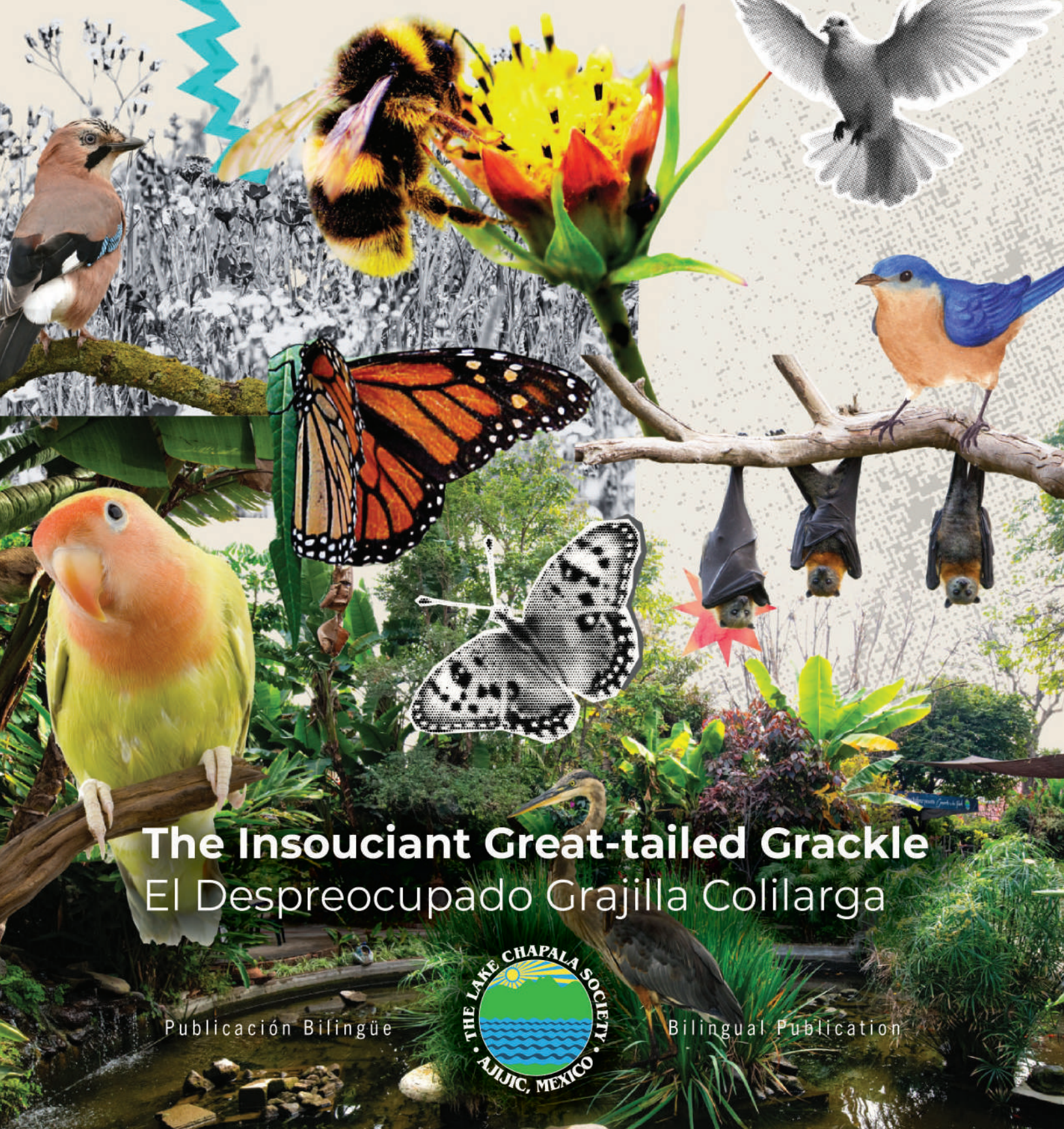


CONEXIONES

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President's Message

First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's Annual General Meeting, one of the most attended.

Many great things came out of this year's AGM. And some of those things were the statements from so many volunteers, members and supporters who shared why they are Proud of LCS. If you missed the video – we would love you to watch and share it.

We also had a number of motions that were presented, and all received overwhelming, majority, positive, votes in the high 80% to 100% yes votes. We also elected new board members who bring much needed skills to the organization.

The message that rang out the loudest was the need for more volunteer board members and board committee members with the skills to keep us on path. The current board members are highly committed volunteers who give everything they can to the organization. We also stressed the important needed skills to make a difference.

Together we have come so far. But the real joy in the journey is what we see in others. Things we, in one way or another, made possible. The excitement in a student who can be the first member of their family to attend University because of our Student Aid program. The comfort brought to children of the region through the clothing that Needlepushers create and share. Or the excitement of a young person in the LCS Children's Art Program as mentors and volunteers help young creative minds find their talents. And there is such much more.

I think many attendees of the AGM got to see the importance of skilled volunteers who can roll up their sleeves and make a difference. The real work of a board is done by the committees of the board. Like most boards in the community this is where so many of organizations struggle.

If you owned your own company before retirement, I am sure you searched hard to find people with the **right skills** to fill each post in your company – you knew that was the key to success. Nonprofits should not be different. We seek qualified skilled people to fill our committees of the board.

Businesses are having a hard time finding people to fill paid positions – so it stands to reason that nonprofits would struggle even more so. People volunteer to serve on a board to make a difference. We need skilled people for certain jobs on the board and board Committees. Chances are we have a role that would benefit from your skills.



Here is an outline of the board roles and the skills for each of these key roles:

Not every person on the board can come with all the skills needed. On our board we have 13 positions. It can be a balancing act to fill positions in ways that will complement each other's skills.

Some of the common skills that benefit most board roles are:

- Leadership Abilities
- Strategic Thinking
- Effective Communication
- Collaboration and Team Building
- Decision-Making Skills
- Commitment, Dedication, Enthusiasm
- Financial Acumen
- Ethical Conduct

Serving as a **Board President** of a nonprofit organization requires a unique set of skills and qualities to effectively lead the board, oversee the organization's operations, and advance its mission. Here are some key skills and attributes for a board president:

- Visionary Leadership
- Fundraising Leadership
- Business Management
- Volunteer Management
- Knowledge of Governance Practices
- Advocacy and Networking Skills
- Collaboration and Team Building
- Conflict Resolution
- Adaptability and Resilience



Mission & Vision

—Our mission is to promote the active participation of Lakeside's inhabitants to improve their quality of life Lakeside.

— Our vision is a future where all Lakeside residents continually have a role in enriching the community's quality of life, vitality and prosperity through the exchange of knowledge, expertise, culture, heritage and language.

—*Nuestra Misión es promover la activa participación de los residentes de la Ribera de Chapala, para mejorar la calidad de vida en la comunidad.*

—*Nuestra Visión es un futuro donde todos los residentes de La Ribera participen continuamente en mejorar la calidad de vida, vitalidad y prosperidad de la comunidad a través del intercambio de conocimiento, experiencia, cultura, patrimonio y lenguaje.*

Board of Directors

President/Presidente: Steve Balfour

Vice President/Vice Presidenta: Yolanda Martínez Llamas

Secretary/Secretario: George Radford

Treasurer/Tesorero: Tim Boardman

Directors/Directores: Christy Caldwell, Greg Custer, Greg Distefano, Madera Glenn, Linda Goman, Steve Graham, Hunter Johnson, Leon Felipe Munoz, George Radford.

Executive Director/Director Ejecutivo: Luis F. Pacheco

Conecciones Team

The magazine's name, Conecciones - Connections in English - reflects its purpose, which is to enable the Lake Chapala Society to connect with the Lakeside community.

El nombre de la revista Conecciones refleja su propósito, favorecer la conexión de The Lake Chapala Society con la comunidad.

Publisher/Editorial: Lake Chapala Society

Editor-in-Chief/Editor en Jefe: Luis F. Pacheco

Managing Editor/Director General: Rachel McMillen

Associate Editors/Editores asociados: Sandra Baird, Harriet Hart, Diana Hunt

Production, Art & Design/ Producción, Arte y Diseño: Domitzu Medrano

Proof-reader/Revisión final: Thomas Gay

Translations/Traducciones: LCS

Advertisement inquiries

Conecciones welcomes submissions of articles from Lakeside authors. We reserve the right to edit as necessary. Submissions should be in MS Word approximately 600 words and should be directed to: sales@lcsac.org

Conecciones agradece el envío de artículos. Nos reservamos el derecho de editarlos si es necesario. Los envíos deben ser en MS Word de 600 palabras aproximadamente y deben dirigirse a: sales@lcsac.org así como las solicitudes de publicidad.

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Cover: Domitzu Medrano

Conecciones Advertising Prices Precios de los Anuncios 2024

	Cost / Precio
Back cover / Contraportada (8.5"x11" / 21.5x28 cm)	\$6,600 MXN
Inside front & back cover / Contraportada interna (8.5"x11" / 21.5x28 cm)	\$6,060 MXN
Full page / Página completa (7.8 x 10.2" / 20 x 26 cm)	\$4,590 MXN
1/2 page / 1/2 página (4.7 x 7.2" / 12 x 18.5 cm)	\$2,775 MXN
1/4 page / 1/4 página (3.5 x 4.7" / 9 x 12 cm)	\$1,465 MXN
1/8 page-business card / 1/8 página-tarjeta de presentación (3.5 x 2" / 9 x 5 cm)	\$510 MXN

All prices include IVA. All ads must be submitted by the 10th of the month for inclusion in the next month's magazine. Send to sales@lcsac.org

Todos los precios incluyen IVA. Todos los anuncios deben ser enviados antes del día 10 del mes para su inclusión en la revista del mes siguiente.

Enviar a sales@lcsac.org

Overall, the board president plays a critical role in providing leadership, direction, and oversight to the nonprofit organization, and possessing these skills and qualities can contribute to their success in fulfilling this role. It is a difficult challenge to find people with most of these skills but finding a full board that as a team have these skills is important. We need a strong candidate for Board President who can join us now and we can prepare for the August election. We also would like to engage a potential candidate for the next Treasurer position.



The role of fundraising within a nonprofit board is critical for ensuring the organization has the financial resources necessary to fulfill its mission and programs. While all board members share some responsibility for fundraising, certain members may take on specific roles or responsibilities related to fundraising efforts. The executive director and fundraising director are also crucial to the fundraising efforts. Here's an overview of the board fundraising role:

Chair of the Fundraising Committee Responsibilities:

- Developing Fundraising Strategy
- Setting Fundraising Goals
- Identifying Funding Sources
- Donor Cultivation and Stewardship
- Major Donor Solicitation
- Grant Writing and Proposal Development



Event Planning and Management: donor receptions, engage supporters, raise funds, increase visibility. Monitoring, tracking and Reporting. Compliance and Accountability.

Skills and Qualifications:

- Fundraising Experience
- Networking Skills
- Communication Skills
- Negotiation Skills
- Organizational Skills

Overall, the board fundraising role is essential for ensuring the financial sustainability and growth of the nonprofit organization, and individuals with the skills, experience, and dedication to fundraising can make a significant impact in advancing the organization.



The role of an **Audit Committee Chair** is vital for ensuring financial integrity, compliance, and effective risk management. Here are the key responsibilities and skills typically associated with the position:

Responsibilities:

- Overseeing Financial Reporting
- Monitoring Internal Controls
- Audit Oversight
- Risk Assessment and Management
- Compliance Oversight

Skills and Qualifications:

- Financial Expertise
- Audit Experience
- Analytical Skills
- Regulatory Compliance Knowledge and nonprofit reporting requirements.
- Communication Skills
- Integrity and Independence
- Continuous Learning



Overall, the Audit Committee Chair plays a critical role in providing independent oversight of the organization's financial affairs

The desired Committee structure for our board is:

- Executive Committee
- Fund Development/Fundraising Committee
- Finance Committee – cultivate next Treasurer
- Audit Committee
- Program Committee
- Communications, Marketing, Community Committees
- Facilities, Campus Committees

If you feel you qualify for any one of these positions or know someone who might, please let us know. Reach out to me directly at SB4LCS@gmail.com

Thank you so much for your commitment to making a difference.

Steve Balfour
President
The Lake Chapala Society





Celebration is an expression of gratitude. Five years have passed since Hospital San Antonio del Lago de Chapala started its operations. Therefore, we wish to extend our gratitude:



- First and foremost, to the community of the Chapala lakeside for their trust. Without it, we would not be here. We have served 28,000 patients, both from the local and foreign communities. This trust motivates us to persist in our mission of “Caring for our patients,” always striving for the highest quality in care, safety, and service.
- To our specialist physicians, who trust in our staff and facilities to attend to our patients in a secure environment. Hospital San Antonio adheres strictly to health standards, governing our daily operations, ensuring the safety of facilities and essential support equipment for adequate patient care.
- To our staff, whose trust, effort, and daily commitment are indispensable for the proper operation of Hospital San Antonio. They are a cornerstone of our organization.

These five years have been marked by continuous evolution, such that today we stand as a tertiary care hospital. We perform procedures ranging from routine to highly complex, also known as high-specialty procedures. Some of these include open-heart surgeries, transcatheter aortic valve implantations (TAVI), spinal surgeries (both instrumented and minimally invasive), brain surgeries, thoracic surgeries, urological surgeries, oncological surgeries, and more.

Our diverse range of services includes:

- **Urgencias 24/7**
Emergency Room 24/7
- **Hospitalización**
Hospitalization
- **Terapia Intensiva (ICU)**
Intensive Care Unit (ICU)
- **Departamento de Hemodinamia y Cardiología intervencionista DHeCI (sala de Hemodinamia)**
Department of Hemodynamics and Interventional Cardiology DHeCI (Hemodynamics room)
- **Quirófano**
Operating room
- **Unidad de hemodiálisis**
Hemodialysis unit
- **Imagenología diagnóstica e intervencionista**
Diagnostic and interventional imaging
- **Resonancia de 1.5 Teslas**
1.5 Tesla Resonance Imaging
- **Tomógrafo de 128 cortes**
128-slice tomograph
- **Laboratorio clínico y de patología**
Clinical and pathology laboratory
- **Servicio de Ambulancia**
Ambulance service
- **Cafeteria**
Coffee shop
- **Habitaciones de recuperación para procedimientos ambulatorios**
Recovery rooms for outpatient procedures
- **Densitometría ósea**
Bone densitometry



Additionally, we collaborate with various national insurance providers.

2,946 MAGNETIC RESONANCE
RESONANCIA MAGNÉTICA

5,273 ULTRASOUND
ULTRASONIDO

10,391 TOMOGRAPHY
TOMOGRFÍA

15,953 X-RAYS
RAYOS X

71,616 LABORATORY STUDIES
ESTUDIOS DE LABORATORIO



We aim to continue evolving and growing. While there is still a path ahead of us, we are committed to working, evolving, and growing together with our patients, physicians, and collaborators.

THANK YOU FOR THESE 5 YEARS.

Hospital San Antonio del Lago de Chapala, 5 years of Taking Care of You.

Dr. Carlos Ramírez Aldrete

UDG.DGP 0334648 AECEM-0017175

Some of the insurance companies we work with include:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- UnitedHealthcare – AARP
- Medicare Advantage Plan
- Aetna
- Cigna
- IMG
- Seven Corners
- Kaiser Permanente
- Travel Insurances
- Best Doctors
- VUMI



www.hospitalsanantonio.com.mx

[f](#) Hospital San Antonio del Lago de Chapala

[i](#) hospitalsanantoniochapala

5 AÑOS Hospital SanAntonio CUIDANDO DE TI

Dr. Carlos Ramírez Aldrete UDG.DGP 0334648 AECEM-0017175



Primeramente, a la comunidad de la Ribera de Chapala, por su confianza. Sin ella, nosotros no estaríamos aquí, han sido 28 mil pacientes que han hecho uso de nuestros servicios, tanto la comunidad local como la comunidad extranjera. Esta confianza nos motiva a continuar con la labor de “Cuidar de nuestros pacientes” buscando siempre la más alta calidad en la atención, seguridad y servicio.



A nuestros médicos especialistas, quienes confían en nuestro personal e instalaciones para acudir a atender a nuestros pacientes bajo un ambiente seguro. Hospital San Antonio es una institución apegada a las normas de salud que rigen nuestra operación diaria, sumada a la seguridad de instalaciones y equipos de soporte indispensables para la adecuada atención de los pacientes.



A nuestro personal, sin su confianza, esfuerzo y compromiso diario, no sería posible la adecuada Operación del Hospital San Antonio. Son un pilar fundamental de nuestra organización.

Celebrar es para agradecer, 5 años han pasado desde que inició operaciones el Hospital San Antonio del Lago de Chapala. Por lo que queremos agradecer:



Estos 5 años han sido de constante evolución, de tal manera que hoy día somos un hospital de tercer nivel de atención, donde realizamos desde procedimientos sencillos, hasta los más complejos, también conocidos como de alta especialidad. Algunos de ellos son: cirugías a corazón abierto, colocación de válvulas aórticas (TAVI), cirugías de columna ya sea instrumentadas o de mínima invasión, cirugías de cerebro, cirugía de tórax, urológica, oncológica, etc...

La variada oferta de servicios que proporcionamos incluye:

- Urgencias 24/7
- Hospitalización
- Terapia Intensiva (ICU)
- Departamento de Hemodinamia y Cardiología intervencionista DHeCI (sala de Hemodinamia)
- Quirófano
- Unidad de hemodiálisis
- Imagenología diagnóstica e intervencionista
- Resonancia de 1.5 Teslas
- Tomógrafo de 128 cortes
- Laboratorio clínico y de patología
- Transfusión sanguínea
- Área de recuperación para tratamientos ambulatorios
- Servicio de Ambulancia
- Cafetería
- Habitaciones de recuperación para procedimientos ambulatorios
- Densitometría ósea



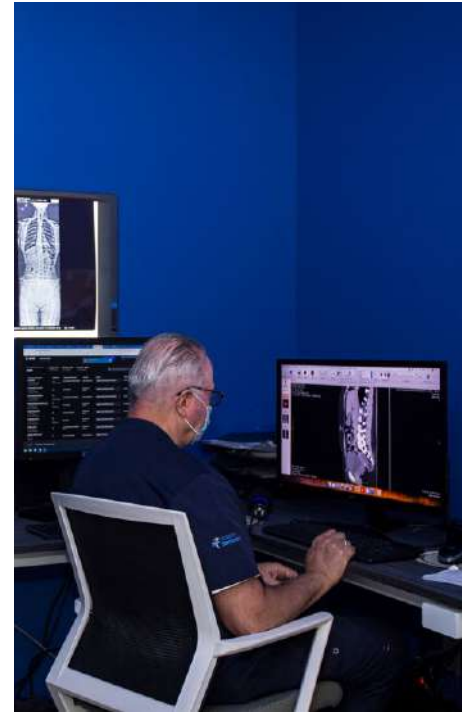
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10,391 TOMOGRAPHY
TOMOGRFÍA

15,953 X-RAYS
RAYOS X

71,616 LABORATORY STUDIES
ESTUDIOS DE LABORATORIO



Tenemos convenios con las principales compañías aseguradoras ya sea nacionales o extranjeras, damos acompañamiento y ayudamos a nuestros pacientes durante su atención médica, para obtener las autorizaciones de pago de sus gastos hospitalarios con sus respectivas compañías aseguradoras. Así mismo, verificamos de manera anticipada si su seguro médico es aceptado por nosotros, para que cuando ocurra una emergencia podamos actuar con mayor prontitud en el trámite administrativo.

Algunos de los seguros con los que trabajamos son:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- UnitedHealthcare – AARP
- Medicare Advantage Plan
- Aetna
- Cigna
- IMG
- Seven Corners
- Kaiser Permanente
- Travel Insurances
- Best Doctors
- VUMI

Algunos de los seguros nacionales con los que trabajamos son:






Queremos seguir evolucionando y creciendo; Aún tenemos camino por recorrer, pero de la mano de nuestros pacientes, médicos y colaboradores queremos y seguiremos caminando, evolucionando y creciendo juntos.

¡GRACIAS POR ESTOS 5 AÑOS!

Hospital San Antonio del lago de Chapala, 5 años Cuidando de ti.



-  www.hospitalsanantonio.com.mx
-  Hospital San Antonio del Lago de Chapala
-  [hospitalsanantoniochapala](https://www.instagram.com/hospitalsanantoniochapala)

Conoce tu Lago de Chapala: Una Maravilla Natural de México

Por Patrick O'Heffernan

El Lago de Chapala, el lago natural más grande de México, es venerado como una de las maravillas naturales más preciadas del país. Presume de una rica diversidad biológica, significado cultural e importancia ambiental, al mismo tiempo que provee agua a tres millones de personas.

El Lago de Chapala se alimenta por medio de los ríos Lerma, Zula, Huaracha y Duero, a pesar de que el caudal del río Lerma ha disminuido durante décadas. El lago juega un papel vital en la regulación del clima de la región y en el cuidado de los bosques circundantes, siendo de gran importancia espiritual para los pueblos indígenas que lo reverencian como un sitio sagrado.

DATOS DEL LAGO DE CHAPALA

- ☼ 6.8-7 millones de años de antigüedad
- ☼ 50 millas de largo por 7.8 millas de ancho; 420 millas cuadradas de área
- ☼ Profundidad media de 7 metros aprox; profundidad máxima que va hasta los 10.5 metros; con muchas áreas poco profundas
- ☼ Alimentado por los ríos Lerma, Huaracha y Duero; Drenado por el río Grande de Santiago
- ☼ El ecosistema del lago está estrechamente conectado a los humedales y bosques circundantes
- ☼ 43 especies de peces; 39 nativas y 4 invasoras. Las especies nativas están en declive
- ☼ Contiene Tilapia, carpa, charales, goodeidos, bagres y chubs de Algansea
- ☼ El área circundante contiene murciélagos narizones mexicanos, pecaríes de collar, salamandras de Chapala, culebras listadas mexicanas, el puma en peligro de extinción y cientos de otras especies.
- ☼ Hábitat crítico para aves migratorias como pelícanos y otras
- ☼ Abarca dos estados y 11 municipios con una población combinada de 325,000 habitantes
- ☼ Provee agua a más de 3 millones de personas en Guadalajara CONAGUA tiene jurisdicción, pero rara vez la ejerce. Las agencias locales no tienen poder sobre él

Abarcando los estados de Jalisco y Michoacán, el Lago de Chapala provee agua potable para el 62% de los habitantes de Guadalajara y sostiene a once municipios ribereños con una población colectiva de 325,000 personas que dependen del lago para la pesca, el turismo y la agricultura.

El ecosistema del Lago de Chapala abarca desde algas microscópicas y fitoplancton hasta imponentes bosques, siendo un hábitat crítico para aves migratorias como el pelícano blanco y la garza real, y especies en peligro de extinción como la salamandra de Chapala, el murciélago narizón, el puma y la culebra listada mexicana.

La agencia federal CONAGUA tiene jurisdicción sobre el lago y su costa, pero casi nunca aplica regulaciones. Los esfuerzos colaborativos entre agencias federales, estatales y locales, y organizaciones sin fines de lucro proporcionan investigación, pero carecen de autoridad.

Como resultado, el lago está amenazado por pesticidas y fertilizantes agrícolas, aguas residuales, desarrollo ilegal y reducción de los flujos. Aunque las pruebas en la mayoría de las áreas del lago revelan bajos niveles de contaminación y son seguras para los deportes acuáticos, existen "puntos críticos" con altos niveles de toxinas. Debido al fracaso de la supervisión federal, grupos ciudadanos luchan contra los desarrolladores ilegales.

Patrick O'Heffernan, Doctor en Filosofía; editor de Lakeside News, escribió esto con aportaciones del Instituto Corazón de la Tierra. Enseñó ciencias ambientales en la Universidad de California, Berkeley y, trabajando para el gobernador de California, Brown, dirigió a 200 científicos marinos para mapear el ecosistema de la costa sur de California y testificó ante el Congreso para ayudar a crear el Santuario Marino de las Islas del Canal de Santa Bárbara.

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Know Your Lake Chapala: Mexico's Natural Wonder

By Patrick O'Heffernan

Lake Chapala, the largest natural lake in Mexico, is revered as one of the country's most treasured natural wonders. It boasts a rich tapestry of biodiversity, cultural significance and environmental importance while furnishing three million people with water.

Lake Chapala is fed by the Río Lerma, Río Zula, Río Huaracha and Río Duero rivers, although the flow from the Lerma River has fallen for decades. Lake Chapala plays a vital role in regulating the region's climate and nurturing the surrounding forests and is spiritually important for indigenous people that revere it as a sacred site.

LAKE CHAPALA FACTS

- ☼ 6.8-7 million years old
- ☼ 50 miles long by 7.8 miles wide; 420 square miles in area
- ☼ Mean depth of 23 feet; max depth of 34 feet; many shallow areas
- ☼ Fed by Rio Lerma, Rio Huaracha and Rio Duero rivers, drained by the Rio Grande de Santiago
- ☼ Lake ecosystem is tightly connected to surrounding wetlands and forests
- ☼ 43 fish species; 39 natives and 4 invasive fish. Natives on decline
- ☼ Contains Tilapia, carp, charales, goodeids, catfish and Algansea chubs
- ☼ Surrounding area contains Mexican Long-nosed Bat, the Collared peccary, Chapala salamander, Mexican Gartersnake, the endangered Puma and hundreds of other species.
- ☼ Critical migratory bird habitat for pelicans and others
- ☼ Spans two states and 11 municipalities with a combined population of 325,000
- ☼ Provides water to over 3 million people in Guadalajara
- ☼ CONAGUA has jurisdiction, but rarely uses it. Local agencies have no power over it

Spanning the states of Jalisco and Michoacán, Lake Chapala provides drinking water for 62% of Guadalajara's residents and sustains eleven riverside municipalities with a collective population of 325,000 who rely on the lake for fishing, tourism and agriculture.

Lake Chapala's ecosystem encompasses life from microscopic algae and phytoplankton to towering forests and is a critical habitat for migratory birds like the white pelican and great egret, and endangered species such as the Chapala salamander, the Long-Nosed Bat, the Puma, and Mexican garter snake.



The Federal agency CONAGUA has jurisdiction over the lake and its shoreline but almost never enforces regulations. Collaborative efforts among federal, state and local agencies, and non-profit organizations provide research, but lack authority.

The result is that the lake is threatened by agricultural pesticides and fertilizers, sewage, illegal development and reduced inflows. Although tests of most areas of the lake reveal low levels of pollution and are safe for water sports, there are "hot spots" with high levels of toxins. Because of the failure of federal oversight, citizen groups fight the battle against illegal developers.

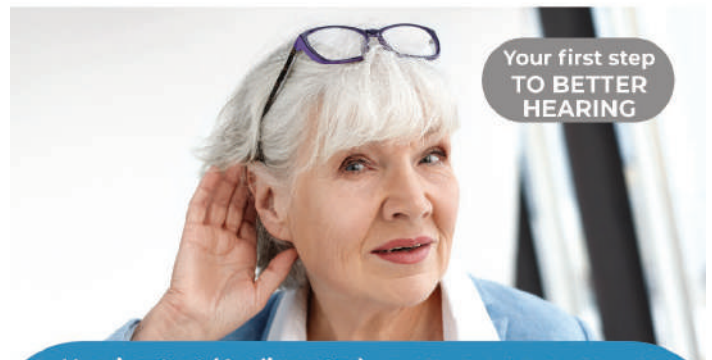
Patrick O'Heffernan, PhD., the Editor of Lakeside News, wrote this with input from the Instituto Corazon de la Tierra. He taught environmental science at U.C. Berkeley and, working for California governor Brown, he managed 200 marine scientists to map the ecosystem of the southern California coast and testified before Congress to help create the Santa Barbara Chanel Islands Marine Sanctuary.

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The Inouciant Great-tailed Grackle

By John Keeling



The Great-tailed Grackle is a common bird seen in Ajijic and Chapala. It is also one of the great 'expansionist' birds of the twentieth century. It has spread successfully northwards across Mexico and the US and entered Canada twenty years ago. Why is it so successful? It has above average intelligence; it will eat anything; it has a natural tendency to wander and thrives among humans.

It has been expanding its range more rapidly than its cousins the Common Grackle which is well known in the eastern half of the US, and the Boat-tailed Grackle which is common in the coastal areas of Florida.

Other expansionist birds new to North America that you should know about are the Western Cattle Egret which hails from the Middle East and the Eurasian Collared Dove which hails from India. These species are well adapted to some aspect of human development. The Cattle Egret follows horses and cows, while Grackles like city parks.

The Great-tailed Grackle hails originally from Central America where it inhabits open country and marshes. It was helped on its way north by the great Aztec Emperor Ahuitzotl who ruled from 1486 to 1502. He ordered the importation of this species from the southern regions of his empire, to be released in the plazas of the capital city Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City. He decreed they should be fed and not harassed. Later, as



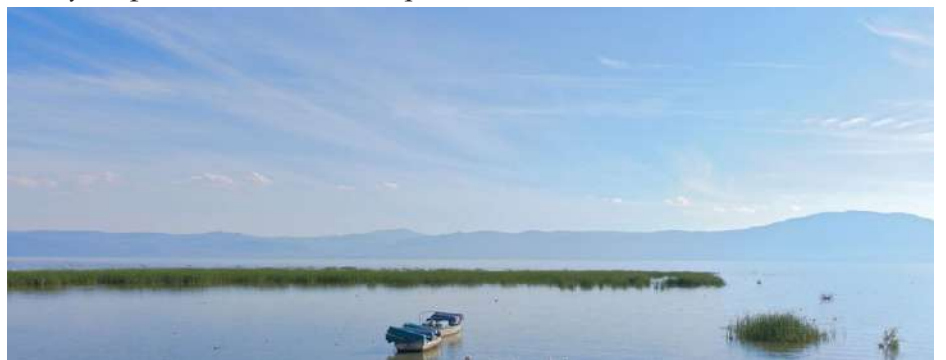
the Spanish conquerors set up mining towns all over New Spain, now Mexico, this species followed the settlers from city to city across the country.

It reached Texas in the late eighteenth century and expanded its territory northward into the central states, eventually crossing over into Canada.

Whether in Chapala or Austin, Texas, these birds strut the streets in an insouciant manner as if they owned the place. Known for their ridiculously long tails, the males are brightest in their spring breeding plumage with glossy black feathers, yellow eyes and a blue iridescence on the body. The females are not as large and have a less impressive dusky brown color.

As omnivores, they will catch and eat anything from insects, tadpoles and lizards to small birds, nestlings and french fries. The list includes seeds, berries, fruit, snails, crayfish and bats.

They are very social, typically roosting at night in trees with large numbers of their own species. During the day, however, they will split up to forage for food in small groups. They are also known for being raucous as they produce an unusually wide range of generally unpleasant whistles, squeals and rattles.



El despreocupado zanate de cola grande

Por John Keeling

El zanate de cola grande es un ave común que se observa en Ajijic y Chapala. También es una de las grandes aves “expansionistas” del siglo XX. Se ha extendido con éxito hacia el norte, a través de México y Estados Unidos, y entró en Canadá hace veinte años. ¿Por qué tiene tanto éxito? Porque tiene una inteligencia superior a la media; come cualquier cosa; tiene una tendencia natural a vagar y prospera entre los humanos.

Ha estado ampliando su área de distribución más rápidamente que sus primos, el zanate común, muy conocido en la mitad oriental de los Estados Unidos y el zanate de cola de barco, común en las zonas costeras de Florida.

Otras aves expansionistas nuevas en América del Norte que debes conocer son la garceta bueyera occidental, que proviene del Medio Oriente, y la paloma de collar euroasiática, que proviene de la India. Estas especies están bien adaptadas a algún aspecto del desarrollo humano. La Gaceta Bueyera sigue a los caballos y vacas, mientras que a los zanates les gustan más los parques de la ciudad.

El Zanate de Cola Grande es originario de América Central, donde habita en campo abierto y ciénagas. Fue ayudado en su camino hacia el norte por el gran emperador azteca Ahuitzotl, quien gobernó desde 1486 hasta 1502. Este emperador ordenó la importación de esta especie desde las regiones del sur de su imperio, para ser liberada

en las plazas de la ciudad capital, Tenochtitlán, hoy Ciudad de México. De igual forma decretó que debían ser alimentados y no acosados. Más tarde, cuando los conquistadores españoles establecieron pueblos mineros por toda Nueva España, ahora México, esta especie siguió a los colonos de ciudad en ciudad por todo el país.

Llegó a Texas a finales del siglo XVIII y expandió su territorio hacia el norte, a los estados centrales, cruzando finalmente a Canadá.

Ya sea en Chapala o en Austin Texas, estas aves se pavonean por las calles de una manera despreocupada como si fueran dueños del lugar. Conocidos por sus colas ridículamente largas, los machos son más brillantes en su plumaje de cría de primavera con plumas negras brillantes, ojos amarillos y una iridiscencia azul en el cuerpo. Las hembras no son tan grandes y tienen un color marrón oscuro menos impresionante.

Como omnívoros, atrapan y comen de todo: desde insectos, renacuajos y lagartijas hasta pequeños pájaros, polluelos y patatas fritas. La lista incluye semillas, bayas, fruta, caracoles, cangrejos de río y murciélagos.

Son muy sociables y suelen posarse por la noche en árboles con un gran número de ejemplares de su misma especie. Durante el día, sin embargo, se separan para buscar comida en pequeños grupos. También son conocidas por su estridencia, ya que emiten una amplia gama de silbidos, chillidos y cascabeles, generalmente desagradables.

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LESSONS (M)

Bordado Artístico (Spanish)	M+W+F 4-6
Children's Art - Open to all (Children 5 years & under must be accompanied by an adult)	Sat 10-12
Children's Chess Club	Sat 12-2
Exercise	M+W+F 9-9:50
Gentle Yoga & Body Awareness	W 10-10:50
Gravity Stone Balancing	T + TH 11-12 Ends 9 May
Intermediate Hatha Yoga	T 2-3:30
Iyengar Yoga	F 11-12
Learn to Knit	T 12-1:30
Line Dancing, gail@doughertynet.com	T + TH 10-11:15
Being Love & Bliss Meditation	T 9:30-10:30
Move to the Beat	M 10-11
Mudlarks Pottery Open Studio	M + F 10-2
Stretch & Balance	M + TH 8:45-9:45

harry_bertram@hotmail.com

Spanish in Action classes (español en acción)	See LCS website or in the office for more info
Tech Help via Email	lcs.tech.training@gmail.com
Write to a Prompt Writers' Group	TH10-12

LIBRARIES (M)

Book + DVD Libraries	M-Sat 10-2
Books on Tape & Library of Congress Talking Books. To order books on-line, you must use a computer or a tablet/iPad. It is not possible to order using a cell phone. Go to lakechapalasociety.com & select libraries/English.	

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (M)

American Mah Jongg	TH 10-1
Bridge For Fun	F 1-4:30
Discussion Group	W 12-1:30
Duplicate Bridge	W 1-4
English/Spanish Conversation* (Open to public)	Sat 12-1:30*
Everyday Mindfulness	M 10:30-12
Game Group	TH 1-5
Open Circle	S 10:30
Scrabble	F 11:30-1:30
TED Talks	TH 12:30-1:45
Tournament Scrabble	T 12-1:50
UFO Cafe Discussion Group	3rd T 1:30-2:30

HEALTH INSURANCE*

Hospital San Antonio	TH 10:30-12:30
IMSS & Immigration Services	M 10-1
email for appointment to intermexfrancisco@gmail.com	
Lakeside Insurance	T+TH 11-2
Ribera Medical Center	T 10:30-12:30

Shiatsu Chair Massage	1st & 3rd TH 10-12
By appointment only, call 331-604-0971	

HEALTH & LEGAL SERVICES*

Audiology - hearing care specialists	T+W+F 9-3
(Consultation fee) Call for appointment 332-945-3267	
Becerra Immigration	TH 10:30-12:30
Blood Pressure Testing	F 10-12
Finestra Investment Consulting	3rd TH 10-1
Intercam Banking Services	M - F 10-1
Optometrist Claravision	TH 9-4
Call for appointment 331-411-1178	
Solbes & Solbes	2nd M 10-12
SkyMed	1st W 11-1

SERVICE & SUPPORT GROUPS *

AA Women's Meeting	T 4-5
Al-Anon (Spanish)	M 6-7:30, W 5:30-7:30
Caregivers of Spouses with Dementia	T 11-12:30
(Support Group)	
Diabetes Support Group	Zoom 1st F 1:00
contact welchk4diabetes@gmail.com	
Information Desk	M-Sat 10-2
AA Open Meeting	M+TH 4-5
Needle Pushers	T 10-11:45
Ranch Dog Adoption Day	1st W 10-12
Toastmasters	M 7-9
Voter Registration	M 10-1 until 15 Oct

NEW ACTIVITIES:

U.S. VOTER REGISTRATION

Democrats Abroad will assist U.S. citizens in registering and requesting absentee ballots on Mondays from 10-1, on the NJ Patio until 15 October. Larry Pihl, larry.pihl@gmail.com, 331-704-6475

GRAVITY STONE BALANCING

T +TH 11-12 on the back lawn. Ephemeral art- learn to balance rocks with gravity. Contact Tom O'Dwyer, by email celticmasonry49@gmail.com, 998-403-7552 MX. for information & registration. April-May 9

IMSS & IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Has a temporary change in its schedule for April-mid May. IMSS will be at LCS only on Mondays 10-1. Contact person during this time is Francisco Ramos, intermexfrancisco@gmail.com, 331-289-1803. Appointments are by email to Francisco.



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www.lakechapalasociety.com

There is no refund

For any questions related to classes
Please contact education@lcsac.org



Mexican Manners and More

By **Víctor Camarena**

- Wednesday, April 3
- Thursday, May 2
- Wednesday, June 5

10:00 am to 12:30 pm

General fee: \$760

This is a one session class. Participant will learn skills and knowledge on how to minimize the Cultural shock adjusting to a new country.



Legends and Traditions of Mexico

By **Víctor Camarena**

Thursday April 4

2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

General fee: \$485

In this two-hour class, discover the enchanting realm of Mexican legends and traditions in a captivating two-hour class. Explore iconic tales like Quetzalcoatl, La Llorona, and Day of the Dead, revealing the rich fusion of Native American and Spanish cultures.

Introduction to Spanish

By **Inez Dayer & Christine**

Wysock

- Thursday April 11, 18 & 25
- Thursday May 2, 9 & 16
- Thursday June 6, 13 & 20

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$790

This three-session class is designed for people without any Spanish language background. Your instructor will introduce you to Spanish pronunciation, basic vocabulary and social protocols.



Getting your Jalisco

Driver's License...

Without Losing Your Mind

By **Víctor Camarena**

- Wednesday, April 10 CLASS
9:30 am to 11:30 am
Wednesday, April 17 TEST
visit to the Secretaria de Transporte
- Wednesday, May 8 CLASS
9:30 am to 11:30 am
Wednesday, May 15 TEST
visit to the Secretaria de Transporte

General fee: \$850

In this class, participants will learn all the requirements to obtain Jalisco's drivers License.

Advanced Care Planning - Living Well and Dying Well at Lakeside

By **Loretta Downs**

Friday, April 17 & 24

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$780

This is a two class course. Empowers you with the knowledge and tools to navigate this delicate but essential aspect of life, ensuring your choices and values are upheld.



Learn to Play Piano for your own enjoyment

By **Donn Rochlin**

Friday April 19, 26 and May 3 and 10

12:30pm to 2:00pm

General fee: \$1,800

Unlock the joy of playing piano effortlessly. Join our 4-week workshop to master chords, play any style, read lead sheets, add embellishments, and practice creatively. No prior experience needed. Includes study guides.

Free Class Clase Gratis

Introducción a la Cultura de la Paz en la Vida Cotidiana

Por **Alma Graciela Fuentes**

Sábado 13 de abril

10:00 am a 12:00 pm

En esta clase de introducción gratuita, participantes serán introducidos a conceptos y habilidades para en comunidad practicar el diálogo, la escucha activa y la confianza a fin de lograr una Cultura de Paz. Para más información o para registrarse, por favor envíe un correo a education@lcsac.org

CLASSES

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Mobile Devices 101

By Andrea Putnam

Wednesday April 24

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$650

This class begins with basic operations— leveraging essential features, including email, WhasApp, texting, installing, and removing apps and widgets. The trainer will walk through sharing content between devices and connecting with Wi-Fi or Bluetooth.

Mobile Phones and Tablets - A Deeper Dive

By Andrea Putnam

Friday April 26

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

General fee: \$760

Explore advanced WiFi settings, Bluetooth connections, email setup, calendar syncing, app organization, notifications, effective messaging, contact management, multimedia streaming, cloud integration, privacy, security, and app permissions. Learn to back up data.

Introduction to Lakeside 101 things you need to know to settle here successfully!

By Reba Mayo

- Friday, April 5
- Friday, May 10

2:15 pm to 4:15 pm

General fee: \$650

Welcome to Mexico!

This is a 1-session class, will provide you with a wealth of information and resources to make your transition to Lakeside as painless as possible.



Tools for Pronunciation : Speak - and Hear - Spanish Better!

By Gareth Collingwood

Monday May 6, 13 and 20

9:30 am to 11:30 am

General fee: \$860

In this 3 week course, students will master the phonology (the sounds) of Spanish. Lose your foreign accent! Avoid potentially embarrassing or confusing situations! Understand all the Spanish you hear as you go about your day!

Clase en Español



Cultura de Paz en la Vida Cotidiana

Por Alma Graciela Fuentes

Lunes 15, 22 y 29 de Abril

5:30 pm a 8:00 pm

Centro Educativo Wilkes

General fee: \$150

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Donn Rochlin
The Improvised Life



APRIL 14

Dale Palfrey
Hocus-Pocus:
Illusions of Magic Towns



APRIL 21

Ricardo
Chapala foreign Liason
How the Government works



APRIL 28

Kelly Bennett
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Explore the enchanting charm of Mazamitla, a magical town boasting breathtaking pine forests, rich cultural heritage, and a delightful climate. Discover handmade cheese at 'La Casa del Queso', the viewpoint of the Juarez dam, the Tiger Hill and the Cola Blanca canning factory

GENERAL FEE: \$1,850

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Explorando el Encanto de Mazamitla, Jalisco:

Una Gema Escondida en México

Por Víctor Camarena

Mazamitla, en Jalisco, México, es un encantador pueblo mágico anidado en las montañas de la Sierra Madre Occidental. Su belleza natural y su rico patrimonio cultural lo convierten en un destino único. Habitado por comunidades indígenas desde hace siglos, Mazamitla ha mantenido una profunda conexión con la tierra y sus ecosistemas, lo que resalta la importancia de conservar su entorno natural para preservar las tradiciones y el patrimonio cultural.

La conservación del medio ambiente en Mazamitla es crucial para garantizar la biodiversidad y apoyar a las comunidades locales. Iniciativas como la protección de especies en peligro de extinción, proyectos de reforestación y la creación de áreas protegidas son fundamentales para mantener el equilibrio ecológico. Además, el turismo sostenible está ganando impulso, con empresas locales adoptando prácticas responsables para minimizar su impacto ambiental.

El agua, un recurso precioso, también recibe atención especial en Mazamitla. Se implementan medidas para conservarla y gestionarla de manera eficiente, incluyendo la protección de cuencas hidrográficas, la recolección de agua de lluvia y programas de reciclaje. Asimismo, se llevan a cabo campañas educativas para crear conciencia sobre la importancia de la conservación del agua entre residentes y visitantes.

El cambio climático representa un desafío adicional para Mazamitla, con impactos como el aumento de las temperaturas y fenómenos meteorológicos extremos. En respuesta, se están aplicando estrategias de adaptación, como prácticas de gestión forestal y agricultura sostenible, para proteger los ecosistemas y las comunidades locales.

El compromiso de Mazamitla con la conservación del medio ambiente sirve como ejemplo de armonía entre el hombre y la naturaleza. Se trabaja incansablemente para preservar su belleza natural y su herencia cultural para las generaciones venideras. A medida que los visitantes exploran este pueblo mágico, se les recuerda la importancia de proteger y apreciar los valiosos ecosistemas que lo hacen único en México.

La Lake Chapala Society A.C. invita a descubrir Mazamitla el martes 28 de mayo, con un recorrido que incluye visitas a lugares emblemáticos como la Sierra del Tigre y “La Casa del Queso”. Este tour ofrece una experiencia auténtica, con degustaciones de productos locales. ¡No pierdas la oportunidad de explorar este tesoro escondido de México!

Exploring the Enchantment of Mazamitla, Jalisco:

A Hidden Gem in Mexico

By Víctor Camarena

Nestled in the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains, Mazamitla in Jalisco, Mexico, is renowned for its natural beauty and cultural significance. Home to indigenous communities for centuries, Mazamitla’s preservation is crucial for maintaining cultural traditions and ecological balance.

Efforts to conserve Mazamitla’s ecosystems are underway, including reforestation, habitat restoration, and establishing protected areas. Sustainable tourism practices are also being embraced to minimize environmental impact while supporting economic growth. Water conservation initiatives, such as watershed protection and rainwater harvesting, are essential in the face of climate change’s challenges.

Climate change adaptation strategies, like forest management and disaster preparedness, are being implemented to mitigate its impacts. Mazamitla’s dedication to conservation sets an example of harmony with nature, ensuring its beauty and heritage endure for generations.

Visitors are encouraged to experience Mazamitla’s charm through tours, offering glimpses of its natural wonders and cultural delights. The Lake Chapala Society invites exploration of this magical town, showcasing its unique attractions and culinary delights.

LCS invites you to join a tour on May 28th to explore Sierra del Tigre, indulge in handmade cheese at “La Casa del Queso,” and enjoy scenic views of Juarez dam and Tiger Hill. Experience the flavors of Rompope and traditional sweets at Cola Blanca canning factory, all while supporting local conservation efforts.

For further details and reservations, please contact education@lcsac.org.



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The Tuesday Market: A Success Story

By Diana Hunt

From four vendors in a garage to over 70 vendors of a wide variety of products, the popular “Tuesday Market” -- an organic treasure trove -- turned 14 last month.

Ana Luz Zepeda, one of the original four -- and serving on the current Board of Directors -- described how it all started.

“There was a group of ladies who worried about what they and their families were eating, so they went to the agricultural department to ask where they could sell their organic produce,” Ana Luz detailed. “They then got invited to sell in a woman’s garage. That woman was one of the four original vendors who were allowed to put up tables. She was located behind the [Ajijic] cemetery.”

Three of those four vendors are still part of the current market.

“It wasn’t long before the neighbors started to complain because so many people with their cars were blocking other garages,” she continued, “so we moved to a building in front of Chula Vista where we were for 2 years. From there we relocated to Centro Laguna Mall (across from Walmart), which at that time was just starting and was empty.”

After four years they made the big leap to the cavernous La Huerta Events Center. Just how large is the space?

“Well, I’m not sure -- it looks like a railway station,” Ana Luz laughed.

But now with over 70 vendors that “railway station” is buzzing, especially early each Tuesday morning when customers crowd in to buy their favorite items.

To make sure potential producers are actually organic, members of the Board of Directors visit each farm. They have a list of specific questions: how the producers are working the land; where is their water source; how they manage the business; how they nurture the soil; do they compost and so on. They also want to know how far away from Ajijic the families live. Most producers are local, but there are some that come from Tapalpa and Guadalajara.

The Board of Directors continually monitors the quality of products.

“We visit the homes of those selling personal care products and kitchens of food producers,” Ana Luz explained. “Most vendors are small and work out of their houses.”

Ana Luz is most proud that the market survived the pandemic.

“We were open the whole time, the three years,” she said. “We made changes. We asked that our customers make a line, to use hand gel and to wear masks. We controlled the number of people inside the market to 20 at one time, the remaining customers waited outside until people left and the next 20 came in. Vendors had to clean their tables after every customer, wear masks and gloves. Later, we were counting people who came in, to know how they were responding to



various announcements on the web, Facebook and so on.”

Many buyers plan to meet at the market to talk and enjoy breakfast before shopping. The café, however, is managed by the people who rent the space to the market. Also, the vendors outside by the Smokehouse are not part of the Organic Market.

According to Ana Luz, the philosophy is to integrate the market’s big community with the small local producers by keeping a balance of vendors -- butchers, prepared and frozen foods, fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses, skin products: everything for the inside as well as the outside.

“We want people to become part of the web with our community of producers, so people who come can find a good friend as well as good food. I am happy to be here for 14 years,” Ana Luz concluded, “because I have made a lot of good friends. My customers and other vendors are part of my life now. It is more than the food which we have at this market. It is the friendship, the solidarity, how we have been growing with the community.”

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El mercado de los martes: Una historia de éxito

Por Diana Hunt

De cuatro vendedores en un garaje a más de 70 vendedores de una amplia variedad de productos, el popular “Mercado de los Martes” --un tesoro ecológico-- cumplió 14 años el mes pasado.

Ana Luz Zepeda, una de las cuatro vendedoras originales y miembro de la actual Junta Directiva, describe cómo empezó todo.

“Había un grupo de mujeres preocupadas por lo que ellas y sus familias comían, así que fueron al Departamento de Agricultura a preguntar dónde podían vender sus productos ecológicos”, explica Ana Luz. “Entonces las invitaron a vender en el garaje de una señora. Esa mujer era una de las cuatro vendedoras originales a las que se permitió poner mesas. Estaba ubicada detrás del cementerio [de Ajijic]”.

Tres de esas cuatro vendedoras siguen formando parte del mercado actual.

“No pasó mucho tiempo antes de que los vecinos comenzaran a quejarse porque mucha gente con sus autos bloqueaba otros garajes”, continuó, “así que nos mudamos a un edificio frente a Chula Vista donde estuvimos por 2 años. De ahí nos reubicamos en Centro Laguna Mall (frente a Walmart), que en ese momento estaba empezando y estaba vacío.”

Después de cuatro años, dieron el gran salto al cavernoso Centro de Eventos La Huerta. ¿Cómo es de grande?

“No estoy segura: parece una estación de tren”, se ríe Ana Luz.

Pero ahora, con más de 70 vendedores, esa “estación de tren” está a reventar, sobre todo los martes por la mañana temprano, cuando los clientes se agolpan para comprar sus productos favoritos.

Para asegurarse de que los posibles productores son realmente ecológicos, los miembros de la Junta Directiva visitan cada explotación. Tienen una lista de preguntas concretas: cómo trabajan la tierra los productores, cuál es su fuente de agua, cómo gestionan el negocio, cómo cuidan el suelo, si hacen compost, etc. También quieren saber a qué distancia se encuentran de la granja. También quieren saber a qué distancia de Ajijic viven las familias. La mayoría de los productores son locales, pero hay algunos que vienen de Tapalpa y Guadalajara.

La Junta Directiva vigila continuamente la calidad de los productos.



“Visitamos las casas de los que venden productos de cuidado personal y las cocinas de los productores de alimentos”, explica Ana Luz. “La mayoría de los vendedores son pequeños y trabajan en sus casas”.

Ana Luz está muy orgullosa de que el mercado sobreviviera a la pandemia.

“Estuvimos abiertos todo el tiempo, los tres años”, dice. “Hicimos cambios. Pedimos a los clientes que hicieran cola, que usaran gel de manos y que llevaran mascarillas. Controlamos el número de personas dentro del mercado a 20 a la vez, los clientes restantes esperaban fuera hasta que la gente salía y entraban los 20 siguientes. Los vendedores tenían que limpiar sus mesas después de cada cliente, llevar mascarillas y guantes. Después, contábamos la gente que entraba, para saber cómo respondían a los distintos anuncios en la web, Facebook, etc.”.

Muchos compradores planean reunirse en el mercado para hablar y desayunar antes de comprar. Sin embargo, la cafetería está gestionada por quienes alquilan el espacio al mercado. Además, los vendedores que están fuera, junto al Ahumadero, no forman parte del Mercado Ecológico.

Según Ana Luz, la filosofía es integrar a la gran comunidad del mercado con los pequeños productores locales manteniendo un equilibrio de vendedores: carniceros, alimentos preparados y congelados, frutas y verduras frescas, quesos, productos de la piel: todo tanto para dentro como para fuera.

“Queremos que la gente forme parte de la red con nuestra comunidad de productores, para que la gente que venga encuentre un buen amigo además de buena comida. Estoy contenta de llevar aquí 14 años”, concluye Ana Luz, “porque he hecho muchos buenos amigos. Mis clientes y otros vendedores forman ya parte de mi vida. Lo que tenemos en este mercado es algo más que comida. Es la amistad, la solidaridad, cómo hemos ido creciendo con la comunidad”.



La abeja irremplazable

Por Diana Hunt

"Si la abeja desapareciera de la superficie del globo, al hombre sólo le quedarían cuatro años de vida. No más abejas, no más polinización, no más plantas, no más animales, no más hombre".

-Albert Einstein

Desde que le picó una abeja de niño, Carlos Sánchez ha estado fascinado con las abejas. Estudió por qué pican, qué comen, cómo fabrican la miel, los alimentos que polinizan, etc. Después de sesenta años sigue estudiando.

Carlos es un poco vagabundo, viaja por California, Washington y Hawaii -siempre trabajando con abejas- antes de volver a casa y trabajar en casi todos los estados de México. Finalmente compró un terreno cerca de la orilla del lago de Chapala.

En este lugar trabaja para hacer realidad su sueño de un sistema sostenible de cría de abejas. Además de sus colmenas, tiene cabras y gallinas, a las que pronto se unirán patos y conejos. Pero lo más importante es que quiere crear un centro educativo donde la gente pueda aprender sobre la importancia de las abejas y aprovechar los recursos naturales de que dispone. La permacultura enseña a practicar la agricultura de forma sostenible, sin utilizar productos químicos contaminantes.

"Quiero crear abejas para la próxima generación", explica Carlos. "Tenemos que ser más sostenibles, aprender a reciclar, si no la Madre Naturaleza se va a enfadar por nuestra forma de vivir, porque desperdiciamos mucho".

Personas de todo el mundo llevan milenios trabajando con las abejas. Los antiguos griegos pensaban en las abejas como símbolo de inmortalidad. Los reveladores estudios del Dr. Akito Kawahara de la Universidad de Florida, revelan que las abejas surgieron hace unos 125 millones de años, unos

25 millones de años antes que las mariposas y 60 millones de años antes que los murciélagos. Fueron ellas las que tal vez impulsaron a las plantas a desarrollar el néctar y las flores de colores para atraer a estos polinizadores diurnos. Las mariposas tienen que agradecer su existencia a las abejas.

Las abejas polinizan árboles y flores, lo que repercute en la cadena alimentaria y ayuda a otros insectos que a su vez alimentan y dan cobijo a pájaros, murciélagos y mamíferos. En pocas palabras, no podríamos sobrevivir sin las abejas. Según los expertos en abejas de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación (FAO), un tercio de la producción mundial de alimentos depende de las abejas. Ellas visitan más del 90% de los 107 principales cultivos del mundo.

De las 20,000 especies de abejas conocidas en todo el mundo, 2,000 son nativas de México. Los humanos sólo manejan unas pocas de ellas ya que la mayoría de las especies son silvestres. En la actualidad, Argentina, China y México tienen las mayores industrias de miel del mundo y todas se basan en la abeja melífera occidental. La apicultura beneficia a más de 41,000 productores en México, donde hay unos 2 millones de colmenas. Los dos principales corredores de producción son la península de Yucatán y los estados de Chiapas, Veracruz y Guerrero. La mayor organización conservacionista de México, llamada Pronatura, estudia formas de aumentar la producción de miel en Veracruz.

Sin embargo, las colonias de abejas están desapareciendo misteriosamente. El aumento de los métodos de agricultura intensiva ha dejado a las abejas en problemas. Desde 1930 se ha perdido un 97% de las praderas de flores silvestres, lo que ha reducido un importante recurso alimentario. Con los pesticidas rociados sobre muchas de las plantas que quedan, las abejas pierden más alimento o se envenenan al alimentarse de lo que queda.

Ahora, además de la pérdida de hábitat, la contaminación y el cambio climático, el trastorno por colapso de las colonias es uno de los problemas que empujan a las abejas hacia la extinción. México no es inmune a la caída de la población de abejas. En lugar de encontrar rastros de la enfermedad, dice Carlos, "las abejas obreras simplemente abandonan la colmena y desaparecen", dejando atrás a la abeja reina, pero sin adultos muertos.

Lo que está ocurriendo en México es un reflejo de lo que está sucediendo en todo el mundo en respuesta a la preocupación por la disminución de las poblaciones de abejas. Precisamente para animar a gobiernos, organizaciones, sociedad civil y ciudadanos preocupados a proteger a los polinizadores y sus hábitats, la ONU ha declarado el 20 de mayo Día Mundial de la Abeja. Este día, pretende crear conciencia sobre el papel esencial que desempeñan las abejas y otros polinizadores para mantener la salud de las personas y del planeta.

The Irreplaceable Bee

By Diana Hunt

"If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would have only four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man."

-Albert Einstein

Ever since he was stung by a bee as a child, Carlos Sánchez has been fascinated with bees. He studied why they sting, what they eat, how they make honey, the foods they pollinate and so on. Sixty years later he is still studying.

Carlos is a bit of a vagabond, traveling though California, Washington and Hawaii -- always working with bees -- before returning home and working in nearly all of the states in Mexico. He finally bought some land close to the shores of Lake Chapala.

Here he is working to make his dream come true of a sustainable system of raising bees. In addition to his hives, there are goats and chickens, soon to be joined by ducks and rabbits. But more importantly, he wants to create an education center where people can learn about the importance of bees and take advantage of the natural resources at their disposal. Permaculture teaches how to practice agriculture in a sustainable way, without the use of polluting chemicals.

"I want to create bees for next generation," Carlos explains. "We need to be more sustainable, to learn to recycle, otherwise Mother Nature is going to be angry because of the way we live, because we waste so much."

People around the world have been working with bees for millennia. The ancient Greeks thought of bees as a symbol of immortality. Dr. Akito Kawahara's (University of Florida) revelatory studies reveal that bees emerged some 125 million years ago, some 25 million years before butterflies and 60 million years before bats. It was bees that may have triggered plants to evolve nectar and colorful flowers to attract these daytime pollinators. Butterflies have bees to thank for their existence.

Bees pollinate trees and flowers that reverberates up the food chain supporting other insects, which then support birds, bats and mammals with food and shelter. Simply put, we could not survive without bees. According to bee experts at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, a third of the world's food production depends on bees. They visit over 90 percent of the world's top 107 crops.

Of the 20,000 known bee species worldwide, 2,000 are native to Mexico. Humans only manage a few of these, as most species are wild. Today, Argentina, China and Mexico have the world's largest honey industries, and all are based on the introduced Western honeybee. Beekeeping benefits more than 41,000 producers in Mexico, where there are about 2 million



beehives. The two main production corridors are the Yucatan Peninsula and the states of Chiapas, Veracruz and Guerrero. Pronatura, Mexico's largest conservation organization, is studying ways to increase honey production in Veracruz.

But bee colonies are mysteriously collapsing. The rise in intensive farming methods have left bees struggling. A staggering 97 percent of wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s, reducing an important food resource. With pesticides sprayed across many of the remaining plants, bees are losing more food or poisoning themselves by feeding on what's left.

Now, in addition to habitat loss, pollution and climate change, Colony Collapse Disorder is among the problems pushing bees towards extinction. Mexico is not immune to the crash in bee population. Rather than finding traces of disease Carlos says, "the worker bees just leave the hive and disappear," leaving the queen bee behind but no dead adults.

What is happening in Mexico is a reflection of what is happening all over the world in response to concerns about declining bee populations. It is precisely to encourage governments, organizations, civil society and concerned citizens to protect pollinators and their habitats that the UN has declared 20th of May World Bee Day. World Bee Day is meant to raise awareness of the essential role bees and other pollinators play in keeping people and the planet healthy.

An advertisement for 'LO DE JIMMY' featuring a paella dish. The top part of the ad shows a logo with a globe and the text 'LO DE JIMMY PAELLA ESTILO VALENCIANA'. Below the logo is a photograph of a large, shallow metal paella pan filled with a colorful paella dish, including rice, vegetables, and seafood. The text 'BEST PAELLA (AND MORE) IN TOWN' is overlaid on the image. At the bottom, there is contact information: a phone number '33 1020 4521', an address 'Constitución #3, 45920 Ajijic, Jal.', and a social media handle '@lodejimmy.paella'. The entire advertisement is set against a dark background.

¿SABÍAS QUE? NEILL JAMES ERA JARDINERA

Por Harriet Hart



Cuesta creer que los extensos jardines de la Sociedad del Lago de Chapala fueran en un tiempo muy pequeños. En la década de 1940, Neill James escribió: “En mi casita de adobe de Ajijic, vivo sola y al aire libre, duermo al raso, cultivo un jardín de flores y verduras del tamaño de un pañuelo de bolsillo... y escribo. Para asombro de mis vecinos mexicanos, trabajo en mi jardín y lo riego a mano. Es asombroso cuánto bebe una planta”.

El historiador Tony Burton nos cuenta que en 1948 Neill construyó la Quinta Tzintzuntzan “como su hogar para siempre, y la rodeó de extensos jardines. Con el tiempo James añadió varios estanques de plantas como fondo a una vasta colección de coloridas flores tropicales, árboles, plantas ornamentales y su propio huerto para crear un oasis verde donde sus numerosos animales, desde gallinas, patos y gallos hasta perros, loros y pavos reales, pudieran campar a sus anchas”.

Hoy, unos cuantos gatos rescatados son las únicas criaturas que deambulan libres y la mayoría de los antiguos estanques han sido sustituidos por el quiosco, el patio Neill James, el escenario y la cafetería, pero los jardines siguen ofreciendo a residentes y visitantes un espacio verde donde relajarse y disfrutar de los árboles, las plantas y las flores.

¿Quién cuida hoy los jardines? Permítanme presentarles al jardinero voluntario Dave Swann. Me reuní con él una soleada mañana de lunes de marzo para hacer una visita. Empezamos en la puerta principal, donde me señaló el cartel original de la Quinta Tzintzuntzan, que se arqueaba sobre la entrada. “Estaba totalmente cubierto de buganvillas. “Tuve que recortarlo y descubrí este tesoro”. Dave mandó pintar el cartel metálico y hoy da la bienvenida a todo el mundo igual que cuando Neill James lo mandó hacer.

A mi derecha había un enrejado metálico colgado con plantas y decorado con trozos de lo que parecía madera flotante, pero eran ramas muertas de los árboles de la propiedad.

Dave señaló un mono de talavera que encontró en la basura: “Compré pegamento y lo remendé”, dijo. “se ve muy bien, ¿verdad?”.

Resulta que Dave rescata objetos tirados a la basura por considerarse ya no útiles y los convierte en objetos de belleza. No se considera un verdadero jardinero, sino más bien un “limpiador y ordenador”. Y hay mucho que limpiar y orde-



nar; me acompañó más allá de la cafetería y los dos estanques que quedan hasta una esquina trasera de la propiedad, que está cubierta de maleza, un “desastre”.

“Ni siquiera quiero ocuparme de esto”, me dijo. “Tardaría meses en ponerlo en forma”. Mientras paseábamos de delante a atrás y mis ojos contemplaban la belleza de la propiedad, me di cuenta de que cuidarla es un trabajo enorme, que Dave realiza cinco días a la semana, como una labor de amor.

Los esfuerzos de Dave no pasan desapercibidos. En la AGM del 19 de marzo, El Consejo Directivo de LCS le concedió el premio al Voluntario del Año. Este hombre tranquilo, trabajador y de hablar suave ha hecho todo el trabajo “duro” de jardinería - cavar, plantar, podar y deshierbar - durante más de tres años. ¿Por qué? Porque se preocupa por los jardines de la Sociedad Lago de Chapala y en silencio y con constancia hace lo que puede para crear un oasis verde para todos nosotros.

Andale! CAFÉ

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Did You Know ?

NEILL JAMES WAS A GARDENER

By Harriet Hart

It's hard to believe that the sprawling gardens of the Lake Chapala Society were once tiny. Back in the 1940's, Neill James wrote: "In my little adobe house in Ajijic, I live alone and in the open, sleep out-of-doors, cultivate a pocket-handkerchief sized flower and vegetable garden... and write. To the amazement of my Mexican neighbors, I actually do the work in my garden and water it by hand. It's astonishing how much a plant drinks."

Historian Tony Burton tells us, in 1948, Neill built Quinta Tzintzuntzan "as her forever home and surrounded it with extensive gardens. Over time, James added several lily ponds as the background to a vast collection of colorful tropical flowers, trees, ornamentals and her own vegetable garden to create a green oasis where her many animals from chickens, ducks and roosters to dogs, parrots and peacocks could roam free."

Today a few rescue cats are the only creatures roaming free and most of the former ponds have been replaced by the Gazebo, Neill James patio, the stage, and café, but the gardens continue to offer residents and visitors a green space where they can relax and enjoy the trees, plants and flowers.

Who cares for the gardens today? Let me introduce you to volunteer gardener Dave Swann. I met him on a sunny Monday morning in March for a tour. We began at the front gate where he pointed out the original Quinta Tzintzuntzan sign, arching over the entryway. "It was totally covered by bougainvillea," he said. "I had to cut it back and discovered this treasure." Dave had the metal sign painted and it welcomes everyone today just as it did when Neill James had it made.

To my right was a metal trellis hung with plants and decorated with pieces of what looked like driftwood, but were dead branches from the trees on the property. Dave pointed to a Talavera monkey he found in the trash: "I bought some glue and patched him up," he said. "He looks good, doesn't he?"

It turns out Dave is a bit of a scavenger, rescuing items tossed aside as no longer useful and turning them into objects of beauty. He doesn't consider himself a real gardener but more of a "cleaner and tidier." And there's plenty of cleaning and tidying to be done; he escorted me past



the coffee shop and two remaining ponds to a back corner of the property, which is overgrown, a "mess."

"I don't even want to tackle this," he said. "It would take months to get into shape."

As we strolled from front to back and my eyes took in the beauty of the property, I realized it's a huge job to care for it, which Dave does five days a week, as a labor of love.

Dave's efforts are not going unrecognized. At the AGM on March 19th, the LCS Board honored him with the award, Volunteer of the Year. This quiet, hardworking, soft-spoken man has done all the "hard" gardening – the digging and planting and trimming and weeding – for over three years. Why? Because he cares about the gardens of the Lake Chapala Society and quietly and steadily does what he can to create a green oasis for us all.



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Love the Earth: Save Your Health

By Sandra Baird

Breathing Easy: Air Quality Solutions

Did you know the air we breathe could be cleaner and fresher?

With pollutants like particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide floating around, our lungs could use a little break from respiratory diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cardiovascular disease. The good news? You can make a difference! Opt for public transport, bike rides or walks to cut down on emissions. At home, keep energy use to a minimum and cheer for renewable energy sources. *Small steps can lead to big breaths of fresh air!*

Crystal Clear: Water Wonders

Water is life, but when it's contaminated, it can turn against us.

Contaminated water sources can harbor diseases like cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A and typhoid. Plus, chemicals and heavy metals present in water can lead to neurological disorders and reproductive issues. The solution starts with us! Being mindful of not dumping chemicals down the drain and cutting back on single-use plastics can protect our waterways. Let's also raise our voices for policies safeguarding our precious water resources. *Your actions can help keep our water crystal clear and safe for everyone.*

Cooling Down: Climate Change Action

The increasing frequency and intensity of heatwaves, along with the expanding range of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, are direct outcomes of climate change.

Our planet is getting warmer, but we're not powerless. Reducing our carbon footprint is something we all can do. From eating less meat to embracing energy-saving habits, every little bit helps. Why not plant a tree or two while you're at it? They're not just beautiful; they're also nature's air conditioners. Together, we can turn the tide on climate change, making the world a cooler place for future generations.

Green Therapy: Boosting Mental and Physical Health

Nature isn't just a pretty face; it's a sanctuary for our mental and physical well-being. The more we connect with the great outdoors, the happier and healthier we become. Support your local parks and green spaces – they're like natural health spas without the hefty price tag! And remember, taking care of our planet is also taking care of ourselves.

Rich in Life: Biodiversity's Bounty

Our planet's diverse life forms are not just fascinating; they're vital to our survival. From medicines derived from plants to the pollination that puts food on our tables, biodiversity is a treasure trove of health and wealth. By choosing sustainably sourced products and supporting conservation, we can give back to the natural world that gives so much to us.

Turning the Tide on Environmental Degradation

It's easy to think that environmental decline is too big a problem for one person to tackle. But guess what? If we all do our bit by recycling, choosing eco-friendly products, and joining community clean-ups, we can make waves. *Every action counts in protecting our planet and ensuring it remains a vibrant, healthy home for all its inhabitants.*



Rachel McMillen
Embracing Change

By: Sandra Baird

In the ever-evolving tapestry of life, change stands as the only constant, an undeniable force that shapes our existence, molds our experiences, and defines our journey.

Rachel McMillen, founding managing editor of *Conecciones*, a writer, a sailor, a teacher, a weaver of wool and tales, is moving on. Next destination? Canada.

Fifteen years ago, Rachel relocated to Mexico, where she quickly engaged with the Lake Chapala Society. She dedicated her time to teaching creative writing, providing monthly courses aimed at newcomers and overseeing the volunteer program. Her affection for Mexican folk art blossomed, leading to a longstanding position on the Board of the *Feria Maestros del Arte* and the acquisition of an inspiring collection of indigenous art.

Three years ago, Rachel raised anchor and moved to Colima, the city and state. There she dove into an enclave of writers and natural artists while enjoying the proximity of ocean and the volcano, Volcan de Fuego, the most active volcano in Mexico.

Despite her re-location, Rachel maintained her service to the Lakeside community as the Managing Editor of the LCS magazine, *Conecciones* driving back to Ajijic frequently and “zooming” the rest of the time. She also continued her service to the *Feria Maestros del Arte*.

To many people internationally, Rachel is known as R.J. McMillen, the author of the *Dan Connor Mysteries*, a 5-book series of novels set on the coastline of northern British Columbia and northern Australia and first nations cultures of both countries. “I wrote to change minds about indigenous culture. I had to start where the readers were, so I created a white policeman and an indigenous criminal, a man who had lost his way.”

Those of us privileged to spend time with Rachel, by her example, have been inspired to change, to challenge the status quo and compelled to question our preconceived notions and to venture beyond the familiar confines of our comfort zones.

Rachel McMillen will be greatly missed by her many friends and admirers as she finds fresh perspectives and fields anew in Penticton, British Columbia, Canada. We will expect an annual visit as a “snowbird.”

“I like to move every five years. Confront the unknown with curiosity rather than fear, keep a mindset of exploration and discovery.” Rachel McMillen.

Lake Chapala's First Field Guide to Birds

By Stephanie Schneiderman

We are blessed to live in or visit Lake Chapala for many reasons and we can now add birds and birdwatching to the list. Aside from the famed and readily identifiable white pelicans, did you know there are over 370 bird species in the Lake Chapala Basin? And, we now have a new guidebook to help us identify some of them!

“Guía de las Aves de la Ribera de Chapala” is the first bird guide in Spanish, designed for the casual or budding bird watcher. “We wanted this book to be an accessible tool, to spark interest in bird watching, to create awareness of these creatures and their habitats,” says Carlos Palomera Garcia, one of the lead authors. “Awareness is the first step in conservation,” he says.

How do you get 370+ bird species into an introductory field guide to birds of the region? You don't. The authors selected 103 of the most commonly seen birds, so that people could begin right away to look around to spot and identify birds.

The book organizes birds by families, then by scientific name, followed by the common name in Spanish and then in English. Ex-

ample: Trochilidae/Colibries/Hummingbirds. Then, each unique species within this family is identified by an illustration with an accompanying description of the bird and its habitat.

It must have been a difficult challenge to whittle down 371 species to 103 but the good news is that the full list of 371 can be found at the end of the book.

This list is thanks to John Keeling and his wife Rosemary, who, for the last 15 years have observed, identified and documented birds from Jocotepec to Jamay and beyond. John wrote the prologue to the book, emphasizing how this guide can help create greater awareness of birds and their habitat and, through this awareness, create the desire to preserve this natural treasure.

The Lake Chapala Basin accounts for 33% of all the birds of Mexico. These birds fall into categories of residence. Some are endemic (only found in Mexico), some are residents (live here full time), some are migratory, and others are accidental (e.g. got blown here via hurricanes). Other categories include threat levels and risk for extinction: some are protected, some are endangered and, sadly, a few are or are becoming extinct.

The paths of authors, J. Carlo Cuevas, Ingrid A. Tello Lopez and Carlos Palomera Garcia first crossed about eight years ago, when Carlo and Ingrid were under the tutelage of Dr. Palomera at the University of Guadalajara, taking an interdisciplinary studies program in Natural Sciences which combined conservation of nature, sustainable agricultural production and community development. But it was their love of birds that was the true bond between them. “Through the years, we've stayed in touch and go bird watching together as often as we can. We enjoy each other's company and our mutual interests,” says Professor Palomera.

According to Jesus Carlo Cuevas, the idea for the book began when he realized that the repertoire of bird



guiding books was mostly made up of English language field guides that covered North America. Books such as National Geographic Field Guide, The Sibley Guide to Birds and Peterson Field Guides are all excellent guidebooks but Carlo felt that a region that had over 33% of all of Mexico's bird species deserved a book of its own, in Spanish. Additionally, according to Carlos Palomera, “the Spanish language books on birds languish in storage rooms of academia.” There is a lack of basic information for public consumption. So, Carlo contacted John Keeling, and Carlo, John, and the team selected the most common birds with the best chance of being seen.

“I had a guidebook from the 1980's, published by the Jardín Botánico in Veracruz. This was my first encounter with the concept of bird identification and watching. It started me on a lifelong path,” says Professor Palomera. “We hope this guidebook will create that spark in others, especially the youth.”

The book is an illustrated guide. Illustrations aid in identification by highlighting key features, whereas a photo, depending on the angle taken, time of day, etc., can distort color and markings. The drawings of the six young illustrators were verified by an ornithologist.

Have a look for yourself! Enjoy the 143 illustrations, walk about, watch in the mornings around your home and see which birds are visiting you!

The book is available at Casa de la Cultura in Jocotepec and from Diane Pearl, Riberas del Pilar.



La primera guía de campo de aves del Lago de Chapala

Por Stephanie Schneiderman

Tenemos la suerte de vivir o visitar el Lago de Chapala por muchas razones y ahora podemos añadir las aves y su observación a la lista. Aparte de los famosos y fácilmente identificables pelícanos blancos, ¿sabías que hay más de 370 especies de aves en la Cuenca del Lago de Chapala? y, ¡ahora tenemos una nueva guía para ayudarnos a identificar algunas de ellas!

“Guía de las Aves de la Ribera de Chapala” es la primera guía de aves en español, diseñada para el observador casual o principiante. “Queríamos que este libro fuera una herramienta accesible, que despertara el interés por la observación de aves, que creara conciencia sobre estas criaturas y sus hábitats”, dice Carlos Palomera García, uno de los autores principales. “Crear conciencia es el primer paso para la conservación”, añade.

¿Cómo se pueden incluir más de 370 especies de aves en una guía de campo introductoria de la región? No se hace. Los autores seleccionaron 103 de las aves más comunes, para que la gente pudiera empezar inmediatamente a observar e identificar aves.

El libro organiza las aves por familias, luego por nombre científico, seguido del nombre común en español y después en inglés. Ejemplo: Trochilidae/ Colibríes/ Colibríes. Luego, cada especie única dentro de esta familia se identifica mediante una ilustración con una descripción adjunta del ave y su hábitat.

Debe de haber sido un reto difícil reducir las 371 especies a 103, pero la buena noticia es que la lista completa de las 371 se encuentra al final del libro.

Esta lista es gracias a John Keeling y su esposa Rosemary, quienes, durante los últimos 15 años han observado, identificado y documentado aves desde Jocotepec, hasta Jamay y más allá. John escribió el prólogo del libro, haciendo hincapié en cómo esta guía puede ayudar a crear una mayor conciencia de las aves y su hábitat, y a través de esta conciencia, crear el deseo de preservar este tesoro natural.

La Cuenca del Lago de Chapala alberga el 33% de todas las aves de México. Estas aves se dividen en categorías de residencia. Algunas son endémicas (sólo se encuentran en la Cuenca del Lago de Chapala), algunas son residentes (viven aquí todo el tiempo), algunas son migratorias y otras son accidentales (por ejemplo, llegaron aquí por los huracanes). Otras categorías incluyen los niveles de amenaza y riesgo de extinción: algunas están protegidas, otras en peligro de extinción y lamentablemente, unas pocas están o se están extinguiendo.

Los caminos de los autores, J. Carlo Cuevas, Ingrid A. Tello López y Carlos Palomera García se cruzaron por



primera vez hace unos ocho años, cuando Carlos e Ingrid estaban bajo la tutela del Dr. Palomera en la Universidad de Guadalajara, cursando un programa de estudios interdisciplinarios en Ciencias Naturales que combinaba la conservación de la naturaleza, la producción agrícola sostenible y el desarrollo comunitario. Pero fue su amor por las aves el verdadero vínculo entre ellos. “A lo largo de los años, nos hemos mantenido en contacto y salimos juntos a observar aves siempre que podemos. Disfrutamos de la compañía mutua y de nuestros intereses comunes”, dice el profesor Palomera.

Según Jesús Carlo Cuevas, la idea del libro comenzó cuando se dio cuenta de que el repertorio de libros de guía de aves estaba compuesto en su mayoría por guías de campo en inglés que cubrían Norteamérica. Libros como National Geographic Field Guide, The Sibley Guide to Birds, Peterson Field Guides, son todos excelentes libros de guía, pero Carlos sintió que una región que tenía más del 33% de todas las especies de aves de México, merecía un libro propio, en español. Además, según Carlos Palomera, “los libros en español sobre aves languidecen en los almacenes de la academia”. Falta información básica para el consumo público”. Así que Carlo se puso en contacto con John Keeling, y Carlos, John y el equipo seleccionaron las aves más comunes y con más posibilidades de ser vistas.

“Tenía una guía de los años 80, publicada por el Jardín Botánico de Veracruz. Fue mi primer encuentro con el concepto de identificación y observación de aves. Me inició en un camino que duraría toda la vida”, dice el profesor Palomera. “Esperamos que este libro-guía cree esa chispa en otros, especialmente en los jóvenes”.

El libro es una guía ilustrada que ayudan a la identificación al resaltar las características clave, mientras que una foto, dependiendo del ángulo tomado, la hora del día, etc., puede distorsionar el color y las marcas. Los dibujos de los seis jóvenes ilustradores han sido verificados por un ornitólogo.

Eche un vistazo usted mismo. Disfruta de las 143 ilustraciones, pasea, observa por las mañanas alrededor de tu casa y ¡ve qué pájaros te visitan!

El libro está disponible en la Casa de la Cultura de Jocotepec y en Diane Pearl, Riberas del Pilar.





SMILE

By Larry Kolczak

Back in January 2023, I read a life-altering article in the Guadalajara Reporter. The article, by Dale Hoyt Palfrey, described a medical project planned for the Lake Chapala area from May 10-18, 2024. The project won't change my life, but it will put a smile on the faces of up to 50 disadvantaged children and adults who would otherwise be cursed to live with disfiguring birth defects called cleft lip and cleft palate. In addition to a deformed upper lip, people with these afflictions often suffer from a severe speech impediment causing them to have a very nasal voice and difficulty pronouncing hard consonants like b, d, g, k and ch.

The project will be conducted by a non-profit organization called Smile Network International (SNI) in cooperation with a number of local agencies. SNI will bring a team of surgeons and medical staff to conduct the corrective surgeries free of charge at the Ribera Medical Center, located on the Libramiento.

This article struck a chord with me because, back in 1945, I had been born with a cleft lip and cleft palate. I was fortunate to have had corrective surgery as a baby that was so successful that I had no speech impediment at all. In fact, public speaking has been an integral part of my entire working life.

I attribute my good fortune to three things. First, my parents were able to afford a top-notch surgeon. Second was my Aunt Jean, who had been an army nurse who served in France during WWII. She was a very devout Catholic, and while still in France at the end of the war, she visited the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. She brought back a small bottle of holy water from that sacred spring. She gave it to my mother and told her to feed me a teaspoonful after my surgery.

The third thing that I believe improved my speech was my mischievous grandfather. He was a happy-go-lucky Irishman from whom I've been told I must have inherited my sense of humor. When I was old enough to talk, my mom explained to him that I needed to practice saying the hard consonants. He came up with just the ticket. Imagine my mother's surprise when she took her toddler to the grocery store and I was greeting all the customers with a loud, clear "goddammit" and "son of a bitch."

So, for whatever reason, I managed to overcome my birth defect and I wanted to do something to help others less

fortunate than I was. And here is the opportunity, in my very own community and at a hospital that was walking distance from my home. I looked up the SNI web page (smilenetwork.org) and called their information number. To my surprise, I didn't get some call center in Bangalore, India. I got Kim Valenti, the woman who established this non-profit back in 2003. Since then, they have sponsored free surgeries in 13 countries around the world. In Mexico alone, SNI has helped over 1,500 patients.

Kim said that, unlike some other organizations, SNI uses 80% of its funding for the actual program and only 20% for administration. What's more, the volunteer surgeons are specialists in cleft lip and palate surgery. And all the medical staff is affiliated with the internationally renowned Mayo Clinic. I couldn't ask for better credentials than that.

Kim assured me my contribution would be used for the Chapala-area patients. In fact, she invited me to come to the Ribera Medical Center on May 11th, and she'd introduce me to the patients that I was helping. She said I was welcome to bring along all the holy water from Lourdes I could carry. But she suggested I resist the temptation to teach the kids my grandfather's speech therapy lesson!

For more information, or to make a donation, go to the SNI website at smilenetwork.org or the locally sponsored GoFundMe campaign set up by Richard Nagy and Mike Platt.

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