathon in Victoria, her home city, on April 26th. She and Rick run every morning. Marianne said she likes the variety of surfaces for running at Gran Pacifica. The sandy beach, the pavers, the golf course and the cane road outside Gran Pacifica provide a good variety of training.

Marianne and Rick have two grown children who are as physically active as their parents. Their 24-year-old daughter, Kristina, and her partner, Nic, bicycled 6,000 kilometers from Victoria, BC to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Kristina is finishing her degree in Earth and Ocean Sciences, which is a geological and environmental based program. Jesse, their 22-year-old son, is a professional bartender at the Irish Times in Victoria, the second most successful Irish pub outside Ireland.

The Lidstones are a family of rock climbers, Marianne and Rick having introduced their children to it when they were six and four years old. When she and Rick have finished running their respective races, they will spend a month rock climbing at several locations in the northwestern United States.

Marianne Lidstone is an attractive, healthy, adventuresome mother, wife, and teacher, who carries the glow of a life well-led. She, a home economics and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in middle school, has been travelling two days a week down a hilly dirt road barely transversable to the community of El Jícaro, teaching Nicaraguan children English at the Anexo Rafaela Herrera School, built by Dinh Nguyen, a resident of Gran Pacifica, and other volunteers. Following through with the concept, Dinh was instrumental in connecting the teacher to the students.

When asked what first drew her to Nicaragua, then Gran Pacifica, Mrs. Lidstone explained how she and her husband with Kristina and Jesse had been on a family vacation four years ago to Nicaragua. She was moved by the desperation she saw in Nicaraguan people as they scampered for the means to live. After speaking with local Nicaraguan as well as American people, she discovered the people scampering the hardest were those who did not speak English. She knew she wanted to return and teach English to Nicaraguan children. She mentioned how important it is for the upcoming generation.

She and her husband began to plan a year long sabbatical when Gran Pacifica's opportunity appeared in one of the travel services in Canada and, besides their other travel plans to Europe and to family in Holland, Gran Pacifica Resort became an important place for them to spend some time.

With sabbatical planned, they contacted Dinh Nguyen, who they'd been in contact with earlier and found a home to rent at Gran Pacifica Resort for two months. Besides the children in the surrounding communities and the grounds at Gran Pacifica, they have enjoyed the seclusion and the beauty. She expressed gratitude to Kelly McInturff, owner of their rental home, for the loan of his truck so she could make the twice weekly trip from Gran Pacifica to the Anexo Rafaela Herrera School.

Marianne says she hates to think about leaving on the 16th of April. When I asked her if they planned on returning, she said their sabbatical was over and they both had to go back to their teaching schedules. Although they are ten years away from retirement, I have a feeling they will be returning much before that.

A link to Rick and Marianne's blog about their travels: <https://take36five.wordpress.com/>

SEA TURTLES AT GRAN PACIFICA RESORT

CHERYL NICHOLAS

There are seven different species of sea turtles in the world, and the beach at Gran Pacifica resort is a nesting spot for three of the five sea turtles found on the Pacific and the Caribbean coast in Central America. Gran Pacifica is home to the leatherback, hawksbill and olive ridley turtles, all endangered.

The primary reasons for the depletion of the turtle population are the climate changes affecting the temperature of the sea and local harvesting of turtles and their eggs. Hatchlings have a treacherous journey from their nests to the sea. Most of them fall prey to predators.

La Flor Beach, just south of San Juan del Sur, is one of the very few beaches in the world where arribadas (in Spanish means arrival) of the olive ridley turtles can be seen. Seven massive arribadas occur each year, all taking place between July and January. The moon influences the arrivals, but it is never exactly predictable when the turtles will come.

After arriving at the beach, the turtles look for a place to lay their eggs. After digging a hole, the turtles start laying their small, white eggs.



Olive Ridley Sea Turtle

About 100 eggs are deposited in the hole, which is then covered up by the turtle. After this impressive job, the females slowly make their way back to the water. The arribadas take a couple days, during which thousands of turtles visit La Flor.

About 50 days later the eggs hatch. Thousands of tiny, dark hatchlings pop up from the sand all of a sudden and begin their crawl toward the ocean. After escaping from the first predators on the beach the small creatures encounter fish waiting in the shallow waters to enjoy an easy meal. The vast numbers in which they swarm the beach make it possible for some of them to get through and grow into an adult turtle.

An image of arribadas on La Flor Beach: <https://vianica.com/activity/25/sea-turtle-arrivals-at-la-flor>



Female hawksbills return to the beaches where they were born (natal beaches) every 2-3 years to nest. They usually nest high up on the beach under or in the beach/dune vegetation. The nesting season varies with locality, but in most locations nesting occurs sometime between April and November. A female hawksbill generally lays 3-5 nests per season, which contain an average of 130 eggs each. Eggs incubate for around 2 months.

Hawksbill turtles are named such because their head and snout are shaped like a hawk's. The habitats of the hawksbill are coral reef communities. Like the other sea turtles, hawksbills are endangered due to harvesting of eggs and meat, commercial exploitation and increased recreational and commercial use of nesting beaches on the Pacific. The hawksbill have the added challenge of depletion of their coral homes. Their shells are so beautiful, they are, unfortunately, often harvested (tortoise shell), which adds to their endangerment. The lifespan of the hawksbill is unknown.

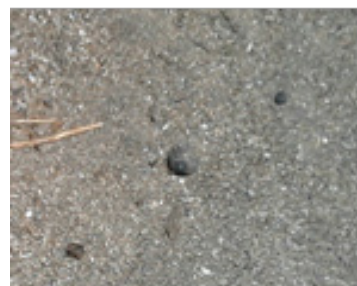
The leatherback is the largest of all sea turtles, and one of the largest living reptiles in the world, weighing up to 2,000 pounds. Their shell is soft and leather-like, earning them their name. Female leatherbacks lay clutches of approximately 100 eggs on sandy, tropical beaches. They nest several times during a nesting season, typically at 8-12 day intervals. After about two months, hatchlings emerge from the nest with white striping along the ridges of their backs and on the margins of the flippers. Leatherback sea turtles are in high danger of extinction.



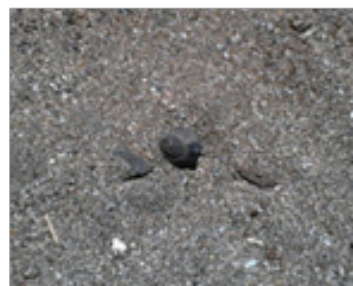
Babies!

On the grounds of Gran Pacifica, south of the big palapa deck, there is a bordered off area which is Gran Pacifica's turtle sanctuary. There currently are three nests with eggs. One nest is hatching and the others should hatch any day. We guarded the nests at night while the turtles were hatching so they wouldn't get eaten. The next day we had two babies.

A small crowd grew as, mesmerized, we watched the little kick ups of sand. One little head poked out,



then



two



little flippers

Three more olive ridley babies hatched while we watched, then we guarded them as they made their way to the beach. It is imperative to let the little baby turtles find their own way to the water so they know where to return to nest.

Nineteen hawksbill hatchlings were released the next day. Click to see the video submitted by JoAnne Stolz.

Dinh Nguyen and his wife, Rachel, found and placed the currently hatching nests (see pictures). Dinh said often times, when he can't sleep at night he walks the beach in search of signs of turtle nests. Dinh and Rachel are residents of Gran Pacifica and will return in November with their own brand new baby.



Dinh digging nests. Placement of eggs into nest.

An important note: One person has organized the turtle nesting and hatching procedure and has involved the community when the turtles are released. JoAnne Stolz, resident of Gran Pacifica is our resident turtle lady. She has compiled a notebook of Gran Pacifica turtle facts and procedures for claiming a turtle nest, hatching and releasing. She looked like an expectant aunt when the turtles were hatching, and a protective parent when they made their journey.



ANEXO RAFAEL HERRERA SCHOOL AT EL JÍCARO

CHERYL NICHOLAS



Impoverished: Destitute, distressed, ruined and indigent are a few synonyms found in Webster's Dictionary for the word.

Some may label the community of El Jícaro as impoverished, but in my view, that is far from the reality the place. I had the opportunity to accompany Gran Pacifica's guest and volunteer teacher on one of her trips to the Anexo Rafaela Herrera School. My experience left me far from feeling as though I'd been in a poverty-stricken, indigent area.

Marianne and I bounced around in the old blue truck up and down the dirt road two or three miles—it's hard to tell on these gully filled, hilly dirt roads. We rode into an area of homes and sugar cane fields. The road was dirt, but compacted; there was no dust. Most of the houses had dirt floors that had been flattened and 'swept.' It isn't an oxymoron to describe the dirt floors as clean. The road, yards, porches and ditches were all free of any kind of trash. In fact, there was no visible garbage anywhere.

We rode a few meters around a corner and came to a grouping of a plain, gray cinderblock building which was the bathroom, a small plank board building, and a pretty blue and white cinderblock schoolhouse. When we pulled up, the children streamed out of the school house and all ran toward Marianne, their American teacher, then did a double take and switched directions when they saw me, a new American lady visitor. Burst my childhood bubble.

Children found in the above defined 'impoverished' areas are expected to be dirty with soiled and tattered clothes, sad faces and hungry eyes. The school children in the community of El Jícaro are far from dirty, hungry or sad. About ten of them surrounded me, wiggling to get closer in order to give and get a hug. I looked down into those big, innocent brown eyes and open loving faces ... expectant. My heart melted.



They were all dressed as though this was the first day of school with clean, unwrinkled clothes. The boys wore bright short sleeve or white long sleeve button up shirts and the girls wore blouses and skirts, shorts or dresses. Their clothes were probably cleaner than mine. After greeting the children and Alda, their teacher, Marianne guided the students into the school house of about 100 feet by 50 feet to begin their English lesson.



I would be willing to place a bet that you would not see the same scene in any American school, unless it was out of fear of punishment. The students wasted no time taking their seats, pencils in hands and poised, over their notebooks, eager to begin, with all eyes on their teacher. Marianne took them through several lessons, never having to call them to attention. As I walked around the room, I could see their work as they wrote on their papers. They would gaze up at me with pride in their eyes.

This project demonstrated how the community could come together. It began with a shovel and a hole, and could not have been completed without the help of people from Gran Pacifica Resort. Credit must be given to those who opened their heart. Dinh Nguyen said he and a friend first saw the kids learning off a dirt floor last year. They stopped and spoke to the children and their teacher about their current school. At the time they didn't have one—it was a spot on the dirt. Dinh related how he belonged to a charity in California and asked them to donate some funds toward a school. They donated about \$9500 for the blocks and cement etc. Mark Randall's group, Surfers on a Mission, donated the cement floors.



Bob Price, owner of Bandito Burrito, donated his time and some other items for construction. Mike Cobb donated tile and other items from the construction sites at Gran Pacifica. Doctor Ellen Roose's group donated sewing machines for the women. Her group also donated paint for the school. Patrick Hiebert donated paint and brushes and brought more Canadians to help paint. The yoga ladies from the retreat taught yoga and painted. Dr. Brian from Casa Cinco Amigos donated a bunch of tooth brushes to the school kids. This community needs continuous support to help these families and their children. With support and education, they will be set in the right direction. Currently there are two people from the village going to the university. One is in his second year, on his way to becoming a doctor. The other is our school teacher, Alda. She will graduate with a teaching degree in December. El Jícaro is hard working family community with happy children that has asked for nothing.

