

**The NEST Trust Newsletter**  
(Nicaragua English and Sustainable Tourism)  
Issue 3 Spring 2008



www.thenesttrust.org.uk

**Our major news over the winter and early spring is linked to Maggie Jo's visit, January to April.**

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**Volunteers**

Long-term

We've four volunteers in place at the moment: Ellen with UCA San Ramon near Matagalpa, Bonni with UCA Soppexcca in Jinotega, Rebecca with Cooperativa Samaria in Yali and Klaus with UCA Tierra y Agua near Granada.

Three months and a numb bum! Visiting volunteers meant many hours bumping along in buses. The communities are widespread: it's a 3 hour gravel road ride from Esteli, where I rented a 'homebase' room, to Yali, another 3 on to Jinotega. The potholed tarmac road to San Ramon is another 11/2 but the road back from Matagalpa to Esteli is a new smooth ride as is the 4 hour one to Granada down south. Granada seems like a different Nicaraguan world to me: smart hostels and hotels, cafes and restaurants with western style décor and food. Lots of expats, mainly USA, talking about their property deals: the houses they are renovating to run as tourist businesses, the ones they are building on Nicaraguan coastal plots to sell at inflated prices that push local people out. But I enjoyed my coffee tart and then my daiquiri, so who am I to talk!

**Community teachers**

- Deylin has a small group learning English in Cebollal two groups in Yali.
- Arlen has just begun one in La Perla.
- Nelvis had one in Las Palmas but it folded because participation was poor and students were unwilling to pay.
- Marlon reportedly has one in Esteli.

In addition Lenin, Hugo, Zeydi and Massiel (from Esteli but teaching secondary classes in El Coyolito) attended a 5 day intensive course with Lenny Lapon. They went through the entire book and each taught a 45 minute lesson. This was successful. Sadly Lenny's returning to the USA and so we may not have a repeat.

I'd like to say a big '*Thank You*' to Lenny for the brilliant job he's done with the recordings. He's been through every track and listed the exact timing for every activity so all teachers and students can find just the right place each time to listen again and again.

**The teaching materials**

**Book two**

This may be ready for the end of 2008, more probably in early 2009. My professional friend, Chris Johnson, has saved me from the nightmare of preparing any more materials and came to Nicaragua for two weeks to learn about the country, observe some of the English classes, and experience being a tourist, as well as enjoy some birdwatching. We had a fun time and she gained a good feel for life, literally - through bumpy bus rides and lumpy beds, 11 nights consecutively in different beds!

Smooth or bumpy when on the road, there is one constant - the loud music. I realise that's one of the most tiring aspects of travel here because I can't block it out, it can be hard to think and that's often how I use journeys, and making or receiving calls on my mobile phone is hopeless - I can't even hear it ring!

## **Book one**

We've donated or sold nearly all the 800 copies of the first printing. Crunch time now – how large a reprint do we do? The more copies the cheaper / book but the bigger the outlay. We may be able to pilot it in all the secondary schools on Ometepe Island, once each school has a CD player. *Plan S(mall)* is for a class set of books ( about 50 x 10), *Plan B(ig)* is for a copy / student (2-3000!).

I was delighted too, just before I left, to establish contact with the organiser of a guides' group on Ometepe Island. Like Miraflor this is a rural area with considerable tourism and a growing need for English. There are 30 guides in the Union, dispersed around six communities and with varying levels. The plan is for Horacio, the leader who speaks good English, to set up self-study groups in each location. As he's a trained instructor hopefully he can support them in their studies.

It's strange to see cattle going down to drink in the water here - it looks so like the sea but it's a freshwater lake. The women have their washing stones erected on wooden platforms in the shallows and Saturday was our Monday: there were lots of women down there early - before the sun makes standing out uncomfortable - scrubbing away at huge sackfuls of clothes, while chatting away - a good social event.

## **We're also experimenting with self study groups in El Regadillo near Esteli.**

The Red de Jovenes Sandinistas approached us for English and computer skills classes. We do not have the resources to work directly with them, especially as they only have Sundays and evenings available. However, they are very well organized, some seem very keen; and all have some knowledge of written English plus grammar as they have graduated from secondary school.

I proposed self-study groups using the CDs and the book. They have organized themselves into 3 groups of ten and Rebecca has volunteered to provide a day of orientation on how they can use the CDs and book for understanding and speaking practice. She also plans to visit

regularly to deal with problems, answer queries and generally motivate them.

If this succeeds, and we acquire some funding from the applications currently in, I would consider supplying them with a few computers and look for a way to fast-track a small group who could then be the community teachers.

***Anyone know of computer literate students of Spanish or Latin American studies wanting a summer volunteering in Nicaragua?***

**Scholarships** In the autumn issue I said we were making two new awards for 2008. In fact we made three and are £200 'short'. So if you'd like to help a young woman study at University please send a donation. I just had an email from one of them, Meyling, who wrote:

"Yo tengo 20 años soy madre soltera, mi bebe tiene 2 años (muy preciosa es niña adorable) la tengo en un jardín para niños o como decimos los nicaragüenses un CDI que cuida a los bebes de 3 meses a 6 años todo el día mientras nosotras trabajamos. Trabajo en una fabrica de puros como empacadora; no es gran salario pero con eso me ayudo y ayudo a mi niña porque su papa no me ayuda absolutamente en nada. Por eso quiero estudiar para darle todo lo que mi hija necesita y estar más tiempo con ella."

## **Computer classes**

Deylin held a lovely promotion ceremony in December for the 18 students who had completed the year long basic skills course in the little solar powered computer lab in El Cebollal. We think this must be a first for Nicaragua. Some 40 students registered to take this year's course and we wish her every success with that venture.

To support her we acquired two replacement batteries: those at the ends were damaged and held insufficient charge. Serendipity brought an original installer, Nestor, back to Miraflor and he gave us invaluable help.

We also bought computers for use in Yali and volunteer Rebecca is experimenting for us with basic skills classes there. Sounds simple? Not so! Esteli's daily midday siren was booming out saying "it's lunchtime folks", while

Maggie Jo could be seen scrounging around in the back of a lorry outside a motorcycle shop. Anything new here! She'd spotted some bubble wrap which was just what was needed for transporting the computers in the back of a pickup truck along the dusty, bumpy roads.

### **Fundraising**

We've two applications in and are crossing our fingers! (One will be successful if we get Charitable status – application going in soon.) However, a steady drip drip of funds would be very helpful. £5.00 / month, even £10 a year, from enough people would make a big difference. Please would **you** consider making a regular donation? (There's a form at the end of the newsletter)

### **New on the Website**

The timings for the CD recordings: invaluable for teachers and students. You can identify the start point and length of every activity.

*Handy hint 1* for teachers: When you prepare each unit write these timings in your copy of the Book against each activity.

*Handy hint 2* for those not in the know: keep your finger on the fast forward / back button and you'll travel through each Track seeing the timings (if you have a digital counter) instead of jumping to the next / previous one

- **How we're doing with the goals for 2008**
- *Raise funds to bring two more students to Britain for language and teacher training courses:* on hold. We decided that this summer was not the right time for the Trust or the person we had in mind for a visit. We will evaluate the situation for a Spring 2009 visit.
- *Complete and print level two of the NEST teaching materials:* On course thanks to Chris Johnson. Module 4 complete.
- *Disseminate the NEST materials more widely:* This is happening. The big breakthrough would be if the Ministry of Education could link their new syllabus to it. MaggieJo hopes to attend the annual English teachers' conference in September.

- *Evaluate the impact of Book 1 in the secondary classes of Puerto Morazan and Tonala:* MaggieJo sat in on some English classes which was really useful: if we do a rewrite there are lots of small changes to make for their situation – which is that students don't own the book so they can't write in it; that there may be up to 50 students in a class; that the electricity may be off ...
- *Work with communities to enhance the volunteering experience:* volunteers offering classes in other communities is very much a work in progress as the tourism programmes of the new communities are not as advanced as Miraflor was when we began there. We've a volunteer willing to give Tierra y Agua a 'second chance' and see whether we can make a difference there; Jinotega is not working out and reports are mixed from San Ramon. I guess if another volunteer came along for the autumn we might give that another chance too. Hopefully Deylin and Peace Corps volunteers will be trained and able to run the Yali classes satisfactorily.

**Great development:** Ex volunteer Jane Boyd has set up a great Hostel (Luna) and Café (Luz) in Esteli. The profits will fund social projects in Miraflor. This is Esteli's first hostel and, with a café offering good alternatives to beans, rice or fast fried food, is a real bonus. Good luck Jane.

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

**And another: Una Ventana en la America Central:** Five Short films on DVD about Central America produced by Doug Specht for The Santa Rosa Fund and The Environmental Network for Central America. Just £5.00. For more information and to download an order form go to [www.ca-dvd.co.uk](http://www.ca-dvd.co.uk)

### **Making a donation**

The Bankers order form is on the next page. Thank you.

### **Contact details:**

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*Thank you*