



The Latest News from WCS Latin American and Caribbean Program

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Happy 2012! Lots of interesting news from the end of 2011 and the beginning of this new year. Again, contents of this newsletter are collected from the Field News submitted by you to the New York office. So we can share your excellent progress broadly among regional colleagues, please send us your news!

CONTENTS

Venezuela.....	1
Guatemala.....	1
Chile.....	2
Peru.....	3
Bolivia.....	3
Paraguay.....	4
Brazil.....	5
Colombia.....	6
Andean Bears.....	7
General News.....	7

VENEZUELA

This past fall, Ye'kwana and Sanema indigenous parabiologists and WCS researchers participated in the course “Community-based strategies for the conservation and participative management of Amazonian caimans” in the Piagaçu-Purus Sustainable Development Reserve, Brazil. This constitutes a combined strategy between the Caiman Conservation and Management Program of the Mamirauá Institute and the Amazonian Crocodylian Conservation Program of the Piagaçu Institute. The central objective of the course was to generate a space of discussion and exchange experiences between community monitors of different geographic zones to define clear directives to implement a management plan for the Amazonian caiman. This experience has informed studies on the conservation and management of the Caura caiman species (*Paleosuchus* spp.).

GUATEMALA

WCS Guatemala has recently established a link with the Brooklyn Bridge Forest Initiative (<http://www.brooklynbridgeforest.com/>), who is interested in obtaining a significant quantity of certified timber to renovate some sections of the Brooklyn Bridge. WCS Guatemala will try to recommend timber from Uaxactún to harness the potential of the carpentry program they have been developing there over the last 4 years. Within this carpentry program scraps are used from timber harvests to make furniture, small wood products and handicrafts. This new opportunity would provide key income to the village

of Uuxactún and the forest concession, aiding them to reach further financial sustainability.

In late November, WCS Guatemala and its Guatemalan partners presented a report called the “State of the Maya Biosphere Reserve” to the President of Guatemala and other high-level public officials. The report describes the current state of the largest protected area in Mesoamerica more than 20 years after its creation, and highlights the unprecedented actions undertaken during the past four years by WCS and a coalition of governmental and non-governmental partners to simultaneously combat the intense threats facing the forest and improve the livelihoods of people who depend on the forest for their survival. Developed over the course of this year, the report will be the basis of the Maya Biosphere Reserve Master Plan to ensure continued conservation and support for the area.



From the left: Oscar Nuñez (Defensores de la Naturaleza), Claudia Mariela Lopez de Tager (Executive Secretary of CONAP - Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas), President of the Republic Alvaro Colom Caballeros, Roan McNab (WCS Guatemala Country Director), Omar Molina (Sub Secretary of CONAP) and Bayron Castellanos (Executive Director of Asociacion Balam)

Marvin Garcia

CHILE

WCS Chile, along with six other organizations in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic region, was recently presented with the Environmental Peacemakers Award (Forjadores Ambientales) for its contributions to environmental education focused on the wildlife and wild places of South America’s Southern Cone. The award was presented to Dania Droguett, Education Coordinator, in a ceremony held by the Ministry of Environment in recognition of WCS’s efforts to educate local residents about Karukinka Natural Park.

PERU

In September, the WCS Peru program carried out a biological inventory in the Bahuja Sonene National Park with the participation of 15 researchers. The inventory was completed with the support of the Park, Tambopata National Reserve, the Association for Integral Research and Development and Fauna Forever. Preliminary results indicate the discovery of 30 species of birds and 2 species of mammals that are new to the National Park, as well as one species of insect that has not been registered for the past 50 years. In addition, they found evidence of Andean bear presence in the park, which would mark a

range expansion for the animal into this area. The world-renowned wildlife photographer, Andre Baertschi, accompanied the expedition to document it. Pedro Miguel Schiaffino, a renowned Peruvian chef, and Silvia Westphalen, a distinguished Peruvian sculptress, joined the expedition to get to know the National Park and raise awareness of the importance of this protected area in Peru with their future projects.



Andres Baertschi

BOLIVIA

In the beginning of November, following an unusual disease outbreak in Bolivia, WCS was contacted by the Ministry of Public Health, the National Service of Agricultural Health and Food Safety (SENASAG) and General Directorate of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (DGBAP) to request technical assistance, within the framework of the PREDICT project, and to conduct epidemiological studies and support the establishment of measures to control these diseases.

Authorities were alerted by several cases of rabies in camelids transmitted by foxes in Potosi, three Hantavirus cases in Santa Cruz, the first report of this virus in Beni, a first confirmed case and suspected new cases of hemorrhagic fever near Trinidad, which is far from the endemic area of this disease.

A common environmental feature found in the areas affected by Hantavirus and hemorrhagic fever has been the change in land use by deforestation and the replacement of natural vegetation for rice crops. It is possible that these changes are favoring the proliferation and spread of rodents as reservoirs, as well as increased contact between wildlife and people. Moreover, cases of rabies detected in the surroundings of Potosi have been associated with fox attacks on camelid livestock, which has been confirmed in the Diagnostic Laboratory of Veterinary Research by the identification of rabies virus in the brain of a fox. For both camelids and foxes, these reports are new for the area and for the country, and could be linked to the alarming increase of quinoa crops in the region.

Government agencies (Ministry of Public Health, SENASAG and DGBAP) will soon hold a workshop with WCS and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in order to analyse, discuss and define strategies for integrated management of zoonotic diseases in Bolivia.



In case you missed it, this photograph (above), taken in Kaa-Iya national park within the Gran Chaco Landscape, was chosen as WCS' photo of the week for December 21, 2011. The mother, nicknamed Kaaiyana, has lived in the area for approximately the last six years. In addition, this photograph has received wide media coverage, including:

- <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/12/111222105510.htm>
- <http://www.ouramazingplanet.com/2182-bolivian-jaguar-photos.html>
- http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/45755190/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/jaguar-photo-reveals-conservation-success-story/#.TwsGFfKvk3g

WCS Bolivia Country Director Lilian Painter was co-author of a paper in *Conservation Biology's* 25th anniversary edition, entitled, "Indigenous Alliances for Conservation in Bolivia." To commemorate this edition, focus was placed on potential future advances in conservation and their application. In their essay, the authors discuss WCS' efforts in Bolivia to increase alliances between conservation and indigenous organizations to maintain biodiversity and improve local livelihoods. Current and future challenges in Bolivia deal with indigenous participation in development projects, including road, mining and energy projects.

PARAGUAY

We are happy to announce that Maria del Carmen Fleytas Jover is our new Paraguay project director. Maria del Carmen comes to WCS from Fundacion Moises Bertoni in Paraguay, a foundation that addresses sustainable development in the country. A graduate of the National University of Asunción, Paraguay, Maria del Carmen completed her Master of Science in Management and Implementation of Development Projects at the University of Manchester, England. With more than 12 years of experience in sustainable development, Maria del Carmen has been successful in linking this experience to conservation, in which she has focused since 2005.

Recently, Dr. Alexine Keuroghlian (Conservation Scientist), Dr. José Virgílio Bernandes (Associate Conservation Scientist) and Carlos Eduardo Barbosa (rancher and stakeholder) from the Pantanal team in Brazil visited WCS Paraguay and met their team, including Angel Brusquetti (Sustainable Development Officer), Juana De Egea (Project Monitoring Officer) and Florencia Arano (GIS Technician). The purpose of the trip was

to develop a cooperation strategy between the two programs, under the framework of the USAID Project “Bosques y Desarrollo” in Paraguay.

Both WCS programs share the goal of minimizing pressures on forests and natural resources in their respective landscapes by developing and promoting best-management practices that optimize profitability and efficient use of developed lands. Consequently, the aim of the collaboration is to exchange sustainable development experiences and encourage new, alternative models of sustainable production, which will be achieved with the participation of local ranchers and stakeholders of the Chaco and Pantanal areas.

The next step for this inter-institutional collaboration framework will be the visit of the WCS Paraguay team to Campo Grande, Brazil, where they expect to consolidate the alliance and set a joint working agenda for 2012.

BRAZIL

WCS Brazil country director Jean Boubli was co-author of a paper entitled, “Explosive Pleistocene range expansion leads to widespread Amazonian sympatry between robust and gracile capuchin monkeys.” In the paper the authors explored whether Miocene or Plio-Pleistocene processes could explain present capuchin species’ present distributions. They found that late Miocene geographic isolation was the cause of the sympatry, or the existence of two species in the same geographic area.

The Royal Bank of Canada recently awarded a 2 year grant to the Pantanal program of WCS Brazil to support their existing ranch management projects. The Pantanal program works with local ranchers to encourage sustainable ranching practices that result in improved watershed management and more profitable ranches.

The long-term research of Flavia Miranda, a field vet in the Pantanal Program, was featured in one of the most important cultural and geographically-focused magazines in Brazil (Horizonte Geografico). The article discusses Flavia’s personal connection with and research on the giant anteater. Flavia’s work on the pygmy anteater was also featured on TV Cultura, the Brazilian equivalent of PBS (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0mH3TF97D0&feature=youtu.be>). Finally, Flavia also participated in the publication of a book entitled, “Management of Giant Anteaters in captivity.”



Flavia Miranda

The Association of Artisans of Novo Airão and the management council of the Unini Extractive Reserve have both formally agreed to participate in WCS Brazil’s best-practices studies on income generation in protected areas. They will work with WCS to provide case studies on traditional crafts and Brazil nuts, respectively.



Catia Dejuste Depaula

In late November, PREDICT successfully completed an expedition to a remote site of the Amazon in north-western Brazil in conjunction with scientists from the National Research Institute of Amazonia (INPA), the Emilio Goeldi Museum, the Federal University of Amazon (UFAM) and the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). The field team conducted opportunistic sampling of free-ranging bats, rodents and marsupials for taxonomic and demographic studies. These efforts yielded 658 high-quality samples from a total of 100 individuals, which belonged to several different species, and some still being identified by INPA and UFPA.

Alexine Keuroghlian, Pantanal Landscape Leader, submitted a photo (right) for BBC's Wildlife camera-trap photo competition. The Editor picked 32 of his favorite photos from the competition, and Alexine's photo was included. More of the amazing photos from this competition can be found here: http://www.discoverwildlife.com/gallery/bbc-wildlife-camera-trap-photo-year-2011-editors-choice?utm_source=Responsys&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=NLT_WILD_081211_NL



Alexine Keuroghlian

COLOMBIA

November 9th, the 51st anniversary of the National Natural Parks of Colombia, was devoted to commemorate the hard work of the National Park guards, several of whom have been killed by landmines or armed guerrillas in the past years while working in the parks. To mark the day, the National Natural Parks System invited 25 journalists from the written and audiovisual media of Colombia to become park guards for a day. The project chosen by the Parks System to highlight the park guards' work was the Andean Bear Monitoring Program, a joint effort between the National Natural Parks and WCS Colombia. The Andean Bear Monitoring Program in Colombia began in 2009 with development of a conceptual framework for the monitoring of Andean bears in the national parks and continued during 2010 and 2011, with transects and camera-trapping pilots. On this day, the journalists were dressed as parks guards and conducted surveys of bear activity and checked the camera traps (photo below). Camera trap photos were then studied to identify individual bears. Following this activity, and in honor of their lost peers, the park guards presented the identity cards of 12 Andean bears identified using the camera trap images from Chingaza National Natural Park to the attending journalists. Each bear was named in honor of a lost park guard.



Robert Marquez

ANDEAN BEARS

Andean Bear Program Coordinator Isaac Goldstein was recently interviewed by Eco-Index, a website that is used by the Rainforest Alliance to share best practices and lessons learned with Conservationists across Latin America. Isaac discusses the Andean bear program in Colombia, where it has been active since 2009, and the upcoming activities for this year. You can find Isaac's full interview here: <http://www.eco-index.org/new/stories/2011/december.cfm>

GENERAL NEWS

This past fall, Jeremy Radachowsky joined the LACP team in NY as Senior Program Officer. Jeremy will continue to dedicate significant time to the Guatemala program by providing overall support. In addition, he will provide support for our programs in Paraguay and Venezuela, and liaise with species and marine program activities in Mesoamerica. Jeremy is working on completing his Ph.D. at the University of Florida, Gainesville, in Interdisciplinary Ecology. We are excited to welcome Jeremy to the NY team.



Martin Mendez

New Assistant Director Martin Mendez took his first field visit to Argentina to familiarize himself with the programs. He's pictured (left) with fellow WCS employee, Flavio Quintana.

The WCS Brazil Pantanal program and WCS Ecuador received a grant from the Overbrook Foundation for their work on collaboration with local peoples to design and implement economically productive activities that also achieve conservation goals. This grant will support WCS projects to continue reduction of deforestation and conversion of natural grasslands in the Pantanal and development of community-based management programs to conserve Amazon river turtles in Ecuador.