

# Cleaning Up In Panama

by Sheldon Dingle

**D**uring January 1995, the estimable aviculturist, conservationist and ecologist Yvonne Patterson of Kansas City, Missouri trekked through the jungles and wild parts of Panama with several aims in mind. First, of course, was her desire to actually see a Black-hooded Red Siskin flying about in the wild. That the Siskin doesn't inhabit Panama was a minor inconvenience easily overcome by Patterson's boundless enthusiasm. After all, it's not all *that* far from Venezuela to Panama. Surely at least one Siskin would have the good judgment to cruise a little north during the Patterson expedition.

To hedge her bet, Patterson availed herself of the most excellent guide services of Dale Thompson, editor, explorer, wildlife photographer, aviculturist and world traveling companion of the finest sort. Even Thompson's extraordinary skills and strenuous efforts, however, failed to spot the Siskin that Patterson knew was in the bush just around the corner.

On the plus side, though, the intrepid trekkers did visit several tropical rain forests near the Canal and spotted two species of toucans, some trogons, motmots, tanagers and manikins. They saw Capuchin Monkeys, Agoutis and Coati-mundis. In one case, while wading up a shallow jungle stream they came upon a delightful little critter wriggling his way down the same creek. Naturally, Patterson wanted to cuddle it, but the experienced Thompson recognized it as a Fer-de-lance, the most deadly venomous snake in the American tropics. The explorers stood back and let the snake do as it wished, which was to exit the creek and head into the jungle. Thompson got a photo of it doing just that.

In addition to seeing wild fauna, our trekkers visited three different tribes of




Photo by Dale Thompson

*The intrepid trekker and world recycler, Yvonne Patterson, with a beast captured on one of her expeditions. Note the skill with which she has the beast by the throat.*

Panama Indians. Some of the Indians were highly skilled artists whose animal carvings are absolutely exquisite. They use the Toqua Nut as a medium. The nut meat has a beautiful white color and a texture very much like that of ivory. The carvings are generally small, ranging from the size of a walnut to about that of a small coconut. Various dyes are used on the finer pieces to render beautiful life-like colors. Perhaps Thompson or Patterson will feature this wonderful artwork in a future article.

It was while at the various Indian encampments that Patterson found her true calling. These Indians, it seems, have no qualms at all about just tossing all sorts of "civilized" debris on the ground where they stand. The primal jungle has become littered with all sorts of paper and plastic trash. There is no indigenous concept of trash containers or of trash disposal. The Indians drop it and if the dogs don't eat it, it remains on the ground. Patterson was aghast and horrified. Indeed, she spent much time picking up litter and packing it to be flown out on the little puddle-jumper planes used to get in and out of the wild areas. I understand there are several charter-flight companies entering bids and encouraging Patterson to expand her trash recycling project.

Who knows where this may lead? Panama, Central America, the Western Hemisphere? Indeed, the Asian and African boondocks share the same little problem that so plagued Patterson in Panama. Her opportunities are worldwide. I can see it all now — Patterson, the Eco-cleanser of the World. And please, don't even breathe a word to her about the debris floating around in outer space. This could get out of hand. 

## Magnolia Bird Farm

We Buy Birds

• We Sell Birds



Complete Bird Supplies

8990 Cerritos Ave.  
Anaheim, CA 92804  
**(714) 527-3387**

(closed for vacation, first 2 weeks of July)

12200 Magnolia Ave.  
Riverside, CA 92503  
**(909) 278-0878**

(closed for vacation, first 2 weeks of August)

OPEN 9 TO 5 DAILY  
Closed Sun., Mon. & holidays