

# Chayo's Andean Home

by David Dudenhoefer  
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***Hola!*** I'm Chayo. My name is really Rosario, but everyone calls me Chayo. I live in Rio Negro, Colombia. Rio Negro is in the Andes Mountains, but not too high. It's between the town of El Encino and Cachalú National Park. Rio Negro is real small—just some farms and a school.





**I live in a white house with my mom, dad, three brothers and six sisters. I have five brothers and seven sisters, but the older ones don't live with us. We also have two dogs, three cats and a parakeet named Felix. Here I am with my mom, my little sister and my baby brother.**





**My dad is a farmer. On our farm, we grow mostly coffee, but we have lots of other crops. We grow a little corn, beans, tomatoes, cabbage, onions, squash, plantains, potatoes, oranges, avocados, limes, bananas, pineapples and papayas. I love papayas; they're my favorite fruit. We also have chickens, turkeys, two cows and a horse.**







**We all work on the farm, except for my younger brother and sister, who are too little. I know how to plant corn and vegetables, how to weed and fertilize. I collect firewood, help my mom in the kitchen, feed the turkeys and chickens, and sweep the house. I can chop weeds with a machete, and pick coffee.**





**The coffee harvest here lasts from December to April. You have to pick only the red berries, and leave the green ones for later. Then you take the coffee beans out of the berries and dry them in the sun. It's a lot of work.**







I'm always happy when school starts, because it means I don't have to do so much farm work. My teacher is Señora Solano. She's really nice. Twice a week, Hilma and Carolina from *Fundación Natura* visit my class. That's my favorite time, because they teach us about plants and animals. I love animals, especially birds. Sometimes they take us outside to look at birds. The coffee farms around here have lots of birds in them, because the coffee grows under trees that the birds like.





**Carolina says Colombia has more different kinds of birds than any other country in the world. My favorite is the *toche*, a pretty yellow and black bird. Carolina has a book about all the birds in Colombia. It's in English, so they have different names—the *toche* is called “yellow-backed oriole.”**





The *azulejo*, a little blue bird that's always chirping, is called "blue-gray tanager" in English.





**The *sittura*, a brown bird with a long striped tail that's always on our farm, is called "squirrel cuckoo." They seem like weird names to me.**





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Carolina explained that some birds only live in Colombia half the year. In April, they fly up to North America, where they build their nests and lay eggs. The *chipe amarillo*, a little yellow bird I've seen near my house, is one of the birds that fly north. In English, it's called a "Tennessee warbler." How's that for a crazy name?

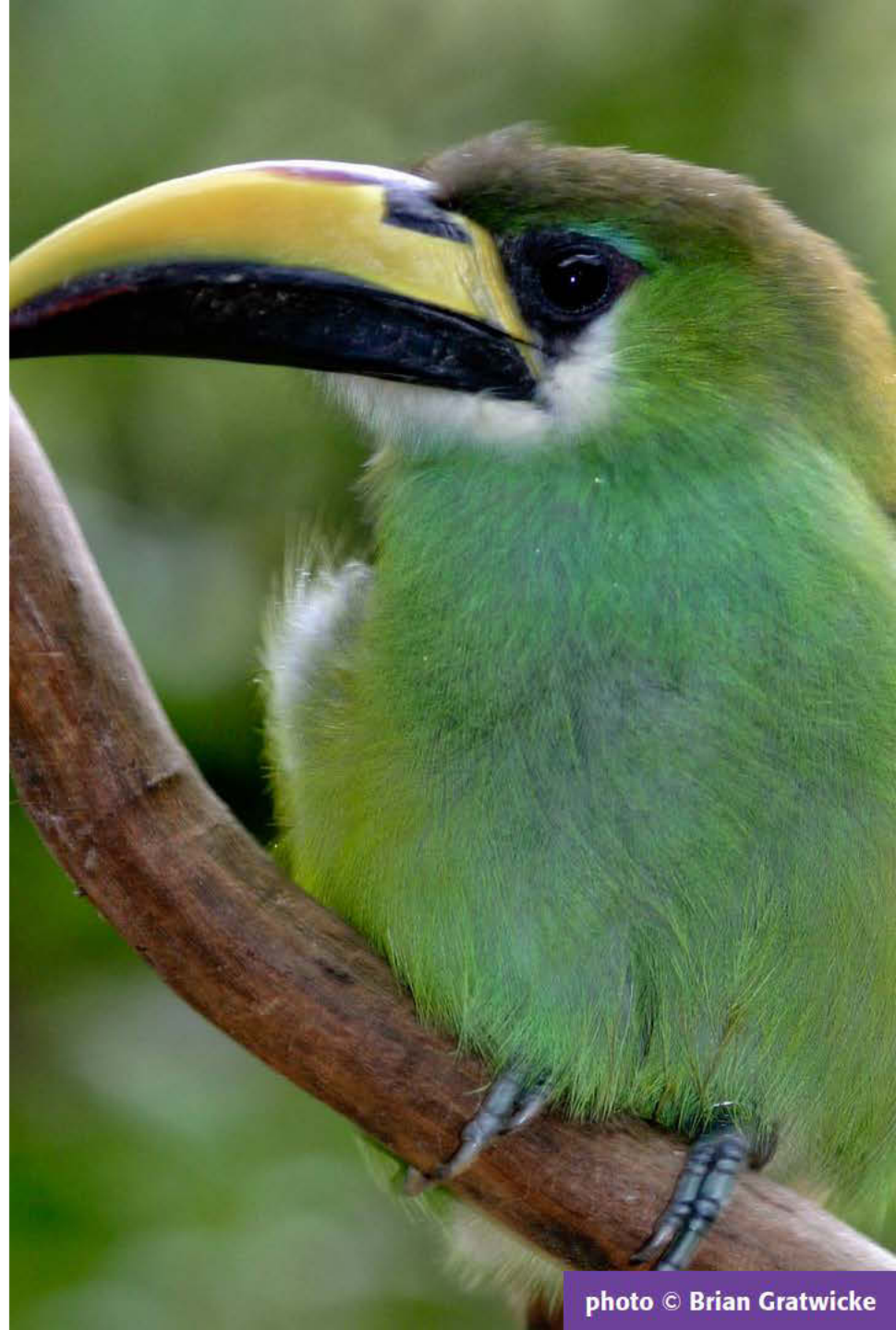




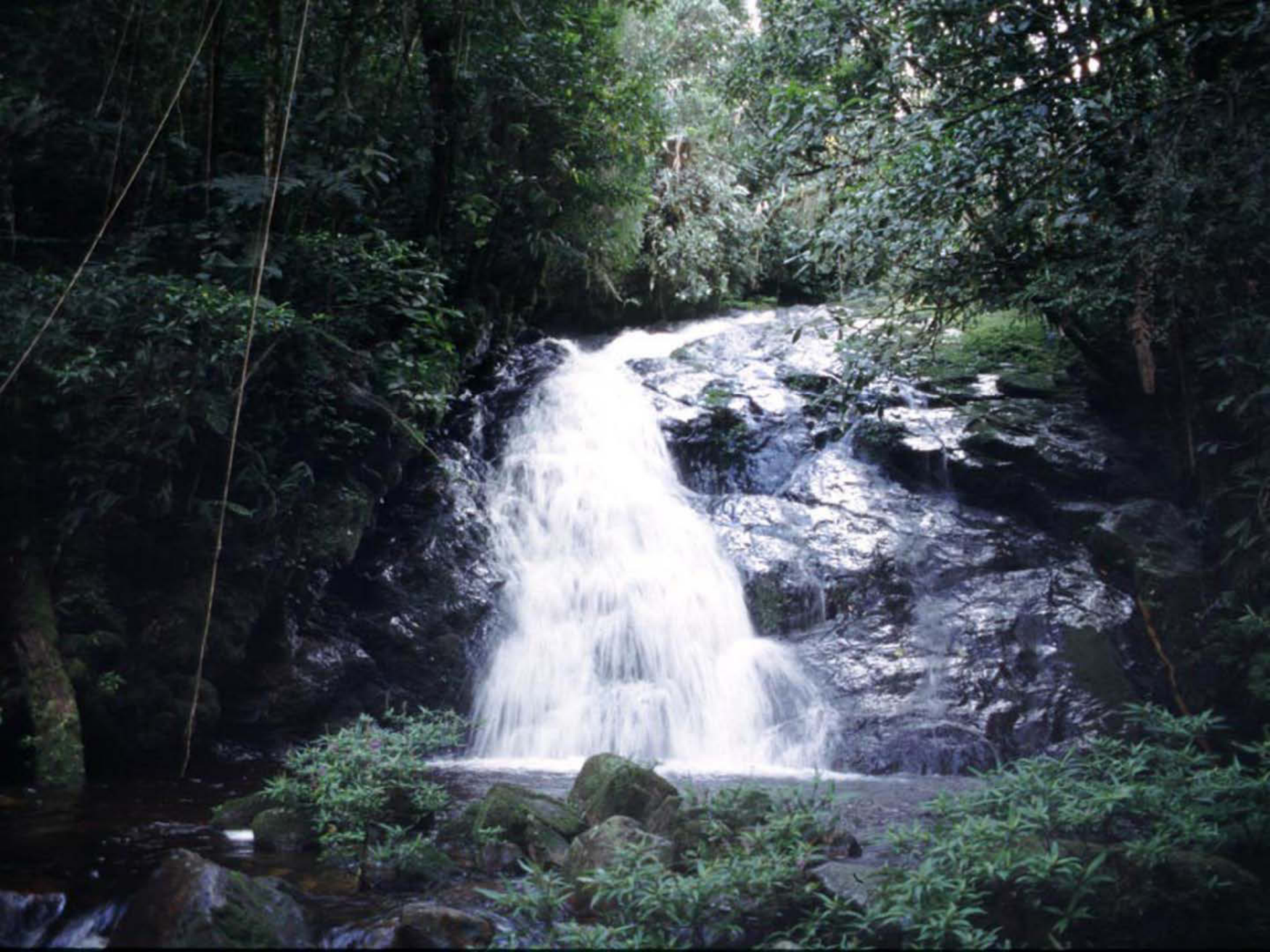
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Carolina and Hilma took my class to Cachalú National Park, high in the mountains. We spent the night in a big old farmhouse, and hiked in the cloud forest. It must be the greenest place in the world! It's full of ferns, bromeliads, giant trees and tiny orchids.

We saw animals I'd never seen before, like a *guache*, or "coati," and a *toucanillo*—a bright green bird with a big bill. It's called "emerald toucanet" in English.







**Cachalú is the home of the *oso andino*, a bear that looks like it's wearing glasses. You would call it the spectacled bear. We didn't see one, but maybe I will next time I go there. I hope I can go back to Cachalú soon. It's beautiful!**



