

(Don't step there.)

[What?]

(I said don't – move your foot.)

[I'm not moving my foot.]

(No, *move* it.)

[What?]

(Eric, look at me.)

[I am looking at you.]

(Read my lips. What am I saying.)

[You're saying, what are you saying – what are you saying?]

(You almost just stepped on a rare species.)

[So what? It's already dead ain't it? It's already dead. What am I gonna do, kill it again?]

(Go back to your tent or I'll kill you and kill you again.)

(I won't, but please leave. I'll see you at camp. While you're there please log today's specimens.)

[]

(Try not to get mauled by a jaguar on your way back.)

From: Jean Cuvier <jcuvier@berkeley.edu>

To: Carl Slattery <cslattery@berkeley.edu>

CC:

BCC:

Subject: Apparitional Anura Data Spreadsheets – Week 6

Carl –

Sixth set of data on apparitional Colombian biodiversity in the order Anura. You know the drill. New species of interest include *Andinobates bombates*, *Oophaga lehmanni*, and *Phyllobates aurotaenia*. In addition to compiling this with the data I have sent you so far, please start new tables and graphs exclusively for the family Dendrobatidae. We have been encountering enough apparitional dart frogs in this area that I believe they will merit their own representation in the report.

Respectfully yours,

Jean Cuvier, Ph.D.

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Berkeley, CA 94720-3140

6 attachments:

[2066-6-22CuvierJApparitionalDataAttch.xlsx](#)

[2066-6-23CuvierJApparitionalDataAttch.xlsx](#)

[2066-6-24CuvierJApparitionalDataAttch.xlsx](#)

[2066-6-25CuvierJApparitionalDataAttch.xlsx](#)

[2066-6-26CuvierJApparitionalDataAttch.xlsx](#)

[2066-6-27CuvierJApparitionalDataAttch.xlsx](#)

{It's Friday. Did he send over his weekly data spreads yet?}

<Just got 'em in this morning. Lotta darts. Info on twenty-seven distinct species this time.>

{Jesus, that many?}

<Yep.>

{Well, I just don't get it. I don't – I mean, what is this guy even looking at? For six weeks?}

<I don't know. That's not my job.>

{I mean, aren't you even a little bit curious? What all this data you've been compiling means?

Even a little bit?}

<Nope.>

{Aren't you concerned he's gone off, like, the deep end or something?}

<No. I'm not. He's just the guy who signs the paper that gets me paid. He's nothing more to me.

If he wants to spend all day getting drunk in the woods until he sees ghosts, labeling empty jars, that's fine, I don't care. This is the easiest money I've ever made and no way in Hell am I gonna overthink it.>

{Huh.}

(Eric.)

[What? Did I step on something?]

(Yes. Lift your foot.)

[God. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.]

(Do you know what that is?)

[It looks like a squished mushroom. Is it rare?]

(It's a fungus. It's the reason there are no more corporeal amphibians.)

[This thing?]

(No. Not this one specifically. Not even this phylum. A chytrid fungus. *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*.)

[What?]

(Like a parasite.)

[So why didn't we just kill all the parasites, before they killed all the frogs?]

(Well, we tried. But there were other things driving the spread of the fungus. And bigger things driving the other things, and we were driving the bigger things. It was like dominoes.)

[But we still could have just killed all the mushrooms, though.]

(Have you heard the one about the ophidiophobe and the lawnmower?)

[The what and the lawnmower?]

(Someone who is afraid of snakes, and they have a lawnmower.)

[No.]

(Well, there's this person who's afraid of snakes, and they have a lawnmower. But they live in this tower that's surrounded by snakes.)

[What? Why do they live there?]

(I don't know. They just do. Anyway the tower wall is electric, so if the snakes try to climb up, they get zapped. The turret is surrounded by barbed wire, so if they make it that far they get sliced up. The lawnmower is remote controlled, and the person sits up in the tower all day long driving the lawnmower in circles around it, mowing up snakes.)

[Oh.]

(Just mowing them all up. And if someone cut the electricity to the wall, the snakes would still get sliced up by the wire. And if someone broke the lawnmower, the person in the tower would just buy another one. And if someone got rid of the person in the tower, they would probably find out that the person was just a remote-operated android, controlled by a different person in another tower that is very far away. And that person is just watching the whole thing on their television.)

[But it wasn't a lawnmower, you said it was mushrooms.]

(Yes, it was mushrooms. But the temperatures made the fungus spread, and if it wasn't the fungus, the temperatures might've been enough, and the point that I really want to drive home, Eric, is that it really is all hopeless. Pointless. It's hopeless and pointless and I don't even know why you're here, I don't know what to teach you, I don't know what you expect from me, and I would send you home if I could, but I can't.)

From: Eric Donovan <e.donovan.15@gmail.com>

To: Michelle Donovan <michelled58@comcast.net>

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Re: HOW ARE YOU???

i hate it here. professor cuvier is an asshole. i never understand anything he is saying. i dont understand any of the work i am doing. the mosquito net doesnt work. i am pretty sure i have yellow fever. i want to come home.

- Eric

[Professor, you're drunk, I have to take you back to the camp.]

(Eric. Eric. Do you know what this apparition used to be?)

[It just looks like an empty jar.]

(*Phyllobates terribilis*, golden poison frog. Most poisonous thing on the planet. Most. Most poisonous thing on the planet. This is the first one I've encountered.)

[Is it still poisonous?]

(Prepare a label, Eric, I don't want to forget what species this one is. Both words have two Ls. Two Rs in *terribilis*, too, two too.)

[How'd it get this way, professor?]

(Oh, Eric, it's just some stage of Anura metamorphosis we've not seen yet. Tadpole, frog, then this. Aquatic, terrestrial, phantasmal, one two three. The scientific community doesn't understand it yet. But I will, soon, I almost get it, it seems so logical now.)

[There are no more amphibians. You said that yesterday.]

(No more corporeal amphibians, Eric, when will you learn the things I'm trying to teach you? This is something else entirely.)

[Why are you looking at it like that?]

(It should have been us, Eric. It should have been us. These were our first ancestors to breach the soup, like soggy evolutionary astronauts. They've been here over three hundred million years. And we've been here for two hundred thousand and fucked everything up. Two hundred thousand, that's, like, the blink of an eye to the universe.)

[I don't think the universe has got eyes, professor. And if it does it takes a long-ass time to blink.]

(Go back to the camp, Eric, if you're not going to be of any help today.)

[You have to go with me. You can't be out here drunk and alone. I'm sorry.]

(I have to label the *terribillis* specimen.)

[There are labels at camp.]

(Eric, if you do not follow my protocols, you will not be receiving credit for this internship.)

[Okay. We have to go, though.]

(I know you need these credits to gr)

[Professor?]

()

[Jesus, are you okay?]

(I'm okay. I'm fine. What happened to the *terribillis*.)

[You threw up on the *terribillis*.]

(No, no, it's not in here anymore, I don't hear it.)

[It's drowning, probably.]

(Frogs can't drown, and anyway, it's not in here, it got out.)

[It didn't get out. It didn't get out because there wasn't anything in there to begin with. There's no filobites-terribillis anymore, they're all extinct.]

(I have no idea how apparitional toxins affect corporeal organisms. I haven't run those tests yet.

For the love of God, watch where you step.)

[You hate God. You said so last week.]

(I'm trying to save your life, Eric, it could be anywhere.)

[It's nowhere. It's gone. Let's go label your jar of puke.]

(Maybe it is still in here. Maybe it's just being quiet.)

[Let's go label your jar of puke.]

(Let's go label my jar of puke.)