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Footage From the Field: Insect Tent-Mates and Flowers You Can High Five

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New Caledonia is at the edge of the tropical latitudes at about 21 degrees south of the equator, and is home to many species of plants and animals. I thought I'd show you some of the characters I've been seeing around. I was excited to find touch-sensitive plants here! They are abundant on road sides...

June 29, 2013

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I was excited to find touch-sensitive plants here! They are abundant on road sides and in other places where grass is well trampled. It turns out that they are not native to the area, but it is fun to play with them anyway.



Touch-sensitive plant. Photo by Corina Logan.

A gorgeous beetle flew into the house one night and we interrupted all activity to get a closer look at this brilliantly iridescent beauty!



Iridescent beetle. Photo by Corina Logan.

A praying mantis has set up shop above my tent and seems to be doing quite well – there are lots of dead bugs caught in the netting below it.



Praying mantis. Photo by Corina Logan.

Beautiful little butterflies flutter through the grass everywhere – I'm always afraid I'll accidentally step on one.



Little blue butterfly. Photo by Corina Logan.

I found a bird's nest on the ground under a tree. It looks like they are using some human-made materials (blue plastic) in their construction.



Bird's nest. Photo by Corina Logan.

A bright green spider became quite attached to my hair clip and didn't want to let go.



A tiny spider. Photo by Corina Logan.

When working with New Caledonian crows, plants of the genus Pandanus come up often in conversation. The crows cut out pieces of the barbed leaf edge and use these pieces to fish animals out of the Pandanus plants.



Pandanus plant. Photo by Corina Logan.

Eagerly waiting for the pouring rain to stop so I can continue testing the birds,

Corina

And now for a bit of Terry Pratchett...

"Something ripped, behind her. She turned and saw the raven carefully removing a strip of red wrapping paper from a package.
‘Stop that this minute!’
It looked up guiltily.
‘It’s only a little bit,’ it said. ‘No one’s going to miss it.’
‘What do you want it for anyway?’
‘We’re attracted to bright colors, right? Automatic reaction.’
‘That’s jackdaws!’
‘Damn. Is it?’
The Death of Rats nodded. SQUEAK.
‘Oh, so suddenly you’re Mr. Ornithologist, are you?’ snapped the raven.”

(Pratchett 1996, p.69, Hogfather)

P.S. I’m going to run out of Terry Pratchett quotes on bird intelligence in a few weeks and I didn’t bring many Pratchett books with me. Does anyone have good quotes to share?

NEXT: [Life in the Field: Building Things in the Land of Crows](#)

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MEET THE AUTHOR

Corina Logan

For my PhD at the University of Cambridge, I studied what birds in the crow family do after they fight: do they make up with each other or go to someone else for support? Now I am a Junior Research Fellow at the SAGE

Center for the Study of the Mind at the University of California, Santa Barbara. With the help of a National Geographic Society / Waitt Grant, I study what birds know about their physical and social worlds. (Photo copyright Rod Rolle)



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