

Entre la Cosecha

(between the harvest)



Costa Rica, Costa Rica. photo by crystal hamlett

a 581 documentary proposal by scott drucker

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ostional sunset, at the soccer field

“The real challenge for a filmmaker is to take a story that seems banal, and tell it in such a way that it becomes exemplary.”

-Jean-Xavier de Lestrade

Entre la Cosecha

a documentary treatment by scott drucker

Tagline: Entre la Cosecha explores the impact an endangered sea turtle has on a local and national community. A government official from Ostional, the town's president, and a local high school student studying to be a guide all illustrate the complexity of the situation, presenting a strong argument for the right to take the eggs.

Introduction:

This is not a story of heroic feats or accomplishment, but rather one of survival. The monthly harvest of the endangered Olive Ridley Sea Turtle has allowed local families in Ostional to survive for years, selling the eggs to bars and restaurants throughout the country. However, according to the *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)*, this is the main reason why the turtles have been placed on the red list. They come to the same beach by hundreds and thousands, from all over the world, and within hours their eggs are gone, returning to sea with no chance of ever seeing their young again.

Researchers at the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) attribute this unusual nesting habit adaptation to the turtles need to perpetuate the species. New predators on land and in sea were making it harder to nest individually. But it was a goldmine to local residents. And today, eggs are consumed and then distributed throughout the world wherever the Olive Ridley nests. Thought to be an aphrodisiac, it is not uncommon to find men taking shots of turtle eggs at bars and markets throughout all of Costa Rica.

According to IUCN researchers, "Olive Ridleys and their eggs have been harvested, mostly unsustainably, worldwide... and there is documentation of recent egg use causing declines. From México to Colombia, Olive Ridley eggs have been and still are used for personal and commercial use" (Lagueux 1989, Arauz 2000, Campbell 2007, Cornelius *et al.* 2007). Although there is a common concern to protect the turtles, turtle laws regulating turtle egg use vary among countries, and even where laws prohibit egg use, illegal use of Olive Ridley eggs is believed to be widespread because enforcement is either non-existent or insufficient. On unprotected solitary nesting beaches (most are unprotected), egg extraction often approaches 100% (Cornelius 2007). Ostional is protected, but there is no consensus as to when it has become too many eggs. And based on my observation of four arribadas in Ostional, I have never seen a local governing officer present to regulate a harvest. If they live in the town they go "off-duty" to help, but not to regulate. The Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Ostional (ADIO), the local community organization, has near total control of the harvests. However, with that control in hand they still fight MINAE workers for the rights to the land and the beach. It is the first time in the

world that a country has suspended an international ban on the poaching of an endangered specimen. And to this day, they are the only country that allows a legal poach of sea turtle eggs (National Research Council (U.S.). Committee on Sea Turtle Conservation).

It all started in 1984 when Ostional became a national natural sanctuary. By 1991, the government decided to move into town to protect the turtles (starting a feud between two organizations that has persisted to this day). The first house the government installed was destroyed by local residents who felt like it was their job to protect the turtles. The town was harvesting more eggs than they should have been, and the national government knew they had to do something, thereby creating a number of laws and regulations (such as a local restriction on building and repairing homes) within the protected sanctuary. The fight wages on. ADIO takes it upon their own volition to guard the beaches at night to prevent thieves from selling eggs on the black market. The government workers walk the beach at night doing research. Eggs are sold illegally; children don't use the public library (located in MINAE building); alcohol and drugs to pass the time between harvests. Basically the Olive Ridley Turtle is the animal equivalent of a cash crop. And everyone wants the crop. They just don't know what to do with the time and space when the crop isn't there.

By reducing the universe into this microcosm, the film will illustrate a hidden catastrophe of an impoverished community, the human footprint on the environment, and the necessity to protect the natural ways of such ecosystems. The turtle egg itself is the perfect metaphor for the fragility of these ecosystems. Behind the curtain of this beautiful beach and the sea creature that inhabits it there is a brutal fight for these endangered eggs. The scientific community, the town, and the turtles themselves are all suffering as a result of this power struggle. But once the crop is gone, a number of other things in its ecosystem, such as the town itself, will die off too.



nearby squatter settlement

Scenes:

We hear an animated minister pray for environmental protection of sea turtles and town prosperity as four protagonists are visually introduced: Pablo (a government official at MINAE and local who also collects eggs), Hilberth (the president of the people of Ostional), Kristen (a tourist visiting Ostional for the week with her husband and two children), and Edward (a high school student studying to be a turtle guide...he also dreams of going to college). They are all anxiously awaiting the arrival of the sea turtles for the arribada. The characters are inter-cut with images of vultures on the black beaches ripping the heads off of baby turtles and sucking the intestines out. They aggressively fight over a nest of baby turtles that have just hatched. A local woman runs over to fight the vultures off with a stick, whacking one on the head.

We are on the crowded streets of San Jose (the capital) at night as people purchase eggs from the new harvest at a crowded market. In a nearby bar middle-aged men take shots of turtle eggs together in good spirits. They wear classy business clothes and pay less than fifty cents per shot. They joke in a serious way that taking the shots of turtle eggs gives them "the sexual force". They talk about how many they take and discuss their knowledge of the sea turtles in Costa Rica, which seems to be minimal at best.

Cut to the president of the town, Hilberth, rallying at an Oscar Arias speech in a neighboring town. He is demanding that MINAE leave the town and that the national government do more to truly support local communities. Cut to Carlos Mario, the president of MINAE, as he is caught in the midst of a local protest in Ostional. Hilberth leads the charge to the MINAE building. Carlos Mario stands at the door as locals hold up signs demanding that he and the rest of the institute leave the town. He proclaims, we are here to help. If we continue to harvest the eggs like we do you will have nothing else to rely on. You need something sustainable. We are locked in on his eyes as he looks on in frustration, waiting for the community to leave. Black vultures circle the skies.

Pablo brings his two children to the MINAE building. They read in the library as Pablo works around the office discussing with his research crew the numbers of the next Arribada.

Hilberth speaks at a weekly community meeting, telling community members to keep their children away from the MINAE building. No library. No movie screenings. After, in an interview he explains the history of the government in Ostional. He says that their used to be a lot of drugs and arms going through the region, and the town took it upon themselves to harvest the eggs since it was a better solution to their socioeconomic status. And now they regulate the turtle population by only

taking one percent of each arribada (could also come out in the narration over images of the town meeting).

Kristin lies on the beach as a baby turtle emerges from the sand. She picks it up to examine it and then places it closer to the shore, facing the open sea. They anxiously await the arrival of the arribada. As they leave the beach she places her bottle in the trash, asking her husband if they recycle in Ostional.

Cut to kids on the street smoking marijuana to pass the time. They talk about how they have never really been very far outside of the town, and the farthest they go is a two-hour bus ride to the nearest city to find work since there aren't a lot of jobs in Ostional. One of the kids throws a juice box into a small pile of trash off the dirt road. Smaller children play soccer in the community field at the center of town. Edward plays soccer with the younger boys. We follow him home as he eats a meal prepared with turtle eggs.

Moving stills of the people of Ostional standing outside their homes and places around the town: in front of the pulperia (market), the bar, and the restaurants.

An international IUCN conference in San Jose, Costa Rica discusses how the government should be doing more to protect the turtle population based on their numbers, verifying declining population. Protest footage is inter-spliced with conference footage.

Cut to Edward outside of a small school with chipped paint and broken walls surrounding the exterior. He waits for class to start. His biology class discusses the nesting habits of sea turtles in Ostional.

After school Edward and his friends trap crabs on the sand to pass the time. A voice over explores what has happened to similar arribada communities in India who have wiped out much of their turtle population.

Vultures pick at the eyes of a dead sea turtle. Archival footage of news station reporting on sea turtles becoming extinct in another part of the world. In the bar in Ostional, local men take shots of turtle eggs. They are watching animal planet, as always, as they explain that "you need to take three turtle shots a day to feel the force." They are drunk and dancing salsa. Edward sits in a local guide class. Voiceover speaks to his dreams of going to college.

Cut to an evening church session as the pastor preaches about protecting their beautiful environment because that is what Jesus would be doing if he was in Ostional today so that they can continue to have the turtle eggs and the immensity of wealth that follows.

Edward picks up his board, left behind by a tourist. One example of the style of the omniscient narrator would be the following. As Edward walks to the water with his board in hand, the narrator states, "Tourists and turtles have a virtually identical impact on the community of Ostional. They arrive out of the blue, bestow untold riches upon the town, and then return to their glorious lives in other parts of the world...thereby leaving the people of Ostional no choice but to wishfully burn the days until their beneficiaries return." As the camera submerges under the water, we cut to underwater footage of a sea turtle coming to shore to nest.

Meanwhile, Hilberth begins preparing bags at the community center with his secretary, a middle-aged man who helps him regulate the Arribada's. Community members gather the night before to discuss the plan. They discuss the urgency of this arribada and how they need these eggs because food is running short.

There are sounds of a turtle egg auction as the Guanacaste national song plays on the radio. Children carry bags of turtle eggs up and down the beaches as adults dig up nests. There are thousands of turtles on the beach. There are images of a room filled with bags of turtle eggs and the community collecting, counting, washing, and organizing eggs. Edward washes a bag of turtle eggs in the ocean. The bags are labeled Ostional Turtle Eggs. Pablo collects eggs with his two children. Hilberth regulates the whole scene. Kristin takes pictures and watches on in amazement. We finally see the turtle auction as Hilberth hands out money to each family in the town. Everyone walks out of the building and back to his or her house.

And the stillness sets in. The boys go back to sitting on the beach, which is once again empty. The library in MINAE is also empty. Empty egg-shells. Empty ocean. Emptiness fills the town: the couple sit on the beach and take pictures of the sunset, kids sit in the nothingness of a storefront, and Pablo holds his baby in his rocking chair. The final image is a handheld shot of Edward standing in the foreground of the frame as another truck drives away from Ostional filled with turtle eggs. There is a final voice over, then the sound picks up again to kids playing soccer. Edward walks away and the frame is empty with nothing more than the long road ahead. Cut to the final credits as quiet sounds of the community continues to roll: boys playing soccer, birds in the sky, trees rustling, and the soft sound of waves rolling in.

There might also be additional scenes throughout the film of turtles nesting, guards watching the beach at night, any confrontations with thieves, and additional one on one confrontation between Hilberth and Carlos Mario. Carlos Mario may emerge as an additional character in the piece as well with the following scenes: presenting research at an IUCN conference indicating declining numbers, trying to organize community screenings, showing the ADIO propaganda film to international volunteers. The video explains how the money they earn (from one percent of the arribada) goes back to community projects such as the school. Another possible

ending might be the bus arriving with a new batch of tourists to illustrate the cyclical nature of the town.

Additional footage for the Science Documentary include underwater footage of the sea turtles, infrared footage of both the turtles and nests at night, and footage of a hatching taken inside of a nest. There will also be interviews with the researchers and the camera will follow them on night walks, hatchery builds, and other research experiments they will be conducting when we are there. There will also be interviews with local sea turtle researchers in California.



Pablo, a local government official holding up turtle eggs

What is this really about?

In a strange way this film answers the old question of which social and political structure is the best for the world. An ironic form of capitalism has won, as an entire community relies entirely on the cash from a natural resource that produces income merely once a month. To compete with other industries in Central America, such as the banana industry, they have found a crop that is in demand and have marketed it locally and effectively. The ultimate structure for future societies seems to be these consumer democracies, which are usually seen as "civilized" and "good" to many more prosperous democracies throughout the world. Although this is also a form of socialism since they share the money, education still goes under-funded,

and children are not receiving the resources they need. The fight for something as fragile and desirable as the turtle egg has held many people back from progressing. The town can't build internally even though foreigners are building giant homes in the hills, and the two organizations aren't supporting each other to fully realize development. It's this socioeconomic position that seems to be shaping much of the world today.

This film is also about the contradiction of both protecting and harming the environment in the same small space. The boom of the turtle egg is a short-term unsustainable option. For long-term development, so much more is needed for a town like Ostional. What happens when this self-destructive cycle becomes obsolete? Darwin theory suggests that these new scientific forces at work (as each specimen has adapted in a unique way to perpetuate) could absolve all but the fittest specimen: humans. Proof of these altercations to the ecosystem are as follows: dogs digging up the eggs since locals aren't feeding them, vultures killing baby turtles instead of waiting for them to die naturally, humans guarding nests during hatchings, etc. Darwin theory ultimately wins by either convincing its enemies or eliminating them.

Malthusian theory also suggests that these towns have turned to such unsustainable food sources as a result of rapid population growth and development. According to a report in the 2009 May issue of national geographic, the world is currently experiencing a food shortage as a result of a lack of sustainable harvests. The town relies on the turtle because it is currently working for them. However, Malthusian would warn these towns of potential disaster in the years to come because of the fragility of such a crop.

The ephemeral boom around this fittest specie has come at the expense of another: the turtle, who has been forced to make adaptations over time, and has clearly won out over conservation efforts. It can also be seen as an allegory for what has been called the New World Order, and how bigger government structures have been established in places like Ostional to enforce laws, often leaving them mostly unchanged. Although there are no corporate or market economic forces at work, these larger destructive mechanisms wear on all of the fragile ecosystems. And it is, for example, incredible that wherever prime raw material is discovered the locals don't seem to really profit as much as they should be. And of course since the specie is endangered, the eggs all of a sudden become an aphrodisiac. But there is also a paradox in that Ostional is more of a success story than the banana industry of Costa Rica, plagued as a victim of globalization and greedy corporate influence, because the local people are benefiting from the crop. The irony also exists in the country's pride for ecotourism. They profit off of tourists who come to see the turtles, then turn around and kill them. As a result, older generations have created immeasurable future dangers for the youth by limiting individual expansion. They wait, like their elders, with little to do between the harvests to pass the time. And

thus, it is all this dead time that self-defines the untold impacts, the inability to foresee into Ostional's future. Meanwhile, outside development has continued to plague small towns throughout much of Costa Rica.



a rare mid-arribada nesting

Style:

It will be mostly in the veritae style. Sit-down interviews will only be conducted with government officials and the president of ADIO, contrasted to a hand-held intimate approach with the townspeople. The interviews will all be on site and during the events taking place in the subjects' lives. Sometimes in shadow to expose the dark world they hide in, and other times when exposed, subjects look off in the opposite direction. Most of the information, however, will come out through conversations they are having with each other and through the veritae of their actions (e.g. weekly town meetings, the process of collecting eggs, etc.). There will also be transition shots consisting of faces of the citizens (or perhaps the faces come at the end of the film). Montage will also be an important element of storytelling to educate people to the process of a turtle egg harvest and to the turtles themselves. The politics of the two sides will be brought to life through the visual, and the history will be illustrated through the audio. A strong omniscient narrator will voice the story and history of these turtles giving insight into how so many people have been affected along the way.

There is also going to be a second documentary made specifically for television. This short film will fit a 20 minute time slot and will resemble the style of a scientific field documentary on sea turtles. It will focus almost entirely on the Olive Ridley

turtle population and their unusual nesting habit, using everything from footage inside of nests to underwater footage of their journey back out to sea, all in quality High Definition (shot on the EX-1). There will also be interviews with local scientists in the community, governing agents, and community members to discuss the impact of the turtle along with the future outlook for the specie. Furthermore, this short piece on Ostional and the Olive Ridley sea turtle will follow researchers on night expeditions, nest builds, and boating trips. The final product will incorporate animated features to illustrate how turtles make there way back to Ostional every nesting season, along with any scientific data that could be visually displayed.



the turtles rely on group nests at this beach for survival

Why me?:

After spending two months in Ostional, four in Costa Rica, I feel that I know the people well enough to film them without exploiting them. Their stories fascinate me, and I feel that they can educate people about both turtles and indigenous communities. The funding of this film will help pay for the costs of making it foremost, as movie screenings in both Costa Rica and the United States will be the strongest form of social outreach (and hopefully throughout the world). I care passionately about the turtles but I am even more passionate about the livelihood of the people. In a way, this film is my own investigation of the situation as I would love to find a balance for this community that allows for the protection of the Olive Ridley without sacrificing the community's survival.

Films for Style Reference:

Darwin's Nightmare – dir. Henri Saupert, 2004...for its investigation of an animal, and its ecosystem, on humanity. Also for its minimalist approach to documentary filmmaking and its ability to weave together many characters and scenes from one location to tell the story of that place.

Lake of Fire – dir. Tony Kaye, 2006...for its ability to weave in so many perspectives on one issue and for the interview aesthetic and approach.

Sans Soleil – dir. Chris Marker, 1983...for the style of the voice-over, a critical piece of this film, but mostly for it's long visual shots that allow the viewer to be a part of the reality.

The Pantry – dir. Braden King, a USC documentary...for its gritty and slow black and white approach to a few characters in one confined space and its ability to portray them poetically.

Motorcycle Diaries – dir. Walter Salles, 2001...for its visual approach to storytelling in a Latin American country. We are taking a narrative visual approach to this documentary.

Y Tu Mama Tambien – dir. Alfonso Cuaron, 2001...for its strong voice-over and the ability of that voice to tell such real human stories. The style of voice-over and the sound mix is an aesthetic we want to approach in this documentary.



art class at the local MINAE government building

Documentary Filmography:

Habayn Chayim – A punk-rock Chasidic Jewish student finds Judaism and cleans up his life. Third place prize at the Jewlicious Film Festival. Director, Cinematographer.

On the Edge of the Crest – The story of three motorcyclists who live for the thrill of riding the Angeles Crest highway. 547, Cinematographer.

The Good Life – The story of professional skateboarder and director Steve Berra. Cinematography.

Three Days with Nordica and friends– Documentation of Nordica’s freestyle skiing team on a three-day trip through Colorado. Director, Cinematographer.



still from Habayn Chayim

USC History and Production References:

507 – Jean Pierre Guenes, Jeff Lengyl

508 – Amanda Pope, Tristan Whitman, Eugene Lazarev, Angela Hackner

547 – Amanda Pope, Josh Morton

537 – Angelo Pacifici

532 – Jeremy Kagan

581 Experience

Head in the Sand — dir. by David Baldwin. Grip.

Potter's Field — dir. by Brad Crowe. Grip.

Resume:

Scott Drucker

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Education

North Central College, Naperville, IL

June 2006

B.A., English Major with a Literature emphasis, Education Minor.

Overall GPA: **3.6**, President's List

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

August 2007-present

M.F.A. candidate in Cinematic Arts. Studying documentary, directing, and cinematography.

Study Abroad Program:

Service Learning Project abroad in Costa Rica, Fall 2005

- Revitalized a library in a small impoverished coastal town through the creation of a reading program, an addition of a projector for educational films, and the donation of hundreds of new books (which was achieved by writing letters to people in San Jose and in the United States)
- Hosted special events such as art classes and movie nights to bring children back to the library
- Taught English classes at the local high school
- Assisted with turtle conservation projects by building hatcheries, and by guarding nests from natural predators during the day and from those that tried to steal the eggs by night (local Costa Ricans)
- Gained extensive knowledge of Spanish on a conversational level

Honors:

Volunteer of the Year, 2004-2005

Outstanding Volunteer, 2004-2005

Alumni Board of Directors Student Involvement Scholarship, 2005

WP and HB White Make a Difference Scholarship, 2004-2006

Goodwin and Bohlander Scholarships for Excellence in Teacher Education, 2003-2006

Presidential Scholarship Recipient, 2001-2005

Relevant Course Work:

Style, Creative Non-Fiction, Advanced Creative Non-Fiction Workshop (film studies), Writing for Social Change

Experience

Temple Menorah, Redondo Beach, CA *September 2006-present*

- Technology and film teacher for Sunday school children.

Nordica Skis, Vail, CO *December 2007-January 2008*

- Director and cinematographer of a promotional documentary film on the professional skiers who ride for Nordica.

North Torrance High School, Torrance, CA *October 2006-June 2007*

- *English Teacher*- taught grade levels 9, 10, and 12.

North Suburban Special Recreation Association, Northbrook, IL

June 2001-August 2006

- *Program Coordinator of Joint Summer Program*- Proposed new ideas for intervention strategies throughout training, managed summer staff, planned all-camp activities that adapted to the needs of students with a variety of special needs (many with severe behavior disabilities) ages 3-14, supervised and assisted 80 staff with about 120 campers for both the educational element in the morning and the recreation element in the afternoon, full-time position in the summers
- *Program Assistant*- One on One aide in a self-contained classroom (Joint Summer Program); Head Counselor for recreation group, full-time summer position
- *Special Recreation Assistant*- One on one aide for special needs students in inclusion settings throughout the school year, part-time position
- *Maine Trip*- Managed three campers with disabilities on a ten day trip to Maine, and assisted with leading the entire group of 36 adults and teens

North Lawndale College Preparatory High School, Chicago, IL

January 2006-March 2006

- Developed long-term unit plans as a part of the student teaching experience for a predominantly African-American student body in a high needs charter school, in an urban location
- Created daily lesson plans that adapted to the needs of all learning styles in the classroom

- Assisted cooperating teacher with creating a stronger sexual education program, including attending one on one meetings with students to find ways to reach their needs and goals
- Mentored students to a successful achievement score on the grammar and writing benchmarks

Urban Education Leadership Internship, Naperville, IL
September 2004-June 2005

- Team Leader for an urban education tutoring/mentoring program at North Central College which assisted minority students from a variety of schools in improving their GPA's as well as giving them the college readiness skills that will contribute to their success in college programs (3 years)
- Supervised tutors during sessions and instructed on effective strategies
- Co-Publisher of tutoring manual, entitled: Effective Reading and Writing Tutoring Strategies

Leadership Experience

Cardinals In Action, North Central College *September 2002-June 2005*

- Educated campus on ways to better serve the community by providing information at meetings, special programs, and workshops
- Served one year as President, one year as treasurer, and one year as an active member and team leader
- Created a tutoring project for bi-lingual elementary students at a high needs "neighborhood house"
- *Team Leader of ADOPT-* organized group of students to volunteer at local animal shelter
- *Team Leader of Shriner's Art Therapy-* orchestrated and renewed project that brought students to a Chicago children's hospitals to conduct various art projects
- Created, administered, or aided with a large number of diverse volunteer programs

Alternative Spring Break, Habitat for Humanity *March 2003, 2004*

- Collaborated with a classmate to prepare and lead a nine day trip for a group of ten students
- Planned and supervised trip to South Carolina, and another to Texas in 2004

Additional Campus Involvement *September 2001-June 2005*

- Created a club on campus (*Stimulus*) to support students with an interest in such creative pursuits as skateboarding, snowboarding, surfing, film, photography, and creative writing

- Appalachian Service Project
- Feature role in a One-Act play
- Directed two documentaries: one addressed animal rights, and the other poverty in the Appalachian mountain region
- Cross Country (four years), Track and Field (three years), Tennis (one year)
- Member of the Student Leaders Association for Teacher Educators
- Student films directed at USC: Synonymous, Habayn Chayim, Take Back the Time, Running, Mesligol (507 group project)

References of Scott Drucker

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 Advanced Creative Non-Fiction Classes
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 Personal Mentor
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