

BELIEVE

by Beverly MacIntire

According to the tenets of island biogeography, an insular landmass is endowed with plants and animals according to a formula based on its area and proximity to other islands. By this calculation, we shouldn't expect tiny Culebra at the low end of the size-scale to have



much to show in the way of biological richness. But I've always thought we are inordinately well endowed.

Besides the obvious--the ancient nesting rituals of leatherback and hawksbill turtles and the springtime spectacle of 30,000 raucous sooty terns doing their mating thing--we have legions of other seabirds--: royal, sandwich and roseate terns, tropicbirds, boobies, frigatebirds and pelicans. This time of year the countryside is a-twitter with migratory warblers passing through. We have lizards galore--anoles, mabuyas and amievas. We are well stocked with snakes, bats and toads. There are undoubtedly endemic insects here unknown to science. And I better not get started on the trees and plants because I know Jim doesn't have room to print even a condensed description of

our floral treasures. I am all for biodiversity, and can barely restrain myself from adding new plant species to my personal collection, as well as revering and safeguarding our natives, so it absolutely made my day when a friend told me she had just seen, right under her very nose.....another very rare species.....*the Culebra puma!*

Going back twenty years there have been accounts of a large cat inhabiting this island. Of course, this is totally out of bounds for our native fauna. The closest relative, the vanishingly scarce Florida panther, lives way too far away to swim here. But I myself have heard personal accounts from three friends who were

certain they had fleeting glimpses of such a thing..

There was one second-hand account from a tourist couple on Tamarindo beach who were scared to see such a large animal and retreated in haste; they assumed it was just something that graced our rare tropical island. Then there was Bobby B. who claimed he saw it on his porch. It must be admitted that both the sighting and the telling of the tale in the late afternoon may have been influenced by a couple rounds of rum libations. But he insisted it was a bobcat, and being a son of the South he damn well knew a bobcat when he saw one. Speculation abounds. With total concealment offered by a habitat of thorn bush that few people ever penetrate, the wonder is that the thing has been seen as often as reported, though I had heard of no sightings for the past few years and was giving up hope.

Then, halleluia, a visiting friend who has been coming here for five years had a remarkable experience. She's been staying at a house by Mosquito Bay, and very early in the morning from the upper deck saw a large tawny form emerge from the trees less than fifty feet away. For a moment she thought it was a dog, but then she got a good look at the long tale curving up at the end and realized it was a very large cat. "I could hardly believe what I was seeing" she told me in restrained astonishment. The puma! It lives!

FORMER MAYOR IVAN ROMERO IS NEW DRNA LIAISON

El ex alcalde popular de Culebra, Iván Romero es el nuevo director de la Oficina de Asuntos Políticos del Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA), anunció el secretario de esa agencia, Javier Vélez Arocho. El Secretario informó que creó el puesto recientemente para que sirva de enlace entre el DRNA Y los alcaldes y legisladores. "Es una posición que entendí que era necesaria, tengo la oportunidad de tener ayudantes especiales, así que traigo a una persona que me ayude hacer el contacto que hay que hacer en la Legislatura, a escuchar los reclamos de los senadores, representantes y los alcaldes cuando yo no puedo", indicó Vélez Arocho. Según el funcionario, el ex ejecutivo municipal tiene experiencia trabajando con alcaldes y legisladores, así como con agencias públicas porque presidió Autoridad de Conservación de Culebra.

The former mayor of Culebra, Iván Romero is the new Director of the Political Liaison Office of the Department of Natural Resources and Ambientales (DRNA), Javier Vélez Arocho the Secretary of that agency recently announced. The Secretary stated that he created the position recently to coordinate between the DRNA and mayors and legislators. "I had the opportunity to have special assistants, so I brought in a person who can help make the contact with the Legislatura, to listen to the concerns of the senators, representatives and the mayors when I cannot". Vélez Arocho felt that the ex-municipal executive has the experience working with mayor, legislators, as well as public agencies because he presided over ACDC of Culebra.