

Monkeys *are made of* Chocolate

Exotic and Unseen Costa Rica

Jack Ewing



PIXYJACK PRESS LLC

FOREWORD

When I'm before an audience, I'm almost always asked this question: Do I see any hope for the future of our endangered planet? My answer is yes, and I think this surprises many listeners, because they and I look for hopeful signs in different places. They look for hopeful signs in the tightening up of laws protecting the environment, in the rigorous enforcement of those laws, in the emergence of informed, dedicated legislators and political candidates, and they see nothing to encourage them in those places. Protective laws are weakened or unenforced, and one of the first environmentally-aware U.S. presidential candidates is defeated in favor of one eager to roll back environmental protections to further big-business interests.

The indicators I'm looking at are very different from these.

If there had been an Amazon.com to search forty years ago, it almost certainly would not have had a separate category for Environmental Conservation & Protection—and if it had, it would have listed a single book: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Today that category lists more than five thousand—and I'd be willing to bet that the vast majority of these were published within the past ten years.

What this signals to me is that a significant change in public awareness has taken place and is spreading very rapidly. This is the basis for my hope for the future. Change begins in changed minds. Changing minds has a domino effect, a cumulative effect that occurs

when one event sets off a chain of similar or related events.

Jack Ewing's success in creating the Hacienda Barú National Wildlife Refuge is part of this growing domino effect—as is the book you're reading.

To make it clear how important this domino effect is, I'd like to give just one example of it in operation.

In 1994 the CEO of Interface, Incorporated—the industry leader of the commercial carpet business—read two books. One was Paul Hawken's *The Ecology of Commerce* and the other was my own *Ishmael*. Up to that time, this CEO, a man named Ray Anderson, had been very diligent about being in full compliance with all government regulations relevant to his business. But when he read these two books, he saw that being merely in compliance is not nearly enough. He made up his mind to do three things: first, to eliminate petroleum from his carpeting (and it had all been petroleum-based until then); second, to develop carpeting that can be 100% recycled—into materials from which all his new carpeting could be made; and third, to encourage his customers to think differently about their floor covering needs. Instead of buying carpet and discarding it when it's no longer serviceable, he will lease them carpet. When it's no longer serviceable, he'll take it back to be recycled totally and replace it with carpeting made from totally recycled materials.

My book and Paul Hawken's were dominos that tumbled into Ray Anderson, moving him to action. But Ray Anderson was a domino as well, and when he fell toward creating a truly sustainable business, his competitors were compelled to keep up in order to be competitive. (Thus Mr. Anderson transformed not only a single business but a whole industry.) Similarly, his suppliers—among them giants like DuPont—were compelled to start developing new materials and processes that would enable him to reach his goals. Within five years, Ray Anderson was recognized globally as a leading figure in the realm of sustainable development.

Paul Hawken and Ray Anderson both began their careers as entrepreneurs and ended up being famous as environmentalists.

Jack Ewing's career followed the same trajectory. When he first visited Costa Rica's Hacienda Barú in 1972, he was looking at it with the eyes of an entrepreneur, and what he saw was a cattle ranch and rice farm carved out of a coastal rain forest. He became a rancher and farmer. Paul Hawken's experience as a businessman gradually changed his vision of commerce. Jack Ewing's experience as a rancher and farmer gradually changed his vision of Hacienda Barú. By 1979 it no longer looked to him like a cattle ranch and rice farm carved out of a coastal rain forest; it now looked like a half-destroyed coastal rain forest.

Paul Hawken's changed mind prompted him to write a book. Ray Anderson's changed mind prompted him to reinvent his company. Jack Ewing's changed mind prompted him to turn Hacienda Barú into a wildlife refuge.

Such a work of restoration doesn't occur as quickly as a book is written, but by the turn of the century all traces of the farm and ranch had disappeared, and Hacienda Barú was once again a natural habitat, teeming with wildlife—world famous and officially designated as Hacienda Barú National Wildlife Refuge.

What gives me hope for the future of the world and the human race? It's Jack Ewing—and the fact that he belongs to a growing community of people with changed minds who are changing the world and the people around them.

To read *Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate* is to share in a small way the great adventure Jack Ewing undertook in transforming his part of the world. In fact, reading this book is an adventure in itself—rather like hiking through a jungle: you never know what you're going to stumble across next! I won't spoil your fun by listing the surprises ahead of you, but they're certainly there in

multitudes—things you’ve never heard of, things you never even dreamed could exist or happen. There aren’t many books that will tell you which phases of the moon are best for pruning trees, for castrating horses, and for cutting weeds—and convince you that this isn’t just moonshine!

You’ll learn from this book, you’ll shed a few tears, and you’ll have a lot of laughs. I certainly did.

— Daniel Quinn

PREFACE

In February 1972 I first visited a ranch called Hacienda Barú, located on the southern Pacific coast of Costa Rica. At that time about half of the land had been deforested and was being used for grazing cattle and growing rice. The other half, approximately 170 hectares (420 acres), was tropical rainforest, one of the few large forest reserves left in this part of the country. My wife, Diane, our four-year-old daughter, Natalie, and I had moved to Costa Rica in December of 1970. Our son, Chris, was born in San José in May 1972. Between 1976 and 1978 I worked full time at the hacienda, commuting weekly between there and San José. Then the whole family moved to Hacienda Barú. For eight years we lived without ordinary conveniences such as electricity, telephones and all-weather roads that many people consider to be basic necessities of life.

After having grown up in the typical, pampered lifestyle of upper-middle class America, the experience of living and raising a family in rural Costa Rica was sometimes trying, sometimes frustrating, usually fulfilling and never boring. The children thrived, Diane survived, and I found myself drawn ever deeper into the fascinating realm of tropical ecology while at the same time losing interest in livestock and farming.

The year 1979 marked the beginning of a long period of transition for Hacienda Barú. Thirty hectares of grazing land was retired

as pasture and allowed to regenerate naturally into secondary forest. In the tropics, when you quit chopping the weeds, land quickly reverts to jungle. Today, ninety percent of the hacienda has been restored to natural habitat, and farming and ranching are no longer practiced. It has been given the official category of National Wildlife Refuge by the president of Costa Rica and has the same protected status as a national park. The refuge is known internationally and is visited by people from many different countries.

It was from these years of experience that I drew the substance for a series of essays that I began writing in the year 2000. These were published by several local English-language monthlies including *Quepolandia*, from Quepos; *PZ Guide*, from San Isidro; and the now defunct *Dominical Current*, formerly published in Dominical. *Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate* is a collection of thirty-two of those essays. They do not necessarily need to be read in order.

The tropical rain forest holds a fascinating story which is told through the interaction of its life forms. Ever tantalizing, its natural history is revealed only in bits and pieces, always full of surprises, begging you to look deeper. Discovering some new tidbit of sapience about the jungle doesn't bring you any closer to knowing all there is, but simply opens more doors, each unveiling its own enticing web of knowledge. In *Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate*, I give to you a portion of the reality I have acquired in more than thirty years of living in the jungle. It is my desire that in addition to being entertained, the reader will acquire a deeper appreciation for the natural marvels of planet Earth, and the millions of living organisms with which we share it.

— Jack Ewing
November 2004