

## The Original Page



Cecropia cores stripped by aracarís and toucans.



Cecropia tree →

This was my best of many photos, so I also used my bird book for reference.



## The Process



Finding these fairy cups, also known as bird's nest fungus, was a real treat since I'd spent some time sketching them several months before during my marathon sit-spot sketch series\* (see the scrap, above). These weren't the same species, being reddish with shiny pewter-grey spore "eggs," but it was fun to see them in such a different setting. I couldn't think of the name "bird's nest fungus" when I was sketching, so I used the alternate name I *could* remember, "fairy cups," which I like just as well. Can't you just see the little fairies setting down their cups here for a moment while they go dance a merry jig?

I was delighted to find this fungus on an iconic bullhorn acacia branch. The "horns" went askew as the branch grew, as you can see here. Not every horn has ant inhabitants ~ if there's no entrance hole, no ants could be in inside. These had no holes.

A flock of aracarís near the river were scraping cecropia (see-CRO-pee-uh) seeds off the finger-like stems (see the bared cores above), and I spent ages watching in fascination. I must have been impressed with the bills because I originally drew the bill on the near bird FAR too large and had to redraw it on a scrap which I glued over the original. I forgot to scan the page before I mended it ~ so I've outlined in red where the correction was made. I stopped at edges where I could blend it in, so on the original it is almost invisible.

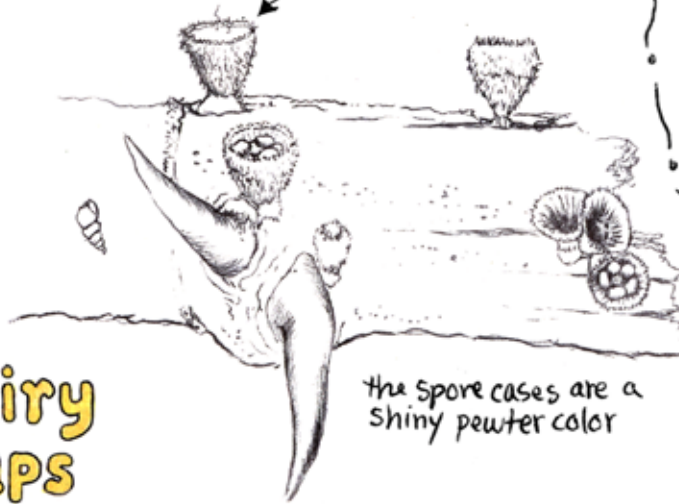
Only when I was putting this book together did I realize I'd spelled the birds' name wrong. I corrected that in the graphics program.

\*You can see the series online at [www.natureworkspress.com/IrenesTravelJournals.html](http://www.natureworkspress.com/IrenesTravelJournals.html)

December 31

Down near the Macal River I found this bullhorn acacia branch, still with two horns, playing host to tropical fairy cups, which rely on raindrops to splash ripe spore cases out and away from the cup. I sketched fairy cups in my ponderosa forest last summer on a pinecone, so this comparison really caught my fancy. These do look a bit different, fuzzy red-brown. The upper left cup still has a silken white cover over it until the spores mature, I assume.

## Fairy Cups



the spore cases are a shiny pewter color

Marvelous day! I just saw a flock of six or seven collared aracari stripping cecropia fruits overhead! They're big birds, the size of ravens, but very agile. The upper drawing here is more accurate.

## Aracari



I've seen toucans eat the cecropia fruits this same way, leaving only the central string/core of the fruit behind.