

BCI
2.11.89

Dear Joshi,

Thanks for the letter. That was the third from India - one from home, another from Purnima + yours. Letters have taken from 11-19 days to reach me from India. Hope all's well with you. I'm fine. Quite settled. Though I've started getting more familiar with the birds, I'm only making casual observations of them. I'm working with frogs! Dr. Stanley Rand was more keen that I looked at the frogs here with the same 'attitude' as I did the birds in U. Kannada. Moreover, my limitations - not being able to drive a car or use a boat, the season (its the rainy season out here) and the short duration of my stay here, have left me with no better choice than do a detailed study of the frogs here. Smaller organisms. Smaller size of study plots. Less effort. Some data, different from what Dr. Rand already has. However, I'm not so much bound by these limitations to the island. I am working elsewhere on the mainland across the canal. I am using a bicycle! Its tiring. Its worth the trouble though. I would have to do 15-20 km in a day (not everyday), may be once or twice a week. Dr. Egbert Leigh has been kind enough to offer me a room in his house + food. I stay overnight with the Leighs when I have to work off the island.

I have already given two talks out here. One on BCI - a slide show and the other was a 'hot' defence of my thesis specially arranged by Dr. Rand at Gamboa. It went on for 2 hours. I could it go beyond 2 aspects. I am planning to talk about my idea of landscapes + the conservation strategy of birds at Ancón one of these days. I'm giving a talk in the city to the AUDUBON SOCIETY (on 9.11.89) ~~out there!~~ of PANAMA! Four talks + at least one more in 3 months!

Differences of opinion are too many - not just between me & the audience - but also within the audience. Except the 2 people who had earlier worked with the Community Ecology of birds here, everyone else accepted what I had to say. The 'bird people' made the most ridiculous remark. "Your birds are bizarre!" The senior staff of STRI are differing in their opinion on tropical research. Whether tropics are that important. What question does a tropical forest community answer that a temperate community does not? My data & interpretation have 'resurrected' the study of tropical communities (which had died long back & I can see that). I have been asked to write up a critical note based on my results for NATURE!

BCI is full of plant physiologists and plant population geneticists. All lab work. The general atmosphere is not at all encouraging. A very easy going attitude ^{prevails} for most Americans - a kind of holiday in the tropics supported by some institution - a small experiment or collection of plants etc., an excuse. I'll tell you more details when I'm there.

I would be glad if you prepared the paper with Prof. Gore & Kharshikar. We ^(Indians) are very soon going to take control of the study of tropical forests. [The Americans are very biased & have a very narrow-minded approach to field research. I'm watching it & have also had to openly make remarks on it]. I would be pleased if you be the first author in that paper if its going to be mathematical. I have no other objection to it. I have a lot of interesting ideas & the frogs to help test more hypotheses. If all goes well I'll be in Bangalore on the 12th December.

Ms. Sue Williams is no longer here. I gave off the bag to Mary (Dr. Robert Leigh's ^{daughter}) who's the only child around here. I hope you would agree with me on that. I didn't want to bring it back. By the time this letter reaches you, it would be time for me to start packing up for my return. I'll

have lots to say back in CES. My regards to the other students.