FOREWORD

Unless you went there nine thousand years ago, you don't step into the Costa Rican wilderness expecting to be amazed by five-hundred-kilogram beasts (or to be eaten by one of them). And once you have seen one quetzal, you have seen them all. So what is left, then? Well, at least half a million species of little things (diluted here and there by the occasional big tree, noisy gaudy bird, or hopping amphibian). But it is a truly daunting task to get to know this incredible biodiversity, to come to feel at home with all of its many parts, and to understand that most of these small creatures won't bite, poke, cause you to itch, or otherwise inconvenience you.

Knowing the insects of Costa Rica is not quite as simple as knowing the common birds or snakes, most of which are already described in great detail on the pages of a guidebook. No, to become familiar with the hundreds of thousands of species of insects and other small things that decorate the Costa Rican wilderness, you have to dive in and let them wash over you. Many—but certainly not all—of the examples caught here by Carol Henderson's camera you can come to recognize and even learn a name for. Many others will just have to remain a question mark until you capture them with your digital camera, put them out on the Web, and let those who know offer an opinion. Of course there are many resources available on the Web to help you with identification (e.g., [A photograph showing two people, a man and a woman, standing in a dark environment. They are looking at a large white sheet that is covered with many small, glowing insects. A bright light source, likely a black light, is visible in the foreground, illuminating the scene and the insects on the sheet.](http://janzen</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Nature tourists looking at the insects attracted to a black light at Rancho Naturalista

.sas.upenn.edu). But this book—which might be subtitled “tales of tropical insect lives”—is a great start.

A curious thing happens in a Costa Rican wildland when you finally slow down and narrow your focus to the little things. You find yourself walking one kilometer in a day instead of the five kilometers that you used to walk. There seems to be something new under every leaf, sitting on every vine, walking under every branch. And if you walk the same trail the next day, the birds are about the same, the plants are the same, but the insects are not. You gradually come to realize how blind we are to the thousands of species of little things. You begin to sense that the

Dr. Dan Janzen, winner of the Crafoord Prize in 1984.

rainforest is not a wall of green but rather a tapestry of creeping, walking, poking, biting, smelling, singing, courting, birthing, and aching life. And every place in the forest is different, every day and every night. The more we recognize, and

appreciate, this incredible biodiversity, the more we realize how much it is threatened, and that we are the only ones who can preserve it. If we do not take some really aggressive steps, such as buying it for conservation purposes (<http://janzen.sas.upenn.edu/saveit.html>), we risk losing it forever.

But another crucial step toward preserving biodiversity is simply getting to know it. So we thank you, Carrol, for broadening your horizons past your beloved feathered microdinosaurs and sharing the results with the rest of us.

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