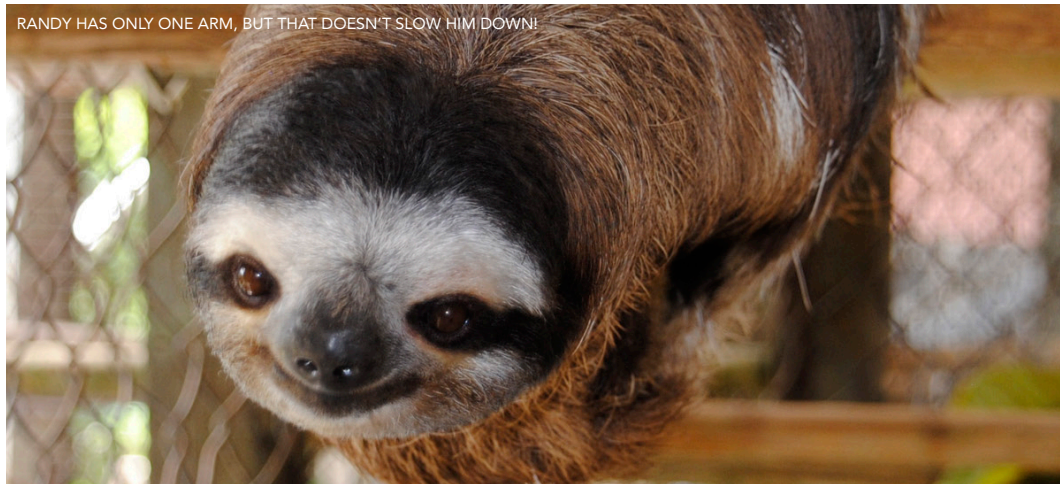


RANDY HAS ONLY ONE ARM, BUT THAT DOESN'T SLOW HIM DOWN!



Dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, release and research of sloths and conserving the Costa Rican rainforest.

[SlothSanctuary.com](http://SlothSanctuary.com)

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# sloth talk

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## Director's note

Dear Friends,



**Nearly half of all adults sloths we rescue are victims of electrocution by power lines.**

Developing the electric grid in Costa Rica is considered progress, but progress at the expense of our precious wildlife: birds, sloths, monkeys ...

The most serious problem for sloths are the overhanging branches that connect a tree to power lines. Sloths use these branches to cross to another tree, make contact with the exposed live wire, then are electrocuted. This either kills, burns or injures the sloth and the electrical surge regularly causes transformer explosions and power outages to the community. It's so common that locals have even given it a name: *averías*. Why are the wires live? Most of Costa Rica does not have insulated wires; only the well-established, lucrative areas of tourism are fortunate enough to have insulated wires.

We took our concerns straight to our national electric company,

ICE (*Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad*). During the meeting it was recommended that ICE focus their efforts—and budget—on burying power lines underground, rather than their usual practice of continually replacing damaged transformers and wires. Underground power lines are more environmentally sound in the long run, preventing injury to wildlife, preserving the beauty of the landscape and requiring less manpower to repair.

It's heartbreaking for us to care for burn victims—the survivors—and even sadder to see these innocent animals perish needlessly at the expense of modernization. Sloths cannot adapt fast enough to survive the perils of urbanization: fewer trees, more people, dogs, cars, power lines ... We desperately need to protect what remains of their habitat and develop conservation strategies to ensure that sloths and humans can coexist side by side.

All the best,

Judy Avey-Arroyo, Director

## RESCUE



At the time of this writing, there are **24 orphaned baby sloths**—our most ever—in our incubator nursery. Due to the increasing number of orphans arriving at the Sanctuary, we needed to relocate and expand our

juvenile nursery. The larger installation features a new exercise area (see “Rehabilitate” for photos) and more dedicated space for their daily weighing, cleaning and feeding routine. This expansion was made possible by our supporters. We are 100% funded by donations and proceeds from our tours, gift shop and Bed & Breakfast. 🌸

TINY BABY ISSY BEING WEIGHED



Coming to Costa Rica? Take our memorable **Insider's Tour**, then stay at our onsite **Bed & Breakfast**. Five unique, airconditioned guest rooms are available for you and your companions. See photos and all you need to know [here](#).

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## Little guy, big mystery



PHOTO © BECKY CLIFFE

I was searching for the tagged sloths of my [Sloth Backpack Project](#) when I was stunned to see a tiny Three-fingered baby sloth quietly sitting in a tree, perhaps 8 months old, completely alone. He looked too young to be on his own, yet here he was. Why? Where was his mother? Had he been abandoned? I was stumped.

I decided to bring him back to the Sanctuary for a health check. Despite weighing only 1.42 kg (just over 3 lbs), he was in perfect health: strong, bright eyes, great skin, full stomach. A baby sloth will usually stay with its mother for a full year following birth, so it's a mystery why this little sloth was alone so young. We had to assume that he had just been weaned from his mother and was in the process of finding his independence.

We released him back into the forest equipped with my tiny tracking backpack so we can monitor his progress and ensure his safety. The data we collect will also provide valuable information about how baby sloths learn to establish a home range and adapt to solitary life after being weaned.

Upon his release, Bojangles, as we named him, made his way up through a network of vines and settled down in a dense area of the canopy. It's always difficult spotting my adult tagged sloths because they camouflage themselves effectively, so identifying a tiny baby amongst the canopy is a whole new challenge!

One last mystery: Bojangles looks identical to a baby ("Pie") whose mother ("Apple") I was studying some time ago. One day they were together and the next day not: Could Bojangles be Pie? The only way we will know definitively is by genetic tests. We are in the planning stages of a study into sloth population genetics, so this is definitely on the agenda for the future. 🌸

British zoologist Becky Cliffe, studying for her PhD from Swansea University (UK), is in her fourth year of research at the Sloth Sanctuary of Costa Rica. Follow updates at [BeckyCliffe.com](http://BeckyCliffe.com) and [@BeckyCliffe06](https://twitter.com/BeckyCliffe06).

## Try, try again

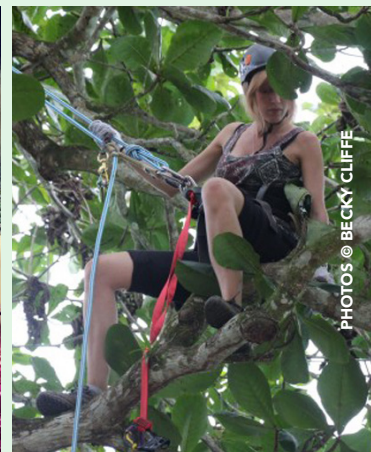
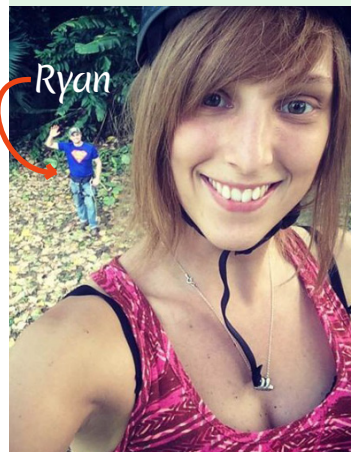
After a disappointing string of backpack failures in November, I returned to Swansea University over Christmas, determined to come up with a design that would increase my rate of data collection and most importantly, not fail! I am delighted to announce that after a lot of drawing, modelling and scratching of heads, we came up with a winning idea. Read more about it [here](#).

## New faces

In January I returned to Costa Rica, where I met up with "Gentleman Scientist" [Ryan J. Haupt](#), a paleoecologist from the University of Wyoming specializing in the extinct Giant Ground Sloth. Ryan is collaborating with the Sloth Sanctuary to study sloth tissue chemistry in relation to sloth diet. I will also soon be joined by my first research assistant, Sarah Kennedy. I feel confident that 2015 will be a productive year for sloth science, which is why Ryan's and Sarah's insight and assistance will be invaluable.

## Looking up

My last three years has involved patiently waiting for wild sloths to come down to the ground so I can tag them or retrieve their backpack data. This has been an inefficient use of time and provides a slow rate of data acquisition. Ryan is trained in tree climbing and kindly offered to show me the ropes—literally. We have now spent a week together hauling ourselves into trees that we know are frequented by wild sloths. My exciting new ability to climb into the canopy will allow me to drastically increase my sample size and expand our research. Ryan has been a great instructor and I have just about every piece of safety equipment possible. So far, so good! 🌸



PHOTOS © BECKY CLIFFE



## Sanctuary profile

# CALI

He begins each morning cutting bananas for our birdfeeders and for his own little school of gourami-like fish. He delights in showing visitors how these fish—whom he affectionately calls his “banana piranhas”—spin through the water and jump to catch the fruit chunks.

At age 69, Cali has been with us from the very beginning—almost 40 years. Many visitors have met Cali during tours, but few know this charismatic gentleman’s intriguing backstory. Judy Avey-Arroyo shares it with us.

One day in 1977, my now-late husband Luis went to the beach at the mouth of the river that runs through our land and discovered a young man living in a palm-thatched hut. He had retreated there to do some soul-searching about his excessive drinking and realized he needed to change for the better. Luis noticed something special in this struggling young man and offered him a place to live in exchange for a job as caretaker, since we were often away, working and raising our family in the States. Cali kept the grounds immaculately groomed, and it was reassuring to know our little piece of paradise was being lovingly tended in our absence.

In those early years Cali adored hosting occasional visitors to *la finca* (the farm), mostly adventure travelers and hippies. He loved exchanging stories and ideas with them and, through these esoteric conversations, he chose to become a vegan and follow the principles of Buddhism.

Cali and Luis were passionate birders so, when we moved permanently to Costa Rica in 1986, Luis and I created a bird watching pontoon-boat tour along our river. Cali continued working for us, keeping the grounds beautiful and, most importantly, pumping water using an old-fashioned hand-pump into a massive holding tank. We didn’t have electricity, yet Cali always made sure our family had plenty of water.

The earthquake of 1991 changed everything: the river was swallowed up and our home was destroyed. Unfazed, Cali

helped us demolish and haul away the remnants of life as we knew it, then help us rebuild to be even better than before.

We built a small hotel and gradually our river naturally reopened itself, although shallower and narrower. Cali began taking hotel guests for rides in a small aluminum canoe that we had brought from the States and it was an instant hit.

Cali is completely bilingual and his spotting and identification of our local birds was excelled only by that of Luis. A wonderful storyteller, Cali loved telling our hotel guests about the early days of *la finca*. Over the years, Cali has become our number one river guide/boatman. He makes up to six trips in a day, taking visitors on hour-long canoe tours through the branch of the Estrella River that fronts our property. A task that he chose—and takes great pride in—is keeping the parking and reception areas free of leaves that fall every day, a never-ending job!

Cali has many neighborhood friends and often rides his bike to visit them in the evening. It’s dangerous, with huge 18-wheelers barreling along our roads. Cali wears a reflector vest, but he also has the protective aura of goodness to keep him safe. He visits his mother and a sister in Limón once a year, but we have become Cali’s family. In Luis, Cali found a brother and kindred spirit, and also a deep mutual respect for our whole family. He has said many times that he will remain here at *la finca* long after he has left the physical world. 🌸





## REHABILITATE



THE NEW EXERCISE AREA IN ITS LEAFY SETTING

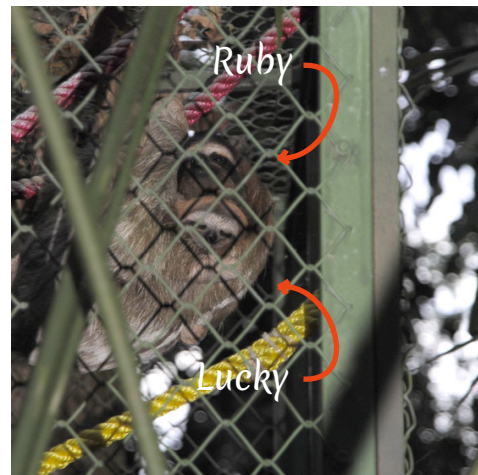
We recently finished completion on a new exercise area for the babies in our juvenile nursery. They are taken to this area for daily climbing practice, an essential lesson that aids their motor skill development. Agility allows them to forage more effectively and, if they are released, to avoid hazards, such as dogs and workers clearing the forest. This project was made possible by your generous donations—thank you! 🌺

CLIMBING PRACTICE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE REHABILITATION OF ORPHANED SLOTHS



## RELEASE

Two of Judy's grandsons were riding their bikes through Manzanillo when they saw a sloth fall from a tree into the middle of the road. Stunned from the impact, she lay motionless, a terrified baby still clinging to her chest. Thinking quickly, the young men hailed a taxi and rushed them to the Sanctuary clinic. An examination by veterinarian Dr. Francisco Arroyo revealed no broken bones, just some abrasions. The sloths were placed in the Sanctuary's soft-release enclosure to be closely observed and to recover. This structure allows pre-release sloths to experience the sights and sounds of their natural habitat. They are also given cecropia leaf bundles that are monitored to ensure the sloths' appetite is back to normal prior to release.



Ruby

Lucky



RUBY AND LUCKY TOGETHER IN THE TRANSITIONAL ENCLOSURE

We named the mother Ruby and the baby Lucky and, after a few days of recovery, both were eating and climbing well. We released them in late January at the location where they were originally found—although we took them further into the forest, far from the dangers of the road. We hope they continue to thrive and our observations over the past few weeks lead us to believe they will! 🌺



## Our gift of thanks

for your donation of  
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**"Meet the Sloths" 3-DVD Set** by Animal Planet™. Delivery is included and ships by USPS Priority Mail®. Please provide address at PayPal checkout. Thank you for your support!

Region 2 DVD format. Also plays in most computers, Xbox and PlayStation® systems.