Tis The Season of Dispersal

All year we have been waiting to see when the young and ambitious adults in our groups will break away to find their own way in the world. Finally, in June we began witnessing the start of dispersal season. As you’ll discover in the pages to come, the application process for joining a new group is vicious in the Jungle.

Calendar of Events

June 11th
Spider monkeys and Saddlebacks discovered foraging in same tree

June 22nd
PrimatesPeru traps a new tamarin, we call her YPG!

July 11th
New field assistant Mary Dinsmore joins the team

Latest News

PrimatesPeru has two newly tagged groups: Ot 4+1 and PM 2

1 month until our first field season ends

Termites raid Chiky’s cage
**Featured Creatures: Candid Camera!**

**We Get Visitors**
Our traps have attracted a variety of creatures over the last few months and we have a few candid images that we grabbed on our trusty camera traps. Some of these creatures are very hard to see in the wild, so enjoy the sneak peek at a few rainforest celebrities.

**Featured Creatures: Candid Camera!**

- **Saguinus Imperator**
- **The Emperor Tamarin**
Featured Creatures: Candid Camera!

*Cebus apella*

The Brown Capuchin

*Saguinus fuscicollis*

The Saddleback Tamarin
Featured Creatures: Candid Camera!

Homo sapien

Holly McCready

Gideon Erkenswick
Featured Creatures on Candid Camera continued…

Eira
Barbara

Tayra
Where are we now?

We’ve had several requests for progress reports on the project, now that we are nearing our end date for this field season in July. We hope that this next section will give you some idea of how far we have come, thanks to your help and some pretty hard hiking!
Where are we now?

Stay tuned for next month’s news report for exciting details like species lists, basic results and more!
It’s not easy making it on your own as a young man or woman in this world. As it turns out, it’s not all that easy for a young fortune seeking *pichico* either. To be fair, we humans ask for a lot more when we strike out on our own, while *pichicos* shoot for the basic amenities such as companionship, food, and sometimes a mate. Nevertheless, the stakes are comparatively low for us because 95% of what we want is dispensable, and generally, there is the option to return home. *Pichicos*, on the other hand, enjoy no such luxury and that is why the next few months, fondly known as the season of high stakes dispersal, is going to change the landscape of *pichico* groups around here forever.

Put yourself in the shoes of OPY for a moment; a young 420-gram adult female from the Westside. Your whole life you have been surrounded by your twin sister, your father, your mother, your grandfather, and your grandmother. All day you run around with them foraging for food, occasionally stopping to pick flies and lick sap off your grandparents’ backs, and, even though you are a perfectly capable adult, your mother and father still insist on giving you a proper cleaning every night.

Lately though, you’ve been getting lots of attention from adults in the neighbouring groups. Other young adult females want to gossip with you and males have sometimes shown interest in your newly perfected scent marks. Pretty soon the grass starts looking a lot greener on the other side, where other tamarins will treat you like a grown-up and you can have a say in things. Plus, there is a dashing young male tamarin in the group just south of you, and even though you know he is already surrounded by females that doesn’t mean he wouldn’t take interest in you; if, perhaps, you were around more often…?

And just like that you decide to take off one day. At first you thought that your own group might protest, but quite to the contrary they rejoiced at your departure because that meant one less mouth to feed. This throws you off a little, but not enough to stop you, and you race down south to check in with that dashing male that they call GBR. You start to sing real loud as you approach the new group so that they are alerted to your arrival and you scent mark a few times because the males seem to like that. You can hear the group responding to your calls and it sounds oh-so-inviting and exciting. Eventually you see them, and they see you, and you’re smiling, but they are scowling back. While GBR hangs back a pace, the other two adults in Group FC, both females, blitz right toward you at a frightening pace, and it doesn’t appear friendly. In minutes they are chasing you up and down the trees, without real aggression but definitely some animosity. They are intent on letting you know that you are not welcome, but they won’t harm you if you just leave them be. You have no choice but to shriek and run away.

Scratch one prospective group off your list, but hey, there are plenty more dashing males in the forest.

Emboldened by the possibilities of moving up in the world you take off into previously unchartered territories.
You cross the great ravine that your family told you never to cross. You’re looking for groups and getting further and further away from your homeland. Unfortunately, there are two immense obstacles you didn’t consider until now. One, it is the driest time of year and food is scarce. Two, this happens to be the exact time when other tamarins are leaving home, which means that competition is steep.

Now you are in a strange part of the jungle and you’re singing like crazy to attract prospective groups. You’re getting a bit lonely and hunger is always an issue, but suddenly you stumble upon a jackpot – a resource no tamarin can ignore. This unique place not only has an enormous blooming *Symphonia* tree that is attracting primates and birds from miles around with it’s little red flowers and fruit, but in it’s lower reaches it also has delicious oblong fruit, yellow on the outside, a creamy inside, and sheer heaven to taste. It occurs to you that a great food source like this must be popular among the local tamarins and if you hang around long enough you can eat to your hearts content while awaiting your new posse. Moreover, the fruit is continually produced, as if by magic, and if this troubles you slightly you push the thought away with the sweet delight of consuming it.

In one of your daily forays to the yellow fruit, you find that a new group has arrived. Having learned your lesson from the last attempt to ingratiate yourself with strangers, you slow down, compose yourself, and casually approach the group. Unfortunately and without warning, a female tamarin that was waiting in hiding comes screeching toward you.

*OPY alone at the wonderful yellow fruit tree*
At her alert the others follow suit and soon your being dive-bombed by tamarins from all sides. Your only choice is to flee the scene, but the group is rearing for a chase--even the group’s little infants are getting involved. Thankfully, like all tamarins, you’re fast and small and can easily escape their wrath, but now you must scratch another prospective group off your list, at least for the moment.

Instead of taking off into even farther flung territories you decided to stick it out at this place a bit longer. There must be more groups in the area that aren’t overrun with psychotic females. On one particular day you see to your surprise, not a group of tamarins, but a single pair of females that are foraging discretely on the bananas. Surely they must have been two loners that found solace in each other and they won’t mind a third? WRONG! No sooner did you pop out of the brambles to say hello, than they hollered and screeched at you like everyone else. You stood your ground for sometime thinking perhaps they just don’t understand you, but this only made them angrier and at last they chased you away.

So things are looking grim at the moment, and now you have some tough decisions to make. Do you go home, and risk that your family won’t take you back? Do you pack your bags and move on to another place with friendly tamarins, but run the risk of not finding another food source? Or, do you stick it out at the good food source but keep a low profile?

Every population of tamarins differs in their capacity to disperse. In some areas, dispersal is not very successful at all, and groups will carry on until their oldest members age significantly, which could take almost 15-20 years. Groups sometimes will be inclined to grow, while in other places, they splinter off when they get to more than a set number of individuals. Sometimes a single tamarin can find its way, but unlike those in a group, this individual must seek out all its food on its own, and must keep an eye out for predators. Gone are the comforting alarm calls, coded with instructions on whether to let go and drop to the ground or to run high up in the trees. Gone is the ability to know if a particular new berry is edible or not – there’s no collective group memory, with one old and wise tamarin with all the answers.

Making it on your own is tough out there. And yet, staying with one’s family means a complete loss of reproductive success. Do all young tamarins disperse? How far do they go? Do they join current groups? If so, which kinds of groups? Or do they have to create their own groups and carve out their own territories within the home ranges of other groups? How many are ever successful? After all, if you are having twins every year, then you’re replacing the young adults who were lost pretty quickly.

Stay tuned to find out some of these answers, as our work with the *pichicos* continues.
Chiggers: The New and Improved Bug Bite

By Deidre Halloran

Over my first week here, I developed the feeling of invincibility; the jungle had not yet conquered me and I was determined to leave after three months here in the same superior position. Every morning the same question was posed: “Have you gotten any yet?” And every time I answered, “I don’t think so, but I’m not sure.” And to that, everyone would say, “The answer is no then. You would know if it was yes.” And right before I started to sign myself out as “Deirdre, jungle conqueror” on the hiking board, I knew. Oh yes, I knew.

Chiggers. Latin name: *evilis annoyicus buggum*. The name itself invokes something nightmarish. The wonder is that here at CICRA, no one really knows how they work. I’ve heard an array of speculations: “they’re little mites that burrow into your skin”, “they lay your eggs and the hatching is what itches”, “they are adapted to reptile skin which is why they get into the tightest spaces”, and the list goes on. But no matter how they work, chiggers are resilient little buggers and as soon as they start to itch, you know it’s all over. Picture, if you will, Santa Claus: no one really knows how he does it, but you can always expect presents the next morning. Chiggers work the same way; it’s just that the Pretty Pretty Princess game is replaced by festering skin abrasions that itch like the dickens. And I don’t think I ever received this many presents in one Christmas...

Early into my second week here, my eyes wrenched open one night in response to a sensation I’d never felt before. A mix between a pain and an itch that was set off by the slightest brush of my mosquito net or breeze from outside. I clenched my jaw as I tried to avoid my overzealous fingers from doing what they do best in the jungle: itching. Only when I realized that if I didn’t give into the desire to scratch I would die, did I know I had chiggers. And many a night since then, chiggers have been thoughtfully helping me improve the constellation of bug bites on my body. And many a night since then, I’ve been kept awake by an intolerable itch. I’ve taken to lying on my hands in order to keep them from flying to a particularly troublesome site.

The most valuable chigger lesson I’ve received has been one passed on to me by my roommate. By the time I had gotten here, Holly had already been battling chiggers for 2 months. She had tried tucking in her socks and shirt, knew that a satisfying scratch came with the price of an indefinite scar, and would have rather been gnawed on by a coral snake than get chiggers in her bed. So Holly and I now religiously take two showers - one in water, and the second in a healthy does of alcohol. Each night our cabin turns into a hospital ward and our headlamps morph into tools used to inspect each bite. Ten minutes of careful application, and we emerge more sterile than the swab shelf in the lab. And sometimes it actually seems to work. But we are slowly watching the liquid in our alcohol bottle disappear like the sands in an hourglass. Sooner or later, our time will run out and who knows what will happen then. Continued on next page
Continued from previous page. We’ve spent quite a bit of time at trap sites recently, sitting as a team under a mosquito net. If Mini starts to expect our hours playing Settlers of Catan (a board game) to rival our hours of FC observation, and we can no longer take the humiliation as she dominates the island with ease, at least I know we have four perfect canvases for a game of connect the dots…

PrimatesPeru Health-list

Here’s the tally for the month, not including mosquito bites...

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Chiggers</th>
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<th>Bullet Ant</th>
<th>Wood ticks</th>
<th>Palm Thorn</th>
<th>Infinity Chiggers</th>
<th>Plant Burn</th>
<th>Temple Spike</th>
<th>Wood ticks (1 infected)</th>
<th>Chiggers</th>
<th>Wood tick</th>
<th>Bullet Ant</th>
<th>Fire Ants</th>
<th>Sand Flies</th>
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<td>Infinity Chiggers</td>
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<td>Lots Chiggers</td>
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