

ATENAS TODAY



Issue number 57
October 25, 2009

In this issue:

New directory	p1
Community garage sale	p2
New Atenas garden club	p2
Poetry	p3

Regular Columnists

Diane Holman	p4
Lorna Smith	p5
Martin Lively	p8
Abandoned Animal Foundation	p10

Classified Ads	p12
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ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 250 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.

Compositions from back issues are archived by category on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then [Atenas Today](#) on the business page.

Updated Directory of English-Speaking People in the Atenas Area

New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to fredmac222@yahoo.com.



Atenas Garden Enthusiasts Plan New Area Garden Club

Can you tell a heliconia from a hibiscus? Do you know what soil conditions, sun or shade settings and watering regime they prefer? If you are interested in learning more about gardening in our region of Costa Rica, sharing gardening tips and plant starts with friends, and perhaps visiting local garden “hot spots” with other gardening enthusiasts, we are looking for you!

To start this new endeavor we would like to gather the names and contact information of people interested in being part of a local garden club. Men and women, please! Once we have an idea of the level of interest and number of potential participants, we will set a date for the first gathering. You can e-mail your response to Lorna Smith at :

smithsnoh@aol.com

Please include your e-mail address.

Captiva

by Ruth Thumm

Tis to the island - called Captiva
Just north of Sanibel
To which folks come a-wandering
To stare at sea and search for shell

If you are sad and weary
Of this world's faster pace
Come walk by sea and search the sky
The frown will leave your face.

The Sandpipers running on the shore
The pelicans flying in single file
The stooping shellers on the beach
All seem to smile, "Stay awhile".

Come join the porpoise in the waves
Skip through the surf and try to fly
Ask the friendly fisherman about his catch
Gaze as the glowing sunset dies.

Too soon the magic days are gone
Captiva--we must leave
But our hearts are filled to brim
We can live again- to give.

-1970

Sun and Water

by Fred Macdonald

Early morning is the best time.
With half the pool drenched in sunlight
I wade slowly in.

The eighty degree water is sharp
But not really cold
As it creeps up to my waist.

That's far enough.
The key is to keep the top dry,
To let the sun toast it.

My hands behind my head
Keeps my arms dry
And my sides open to the heat.

Slowly I walk around
Eyes sometimes closed to savor the contrast;
Cool bottom and hot top.

In the clear morning air
Bright, horizontal sun rays
Make pool side flowers sparkle

Gradually I go deeper.
Cool water inches up my chest.
Hot skin seems to sizzle.

Head and shoulders stay dry,
Portals for the sun power
To sustain my warmth.

I walk and think;
Sometimes I bring a book,
Prop it on a raft and read.

The sun feels so good,
Its focused heat gradually increasing
As the morning advances.

Finally it is too much.
I crave the cool clear water.
Time to submerge.

I dive and stretch my arms,
Pulling myself along the surface,
Welcoming the brief, refreshing shiver.

Knifing through the glass surface,
The first laps effortless,
Arms strong and no need to breathe.

Then out to shed the water,
And let the sun do its job
Of quickly baking me dry.

How fortunate I am
To be able to begin a day
In warm sun and cool water.

Our Columnists

Of Philosophy and Justice



by Diane Holman

I am reading a book by the philosopher Richard Rorty. I am not sure how I happened to buy this book; I think I may have been reading a magazine featuring a "debate" between various 20th century philosophers—between pragmatist philosophers and essentialist philosophers—and I may have found Rorty's views refreshing. In any event, this morning I came across the most exciting prose I have read in a long time, so exciting that I am typing quickly and finding my words red-underlined by the computer.

In talking of two of the most important Supreme Court decisions of the 20th century, *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade*, Rorty says:

"The cheer we egalitarians raise at such breakthroughs into romance—at such examples of the poetry of justice—is, I think, what justifies Posner's statement that although it was 'not a good judicial opinion', Holmes's *Lochner* dissent was

'the greatest judicial opinion of the last hundred years'. I read that dissent as saying, in part, 'Like it or not, gentlemen, trade unions are part of our country too.' I think of *Brown* as saying that, like it or not, black children are children too. I think of *Roe* as saying that, like it or not, women get to make hard decisions too, and of some hypothetical future reversal of *Bowers v. Hardwick* as saying that, like it or not, gays are grown-ups too."

Well, *Bowers v. Hardwick* has been overturned—anti-sodomy laws are no longer enforceable. In the course of my lifetime as a law student and a lawyer I have thrilled to the decisions in *Brown* and *Roe* and *Lochner*: to me they are examples of an intelligence responding to the real needs of real people, an intelligence not programmed by elitism or religious indoctrination.

To me, Rorty and, occasionally, certain Justices of the Supreme Court, represent the best thinking of the best American minds. I sent an e-mail to my youngest son, Joe, who wrote his Master's thesis on Foucault, and told him that I was reading "Philosophy and Social Hope" by Rorty. He responded in an e-mail saying: "Rorty is one of my few favorite philosophers. A few years ago [before Rorty died], I sent him an e-mail telling him how much he had influenced my thinking". There is an intellectual tradition in the United States; there is a liberal tradition. There are breakthroughs into romance; there is at times a poetry of justice. Many of us need to hold on to that realization in these trying times.

NATURE AND WANDERINGS AROUND ATENAS

The Parakeets of Atenas' Central Park



by Lorna Smith

Every evening as sunset approaches, an amazing spectacle reoccurs overhead in downtown Atenas. Like clockwork, birds arrive by the hundreds, chattering and raucously communicating, vivid lime green, yellow and flame orange wing linings flashing as they jostle for key roost sites and settle in for the night. The noisy culprits are Crimson-fronted Parakeets. It is likely that they have been roosting in the Royal Palms and other mature trees in Atenas' Central Park for as long as the large trees have been there. Although they depart early in the morning and scatter in small flocks, (perhaps family groups) to forage far a field for flowers, fruits and nuts as they ripen, they remain loyal to their favorite night-time roost sites.

Roosting areas such as the Park in Atenas, may be used by many subsequent generations of parakeets as long as the roost site remains viable and foraging nesting habitat can be encountered nearby. Like a number of other birds, the crimson-fronted parakeets take advantage of the relative safety provided by colonial (shared) roost sites. In large groups, there are always a number of

birds awake at any given time, ready to give the alarm, if any predators are spotted such as owls or snakes. However, it is also easy to see that these gregarious and social little parrots very much enjoy each others company and will spend hours chattering together and grooming each other. Although the noise the parakeets make can be almost deafening, once they alight in a tree, they become invisible until they move. Such effective camouflage in a brightly colored bird seems to function outside the bounds of logic. "I know the bird is RIGHT in front of my eyes.....I saw him land, now WHERE is he?" is the parakeet watcher's lament.

Crimson-fronted Parakeets are large green parakeets that belong to the genus *Aratinga*. Members of this genus are found throughout Central and South America and represent a wide range of small parrot-like birds. Almost all parakeets and parrots belong to the large family *Psittacidea*. What makes all members of this family unique and identifiable is the short, blunt, rounded beak which includes an upper mandible which fits tightly over a broad lower, pointed mandible. Another identifying characteristic in all parrots is the zygodactylous foot. This simply means that two toes point forward and two point backward when a bird is perching. Such foot construction gives parrot family members the abilities to grip strongly and climb adroitly. Parrots are monogamous, with pairings often lasting the lifetime of the birds.



Crimson-fronted Parakeets can be identified by their red foreheads, and patches of a similar color on the leading edge of the wing (seen in flight) and long green, pointed tails. They measure between 11-12 inches in length. The sexes appear similar, although juveniles are not as bright. The crimson patch on juveniles often appears spotty. It is easy to observe the large, noisy flocks of these birds as they fly every morning and evening between feeding areas and the roosting site of preference in the Atenas Central Park opposite the Catholic Church. Watch for them feeding in local fruit and nut trees in season. The birds are very partial to the fruit of the Cas tree and the Poro tree.

These parakeets occur mainly in Costa Rica, with some birds ranging to Panama and Nicaragua as well. When it is time to nest Crimson-fronted Parakeets seek out forest areas where hollowed out trees or cavities in decaying wood can be found, although they will also nest in thickets. They frequently occupy old woodpecker cavities and occasionally make their own excavations. Once the nest is selected and occupied by a pair, the female lays and incubates the eggs. Clutch sizes range from 2 to 4 white eggs. While the female remains on the nest, the male brings food to her and the nestlings. When the nestlings are old enough, the female will leave the nest and assist her mate in the foraging duties for the hungry growing family. Nesting season is generally January

through April when the least amount of rain falls.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) monitors the health of bird populations worldwide. So far, populations of Crimson-fronted Parakeets remain healthy owing to their ability to adapt and expand into areas of farming activities and second-growth forests.

The other species of parakeet which can be observed in the greater Atenas area is the Orange-chinned Parakeet, or *Brotogeris jugularis*. This parakeet is a smaller, duller cousin to the Crimson-fronted Parakeet. It is mostly grass-green, with some fading to orange on the wings. The orange chin, for which the species is named, is hard to see from any vantage. In Atenas, the short tail and smaller size allows the species to be distinguished quite easily from the Crimson-fronted. The call is more melodious, and the very swift flights of flocking birds are more erratic.

An interesting nesting habitat of the Orange-chinned Parakeets is their frequent use of arboreal termitariums (termites' nests constructed in trees). These dark brown, papery looking balls can be found in the crooks of many trees around Atenas, and throughout Central America. The birds will excavate tunnels and make nesting chambers in the center of the termite mounds. They will lay their eggs in their "custom-built" nesting chambers. It is believed that the termites excrete a substance to block off the Parakeet nest from any internal communication with the termite mound. Scientists are still studying how this apparent symbiotic relationship works!



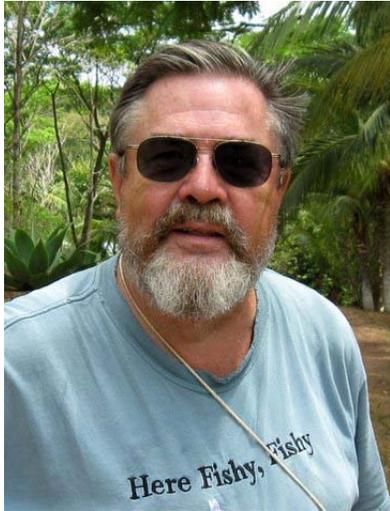
A Word on Keeping Wild Birds in Captivity

It is illegal in Costa Rica to capture or cage wild birds, unless you are licensed as a rehabilitator. This law is not strictly enforced, as is obvious to anyone who walks the neighborhood streets of Atenas and observes the many caged birds kept as pets. Few have been purchased from legitimate sources. Wild birds simply do not make good pets, and this is especially true of all members of the parrot family. Parrots need a great deal of time and attention. They are very social, gregarious, intelligent birds who need space to fly and lots of stimulation to stay healthy. They also need the right kinds of food and shelter. Many wild birds carry a parasite load that may not affect them in the wild adversely, but under the stress of captivity, the parasites can take over and kill the bird very quickly. It is not an act of kindness to cage a wild bird. Furthermore, parrots can be very destructive and noisy pets! Their longevity, (over a hundred years for some species) means that a bird consigned to life in a cage has a very long period of captivity in front of

him and the potential for abuse on the part of future owners.

Injured, young or displaced wildlife which you may encounter can often be transported to ZOO AVE for rehabilitation and release by the trained staff of biologists and veterinarians. If you need assistance with catching or transporting an injured or young abandoned animal, please call Lorna and Darrell Smith (our local married team of biologists) who have years of experience in capturing, transporting, rehabbing and releasing injured wildlife.

Fear on the Job.



by G. Martin Lively

This is the first in a series of true accounts of my experiences as a cop in San Francisco.

The door to the electronics store basement warehouse area was open a few inches. Not a good thing at three in the morning. The business was new and had not yet installed burglar alarms.

The hood of a car parked at the curb nearby felt quite warm, and there were .22 caliber bullets in the front passenger foot well. Time to call for backup:

“Headquarters, 52.”

“Go ahead five two.”

“Open door, Top of the Hill TV.”

“10-4.”

The dispatcher notified the adjacent beat officer to cover me, and I waited where I could see both the front and side or basement door to the store.

Despite the half hour TV show cliché where there are at least three car chases and two shoot outs per show, the real work day, or in my case work night, of most cops is mostly

boring. Driving around from midnight until 8:am in Daly City, California, looking for something out of the ordinary requires a lot of caffeine and dealing with a little fear. Fear that if you nod off while waiting for someone to bust the stop sign where you get your two “movers” per shift, the shift sergeant will find you and write you up, or that someone with a hatred for cops would do even worse. (There was no quota on tickets by the way, but there was a firm sense that if you did not bring in two citations for moving violations and two for parking violations that you just weren’t looking. Think about it. As you drive an hour or so going anywhere, how many traffic violations do YOU see?)

Backup arrived. It was Bill Moeller (poor Bill, he had been given badge number 54 at the height of the popularity of the TV show *Car 54 Where Are You?*, and was teased on air by everyone). Bill had gotten there in a couple of minutes and Lt. Tom Culley, the Watch Commander and Shift Supervisor that night, arrived at the same time. The dispatcher at the station reported that he had notified the TV store owner of the apparent break in, and that the owner was en route, but probably an hour away. I asked Bill to pick the front door lock and to find the light switch for the basement, and to then station himself at the upstairs interior door to the basement. Tom and I entered the basement through the already opened door.

The little worries about being caught napping by either a supervisor or a malcontent were nothing compared to the icy sensation of entering a totally dark warehouse area through a forced door, knowing that the person or persons inside might be armed.

Tom and I alternated moving forward a few feet at a time. We held our flashlights out to the side at arm’s length and button flashed the light on for just enough time to see where each could advance. We leap-frogged in this manner through the storage racks and

stacked TVs. Each flash brought the expectation of a gunshot. Finally we could hear someone scurrying ahead of us. We could hear him breathing and he could hear us closing in on him. Flash. Move. Flash. Move. After what seemed like hours but had to have been only minutes we were nearing the opposite corner of the basement. He had not fired. And now, up against a concrete block corner he knew he was caught. Would he start shooting?

The basement ceiling lights flashed on; Bill had found the switch. Boxes moved in the corner and we yelled that whoever was there had until the count of three to stand with hands raised and empty, or we would start shooting. (We could not have done that, of course. But...threats work.) He stood as ordered and was quickly taken down and cuffed.

We called out for Bill to come down the stairs from the showroom and the three of us searched for a gun. No luck. There were several large uncovered drains in the basement floor and a handgun could have easily been dropped into one of them. Too bad, because burglary while armed with a firearm carries a much higher penalty.

The suspect said nothing; this was far from his first time in handcuffs. We heard much, much later that he had pled guilty and been returned to prison for this burglary and for violation of parole.



Atenas Foundation for Abandoned Animals



by Lori, Sylvia, and Lorna

Hard Working Volunteers Make Animal Rescue in Atenas a Huge Success with Spray and Neuter Clinics as Foundation Celebrates Finding Homes for 1000 Animals in the Past Two Years!

I have lived with dogs and cats all my life. My family has included over a dozen different dogs over the years. All but two of them were mixed breed rescue dogs. The satisfaction that I received from giving these lovely, deserving animals a permanent home and being loved in return, cannot be expressed in words. Until every pet owner accepts their responsibility to spay or neuter their animals to prevent more unwanted street dogs and cats, there will always be too many animals and too few homes, and even 1000 new homes is not enough!

So we are putting out a special appeal to the Atenas community of pet owners this month. Please see that every pet in your household, dog or cat, is spayed/neutered. Your purebred pets also contribute to the problem. It only takes a few moments for an animal to escape from your watchful eye and breed with the local skinny starving, street dog who has come into heat yet one more time. **Unless you are very serious and experienced at breeding animals, don't plan to breed your purebred pet.** There is a science involved in breeding for good traits and

it is expensive to have all the necessary tests done to make sure your dog is not passing on undesirable traits to the breed.

If what you want is a grateful loyal companion who will love you all your days, a mixed breed homeless dog should be your choice for a pet. Once you have adopted a homeless animal into your family, you can know that you have given them a chance at a happy life. Life on the street is very hard, and extra hard for a pregnant female, cat or dog who has no home and no way to adequately care for their offspring.

In addition to reducing the number of unwanted animals abandoned and abused each year, spaying or neutering your pet will improve that animal's overall health and quality of life. Fewer cancers and tumors such as mammary and testicular tumors are found in dogs who have been "fixed". Reducing the amount of sex hormones affecting your dog/cat also means that their behavior will be friendlier, they will be less likely to roam and their exposure to disease and parasites is greatly reduced. Spayed or neutered pets are safer pets. The Animal Rescue association of Atenas holds several low-cost spay/neuter clinics every year. For information on upcoming events, contact us directly or visit our website.

Another recent success story for the Foundation was the rabies vaccination event held on October 3 in Dr. Solano's clinic. The donation of 200 vaccines from SENASA (Servicio Nacional Salud de Animal - National Animal Health Service and part of the Agriculture Ministry of CR) made this event possible. We are very grateful and express our thanks to the volunteers, and especially to Dr. Solano, who made this event possible.

This month our featured animals for adoption are: **Pecas**, a mixed breed female, **Samantha**, a Dachshound mix female, **Bruno**, a Rottweiler Shepherd mix and our lovely Tabby Cat, **Bemito**. These animals are currently in foster homes and are in desperate need of permanent families to love them.



We are also putting out a special request for the help of a good hearted Samaritan who will be willing to take on the expenses for treating **Spud**, the Mercado dog that has cancer of the penis. Sadly, had Spud been fixed when he was younger, he need not have suffered from this type of disease. He has a good survival chance with treatment, but will not survive beyond six months if he doesn't receive treatment . Spud is really great little dog that deserves this fighting chance. We are also seeking a foster or permanent home for him. To see all of their stories and read more about the animal rescue foundation and what you can do to

help the abandoned street animals of Atenas, please visit our website at:

<http://www.costa-rica-live.com/AnimalesAtenas/Adopciones.html>

American Builder

20 years experience building in Costa Rica. References and photos. Have architect to help with plans and permits if needed. Building in Atenas can be easy with the right team.
Call Bill Enell 8812-0126 or 2446-4837

Counseling Services



Now accepting clients for counseling and life coaching. Alleviate symptoms, make desirable changes, and attain important goals. Depression, culture shock, despondency, marital problems, etc. Individual, couples, families. **Ron Bell** @ 2446-1257 (Rio Grande, Atenas).

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For Sale -- 1997 Toyota RAV 4



asking \$6900

The perfect small SUV for Costa Rica. Five speed manual transmission, four wheel drive, air-conditioning, radio, good running condition (recently passed inspection).

Contact: Fred Macdonald 2446-0440, 8848-7632, fredmac222@yahoo.com

Private Lot on River



This 5400 square meter lot is in Finca Zacatal, a 9 lot community located in San Isidro de Atenas, approximately 5 kilometers from town. Huge trees and a stream border the property, which is completely private with no other houses visible. Water and electricity is installed to the property line. Two other houses have been constructed in the community, and a caretaker house at the entrance provides security.

Asking price \$60,000.

Contact Fred Macdonald, 2446-0440, 8848-7632, fredmac222@yahoo.com.

Short-Term Rental Property



The lower unit is a new, furnished one bedroom apartment, with a full bath and a living room-kitchen combination. It is located in *Hacienda Atenas* with great mountain views. Amenities include: large bedroom with sliding door, queen bed, on-demand hot water, gas stove/oven, refrigerator/freezer, microwave, satellite TV, WIFI, security alarm system, gated entrance, large secure parking, large covered patio, separate patio with gas grill, and access to a pool and a washer/drier. Daily maid service is available if desired.

Only \$65 per night, or \$420 per week (7 nights)

Contact: Stef Bogatinoff (506) 8863-9964 stef@costaconcierges.com
