

ENVIRONMENT

Earth Summit for Youth on Global Biodiversity well under way

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With some 30 teenagers from several different countries in tow, Dan Bisaccio led the way into the jungles of Quintana Roo. As director of HabitatNet, Bisaccio has organized this month's Earth Summit for Youth on Global Biodiversity at El Eden Ecological Reserve, in conjunction with the reserve's director, Jose Maria Ramos from the Center for Tropical Research of the University of Veracruz, and Cancun's nonprofit conservation group Amigos de Sian Ka'an.

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This past Monday through Friday, kids from Mexico, the United States and Saba (Netherlands Antilles) had the adventure of a lifetime as they did field work at the reserve and got to know kids from other countries who have similar ecological projects going on in their homelands.

Though Bisaccio has been bringing students down from Souhegan High School in Amherst, New Hampshire where he teaches conservation biology since 1995, this is the first time he has organized a group including young people from other countries.

His work with HabitatNet, which is supported by the Smithsonian Institution's Monitoring and Assessment of Biodiversity (MAB) Program, has taken him to many different countries around the world. This year the students of those countries were invited to submit proposals in order to



HabitatNet director Dan Bisaccio shows off a bat from the reserve.



Students from different countries got together in the name of biodiversity.

attend this "earth summit" - the accepted proposals are being presented during the summit at El Eden Ecological Reserve.

The first weeklong get-together involving the students from Mexico, the U.S. and Saba began in nearby Puerto Morelos where the, at first slightly shy, kids met and piled into vans to begin the journey to the reserve.

The ride to El Eden goes from the relatively smooth highway 30 kilometers west to an hour's jaunt down a bumpy dirt road to Rancho Santa Maria (where they got the chance to swim in a beautiful cenote) and then the final one-and-a-half-hour trek deep into

the jungles of Quintana Roo.

Lunch was served in the main building upon arrival; though rustic, the facility comfortably accommodated the entire group, and the kitchen staff did an excellent job of satisfying the hungry teenagers and their counselors.

Once room assignments were made for everyone, some of which included tree-house-like cabins set on stilts, the activities began.

The first evening included a multilingual exercise designed to break the ice and get the kids familiarized with each other. The following days were a mix of field work, project presentations and fun. The entire program emphasizes the

idea of not what to teach students, but enabling them to learn.

The students' work in the reserve was based on monitoring biodiversity plots by collecting data on the flora and fauna found there.

With Bisaccio leading the way, identifying the different species of trees and pointing out evidence of wildlife, these teenagers entered a world that they not only share with nature, but with other kids in many ways just like themselves.

The Earth Summit for Youth on Global Biodiversity continues with the second group visiting El Eden Ecological Reserve next week.

"Holding hands at midnight 'neath a starry sky..."

The song we have chosen as our guide this week for things to do, see and hear while in the Mexican Caribbean has been recorded by far too many artists to even begin to mention them. However, as with so many hit songs of old, this George and Ira Gershwin song, written back in 1937 for the musical, "Damsels in Distress," was introduced by a dancer, Fred Astaire.

"Holding hands at midnight 'neath a starry sky. Nice work if you can get it and you can get it if you try." Well, you are here in the Mexican Caribbean, one of the most beautiful and romantic places on earth where a starry sky is just about a given at this time of year.

We also offer so many lovely places to enhance the romantic aspect of the starry sky. For instance, we have fine dining establishments with great views, either over the lagoon, or with elegant interior décor such as Cenacolo in the Kukulcan Plaza mall in the Cancun hotel zone.

There are others as well, such as Alfredo's alongside the El Presidente Inter-Continental Hotel. You can hold hands with your significant other of the moment at any of these places and a slew more.

"Strolling with your one love, sighing sigh after sigh. Nice work if you can get it and you can get it if you try." You can do this while strolling along the same beach in front of your hotel that you enjoyed during the day when the breeze wafted in from the ocean and you enjoyed the sun and white sand. Of course, you may have done the same thing at any one of the beaches all up and down the coastline or better yet at one of our great theme parks such as Xcaret, Xel-Ha or Garrafon on Isla Mujeres.

Of course there are a lot of fun things to do at night as well. For instance, you can take part in the interactive fun at places such as Carlos'n Charlie's in the heart of the Cancun H.Z. or at Pat O'Brien's or Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville at the Flamingo Plaza shopping center also in the H.Z. If you happen to be a sports buff, at the same plaza you will find The Outback Steakhouse

and Sports Bar where you can catch all of your favorite televised games, including the NFL Conference championship encounters this weekend where the Super Bowl contenders will be determined.

"Just imagine someone waiting at your cottage door where two hearts become one. Who could ask for anything more?" Well, in this case, we would have to substitute



What's Going On
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"hotel room" for cottage but the rest holds true. Who could ask for anything more than such a get together in romance headquarters. Particularly after a night out, dining fabulously and then choosing your favorite form of public entertainment. You can listen to jazz at any one of several venues, including our premier jazz club, Roots, in downtown Cancun or if you are in Playa del Carmen at Apasionado on Fifth Avenue and 12th St. Or you can go dancing at any one of scads of emporiums, such as the Mambo Café, either the one in downtown Cancun at the Plaza las Americas mall or the one in Playa del Carmen. There also are great discotheques like The City that has the most impressive sound and light equipment in the world and brings in some of the top DJs on the planet to create the sounds. And for a lot of sheer fun there is the Shrimp Bucket where you can get all the shrimp you can eat for a song and spend the evening eating shrimp, drinking beer or whatever and enjoying the atmosphere, also over the lagoon.

"Loving one who loves you and then taking that vow. Nice work if you can get it and if you get it won't you tell me how?" The romantic atmosphere here has led to more wedding proposals than you can shake a stick at and understandably so. Who can disregard all of the elements that contribute to love and romance in the Mexican Caribbean? But, as you can see, you don't really need to tell me how to enjoy it but rather you...
Enjoy!!!

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