

*December 2020*

*Patos Suertudos, Costa Rica*



*Much love and blessings to all of our dear friends and family. May the new year bring gifts of health and happiness.*



*The year 2020 at Patos Suertudos, began with a birth of identical twin male lambs named Twenty and Twenty.*



*We finished building a chicken coop to make*

*room for a family of four with their three cats and 37 chickens. Then began deconstruction of the Termite House.*

*Nick came from the states to earn a Permaculture Design Certificate. We designed his program to build upon his Science-teacher/adventure guide background and goal to teach adults. His final project was designing a curriculum of fun game/initiatives to teach Permaculture principles to all ages.*



*The Adorable family took care of the farm while David and I traveled to Auckland, New Zealand for our niece's wedding. We made magical memories with*





Mom-in-law, Barbara, David's sister Janet, her twins, Maya and Sarah, Sarah's groom Rich, and his beautiful family.

**Small world:** Lilly, one of our volunteers from Seattle, now lives on the South Island and is close friends with Rich. Seeing her added even more joy to the trip.

The newlyweds stayed in town before honeymooning to Rich's family's home on Rarotonga, Cook Islands giving us an opportunity to spend more time with them while exploring Auckland and some of the North Island.

I was impressed by Auckland's bicycle friendliness, the diverse culture, and unique climate.



The water near city reminded me of Seattle.

We were lucky to have made the trip before



borders closed, leaving us in our Costa Rican paradise with a long list of projects.



*The brothers we call “the Buffaloes”, Vianey and Alvin came to work for days at a time. They went from sleeping on the old porch of the termite house porch to the Gavilana House, as*



*one came apart and the other came together. The two are super strong and specialize in heavy lifting, working harder and faster than anyone we know. All while singing and laughing.*



*They helped pull apart the old structure, moving heavy cement, gravel, trees,*



*and digging up gnarly roots of giant bamboo so the floor in the new house wouldn't turn into a forest. My biggest challenge was keeping them fed and enough work organized in front of them.*



*They rebuilt part of the humanure structure, helped re-model the cabina, the Gavilana House, re-roof the*

*Mot Mot house, paint the roofs, de construction of Termite House lifting solar panels in place, and re-construction on the new house. Oh, plus they put in a whole new long fence-line to keep out the neighbor's giant bulls.*



*As if all that heavy lifting wasn't enough, they'd warm up for dinner bench pressing slabs of concrete and run a few Kilometers.*



*The adorable family left us in March with 7 chickens to keep us in eggs.*



*When the new roof on the former Creekside Cocoon House took on a frontward V shape, David renamed it Casa*



*Gavilana, for the Laughing Falcon, the bird we call George for my Uncle, another life of the party.*



*Nestor, who put many hours into the Gavilana House returned for weeks at a time while continuing to develop his own farm and completing coursework to earn his Patos' Permaculture Design Certificate.*



*He's been a huge help through this year. His English skills have improved over time, while my Spanish is stronger for his gentle corrections.*





Our very awesome neighbors, **Jose and his son, Jefferson** dropped by to check out the action and volunteered to help dig and mix cement to set in the posts.



**Jefferson** kept coming back for more. We like him, so we've kept him on staff. He's made our year easier by taking care of

letting the sheep out, keeping up with the chopping, harvesting, and lending a hand where needed.

His family keeps us in goat milk and link us to community. They are very resourceful, helping us make good use of materials that we discard.



*The roofs needed cleaning, some replacing and painting before we could add more solar panels.*



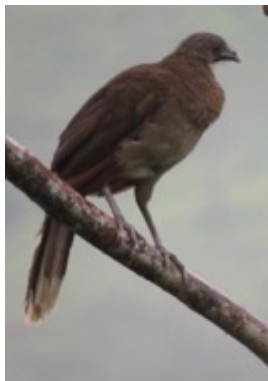
*I couldn't believe how quickly these guys made that happen. That had to happen before adding more capacity to the solar system to accommodate the expanded need with the new house.*



*Named for the beautiful **Mot Mot**, the little house we use for storage got new bamboo supports and roofing. The covered porch became the new home for the mariola honey bees.*



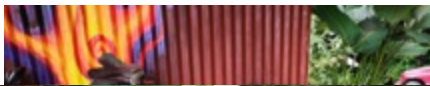
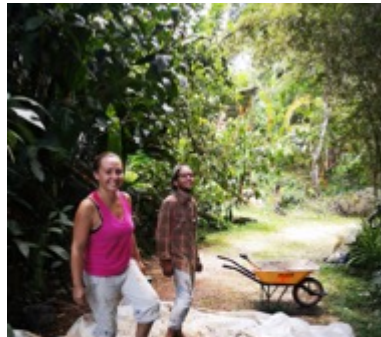
*The **cabina** got new roofing, expanded coverage, a little kitchen, sink, water, and shower with hot water when the sun shines. It's become a special place to hide out for a stay-cation.*



*The **Pajuila House**, where David and I sleep is named for an abundant prehistoric chicken-like bird unique to the area. It is made mostly of bamboo with some dirt floor. You will find me in the hammock reading during afternoon siestas and on the porch at sunrise for yoga.*



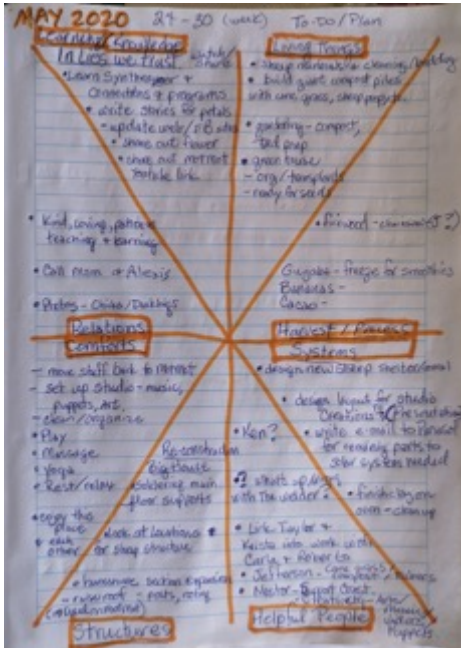
***New Oven:** The beautiful elephant-shaped mud-rocket-oven needed to be remade. We love this technology, burning just a small amount of wood. I struggled with all the cracks. Add more sand! Many hands (and feet) and lots of hours until paleo-pizza. Totally worth it.*





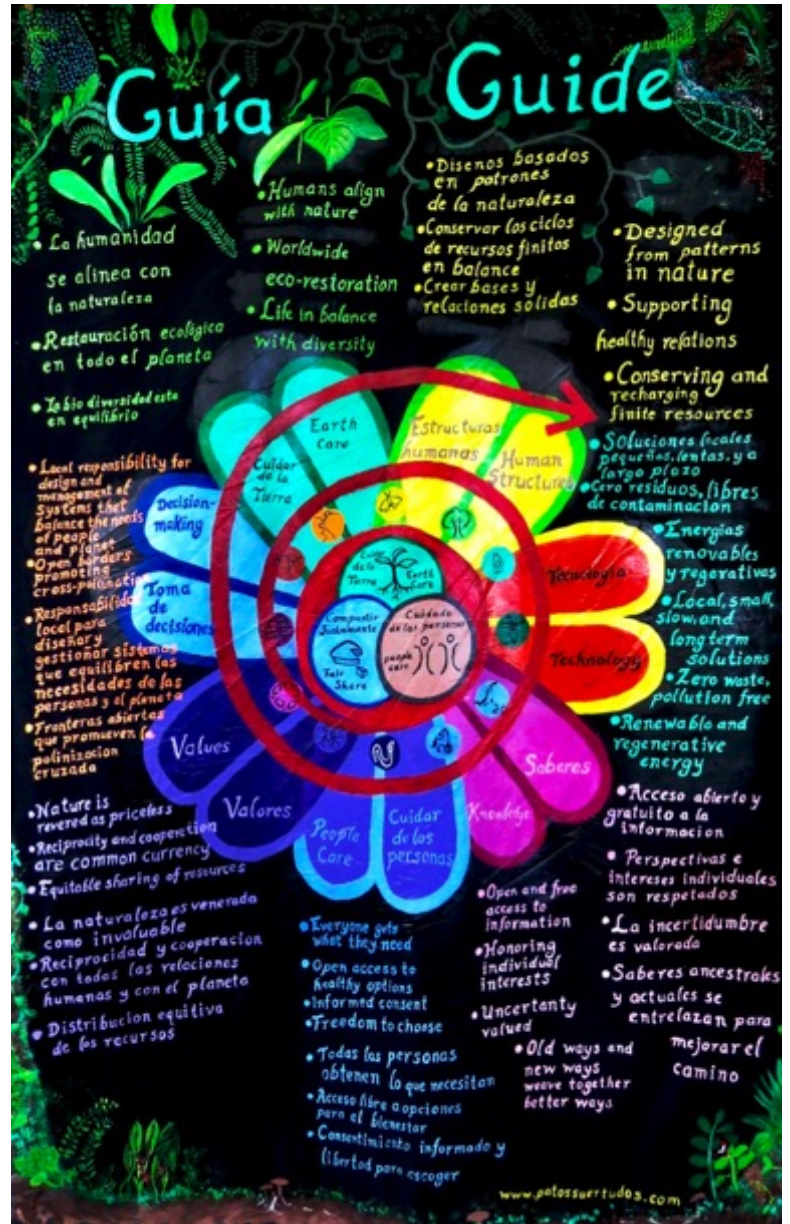
Once the cement structure work was complete, between rainstorms, David began the tedious process of *welding* the supports for the structure with help from Nestor and Jefferson.





Ongoing Projects: Here's an example of the weekly planning tool I developed to keep us focused on our goals. It has helped us keep all the balls in motion on one page in the daily journal.

**Guide:** I spent months getting wording right, designing and painting a **Permaculture flower** with more generalized visions of what the future can hold under each area of life. I am ever more convinced that a nature-based system offers hope for the future. Nestor and I took on a collaboration with Carla and a local TV program to feature local people doing permaculture-type projects. The producer and his wife, a professional puppeteer encouraged us to produce **stick-puppet show videos** for our sponsorship ads. The high learning curve with our little evolving studio wasn't ready for prime time before the show ran out of funding. Still, we plan to fulfill our goal to make a show for the remaining 5 of each of the 7 petals to accompany the permaculture flower "Guide". See our YouTube channel. Please watch, like, subscribe, and share.



## *Patos Products:*



***Cacao:** (The climber on the cacao tree pictured is vanilla. Humans pollinate them by hand for commercial production.)*

*We continued experimenting with making chocolate with our new melanger machine that rolls cacao into chocolate that can be melted and molded.*

***Processing:** We ferment*

*the seeds in a hanging feed-sack for a week, then place them in the solar dehydrator.*

*When dried, they are stored in sealed buckets until ready for processing.*

*When ready to process, we roast them on the solar cooker then run them through a food processor. We filter out the shells with a fan to get nibs. Nibs can be ground in a coffee grinder or put into the melanger to make*

*chocolate. We run the melanger for three to six hours. We use a local organic minimally processed cane sugar in various percentages. I like 80% mixed with coconut flakes.*

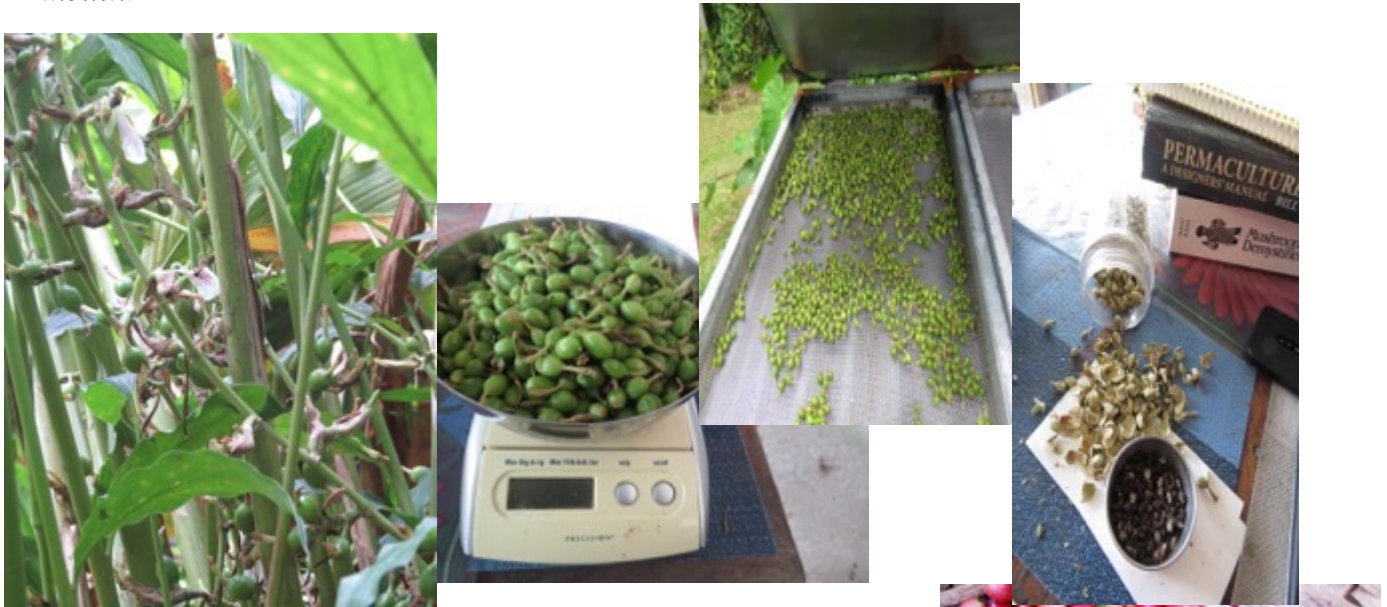
*After pouring out the chocolate, we sometimes pour in a paleo mix of roasted nuts and seeds to make our own Nutella. YUM!*

*For a smooth consistency and to keep chocolate from melting in your hands, tempering is critical.*

*We put the bowl back on the solar cooker until it reaches 120 degrees F, then cool to 82 degrees F, then heat it back up to 90 degrees F before putting into molds or pouring onto banana leaves.*



*Cardamom*—I know why this spice is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most expensive. It takes a long time to grow, it is painstaking to pick, dry, and pick out the little seeds. But WOW. The flavor pops in your mouth.



*Coffee:* what Costa Rican farm would be complete without it? We live in coffee country. We know farmers who have lost their property investing in a one crop industrial model. This climate grows a huge diversity



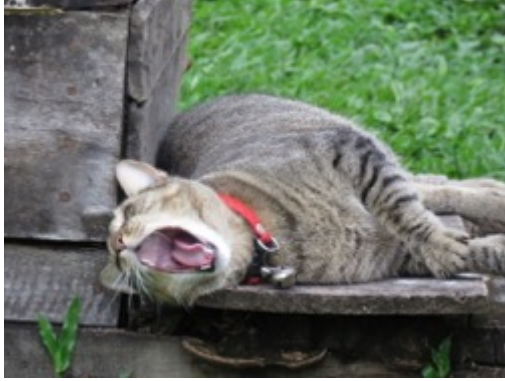
of plants. Our model is to take advantage of that, growing as many different useful plants as possible, while learning how they interact with the rest of nature. Our plan is to produce enough for ourselves in the most sustainable way possible. We will sell or gift in the local market.

**All organic mixed crops.** We let nature decide what works, while we watch and interact. Sometimes we have to let a product go if it requires too much effort. For example: **Turmeric:** It grows so well here, that we have way more than we can possibly use. But we think it's a good problem to have, as people become more aware of its numerous benefits and it doesn't hurt to leave it in the ground.



**Patos Pets:**

Pete the Cat put on enough weight to take Fin down in their regular wrestling matches. Fin must be part



whippet. He can run circles at incredible speed. He likes hiding treats in his special spots and staying near



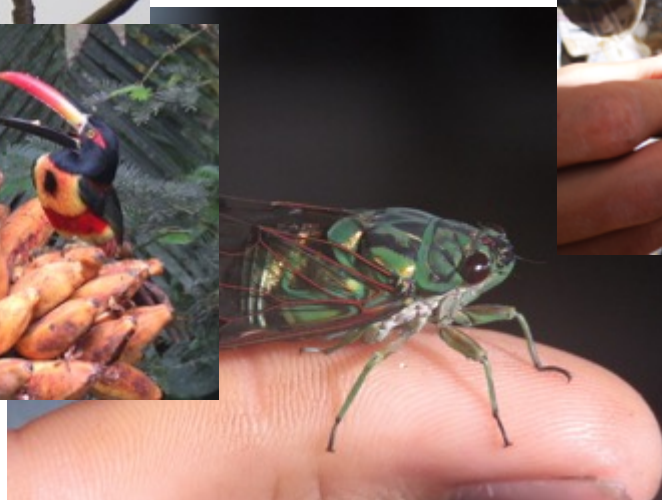
me. They are good company. Here, he is standing above the new steps I built.

Guppies eat mosquito larvae, so we have a couple of bowls in the *Orapendula* House next to the sink. They are easy for someone who was used to caring for tropical fish needing heat and pumps.



Canaria's owners sold her to another neighbor earlier in the year, leaving us without a horse. The new owner, brought her back in November because she didn't have enough pasture. She's now happily helping us by transform pasture into fertilizer. She will be a big help this dry season, hauling heavy things like big bags of poop up to make more great compost.

*Wildlife* We are regularly blown away by the abundant and growing diversity as we regenerate the ecosystem. Who knew there were so many types of stick bugs?



## *Flora*

Go to the website to see more.

[www.patossuertudos.com](http://www.patossuertudos.com)



*In April, LOTS of bushes are loaded with these wild blueberries. Check out the size of the tree over Fin on the bench.*



*bench.*



*And this. A great example of **Biomimicry**. I imagine early humans copying this weave pattern of the Coconut, where the branches attach to the stem.*



In October, our first guest for months, **Gressa** from North Carolina came by way of Berlin as a Workaway volunteer and



Permaculture Design Student. As her final project, she assisted in the production of “**Deep Sea Dreamer**” with her voice, guitar, and adaptations to the song that I wrote “We already paid”. [Link...](#)Please watch, like, subscribe, copy, and share.



A very rainy October and November,

David took a day off of intermittent welding to ride into San Vito and back in the rain.



Orapendula House named for these unique to here crow-type bird is social, as this houses our community kitchen, library, and now the new little studio. As the (kiskasee or toucan) house replaces the old Termite House structure..

**From our jungle house to yours, Wishing you all the best in 2021.**

