



## the bp conservation programme



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*Quarterly newsletter for the BP Conservation Programme—a partnership between BirdLife International, BP, Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Please contact Robyn Dalzen, [dalzr1@bp.com](mailto:dalzr1@bp.com), with comments and queries or visit our website at <http://conservation.bp.com>.*

#### Message From the Programme Manager

Already halfway through the year, and we have a great deal to report in this edition of our newsletter – with plenty of news from the field, a training update, a new application deadline for 2007 awards announced, a new team member joining us, and the Society for Conservation Biology Annual Meeting to look forward to!

#### Award Winner Training

From the 26<sup>th</sup> May until 7<sup>th</sup> June, representatives from 18 Future Conservationist Award winning teams came together in North Wales, UK, to learn a variety of skills, including conservation education, communications, people-oriented research, project planning and management skills. This training aimed to assist participants in carrying out their projects, and allowed them an opportunity to meet and share ideas with one another and a range of world-class conservation experts. We certainly enjoyed spending time with them and learning more about their conservation efforts and the context in which they work, and hope they got a lot out of the workshops too!

#### “Conservation Without Borders”

Having just returned from an intensive two weeks of training in the mountains of North Wales, the BP Conservation Programme team is now energetically launching into an exciting week in San Jose, California at the Society for Conservation Biology's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, “Conservation Without Borders.” Representatives from each of the eight 2006 Conservation Follow-up and Conservation Leadership Award winning projects will attend the meeting (along with more than 15 other past award winners) and present their initial research findings to an international audience of more than 1500 conservation practitioners.

*(Programme Manager's message continued...)*

#### Future Conservationist Awards 2007

Over the past year, many of you know the programme partners have been engaging in extensive discussions concerning the future direction of the BP Conservation Programme. The partnership continues to recognise the need to encourage a greater number of young people to pursue careers in conservation, and has been challenged to find ways to build on efforts in key areas. Please see below for details on some important changes to the BP Conservation Programme for 2007.

#### Diary Dates

**7 – 11 August** [ESRI User Conference](#), San Diego, California, USA

**13 – 19 August** [24th International Ornithological Congress](#), Hamburg, Germany

**22 – 26 August** [1st European Congress of Conservation Biology](#), Eger, Hungary

**3 – 7 September** [VII International Conference for Wildlife Management in Amazonia and Latin America](#), Bahia, Brazil

**17 – 29 September** [Smithsonian Environmental Leadership Course](#), Washington, DC

### **Welcome Program Officer Lynn Duda**

I'm pleased to introduce Lynn Duda, our newest member of the BPCP team, who will be working with WCS in New York within their International Training and Capacity Building team. Lynn comes to us with some useful experience behind her! She has traveled as a field ornithologist in many different countries, particularly in Central and South America, covering research topics ranging from looking at the effects of fragmentation in Amazonian Brazil, to population trends of neotropical migrants on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica.

Having taught Wildlife Management Field Techniques at the University of Rhode Island, managed a migratory bird banding station, and lead a conservation semester abroad program in the Ecuadorian Andes, Lynn is now looking forward applying her expertise whilst working with us on the Programme. Using her French, Spanish and Portuguese speaking skills, she was able to quickly make friends with participants at the Winner's Training in Wales, UK on her first assignment with us earlier this month. I hope you'll join me in welcoming her to the Programme!



~ Marianne Carter, BP Conservation Programme Manager

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## **Latest News**

### **Important Changes to Future Conservationist Awards**

The programme seeks to make a sustained, positive impact on conservation by providing training, guidance and funds to a network of developing international conservation leaders who continue to learn through experience as they manage globally important projects. By investing in people in this way, the BP Conservation Programme can help build their capacity to address important conservation problems and to transfer these skills to relevant stakeholders.

For 2007, we will be focusing our Future Conservationist Awards within twenty countries where BP has a significant business interest. These countries include: Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Egypt, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, Trinidad & Tobago, Turkey and Venezuela.

Focusing our efforts in this way will enable us to really make a significant contribution to conservation capacity building needs in these locations, and will allow BP to be of greater assistance to the teams we support. We realize this news will be disappointing to many who are outside the countries listed, but we are pleased to say that we will continue to support teams who have already won awards all over the world through our Conservation Follow-up and Leadership Awards, as well as alumni grants. The partnership is also seeking additional funding options to extend the geographic scope in the future.

The deadline for application forms for 2007 Future Conservationist Awards is **24<sup>th</sup> November 2006**, with awards being announced at the end of February 2007. There will be a few changes made to our criteria and application form for the next round, so look out for further information in August.

### **Kate Stokes Memorial Award**

On 19<sup>th</sup> February 2006, our colleague and dear friend, Kate Stokes, tragically passed away. Kate worked with us as Programme Officer for four years and had an enormous impact on hundreds of young conservationists during that time. Her warmth, energy, enthusiasm and commitment will be terribly missed. In partnership with Kate's family, we have established the Kate Stokes Memorial Award in her honor to support young conservationists around the world. We have already raised over £32,000 (\$60,000), but are aiming to reach a minimum of £40,000 (\$80,000). To donate to this fund, please send a cheque (British Pounds or US Dollars) to: FFI, Great Eastern House, Tenison Road, Cambridge, CB1 2TT. Please make cheques payable to "Fauna & Flora International" and state it is for Kate's Award.

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## News From the Field

### AFRICA

#### **Rainforest Reserves for Critically Endangered Comorian Fruit Bats (*Gold Award 2005*)**

The past few months have been exciting for our project team, as we have finished our ecological surveys of potential forest reserve sites and social surveys of neighboring villages. The field ecology work was often difficult, on steep mountain slopes with heavy rain, but we were able to collect all the data we hoped for and more at seven remote forest sites.

Our village work was extremely rewarding, as we were welcomed with open arms by each of our ten target villages, and found the villagers to be excited about our project and eager to collaborate. We now have a vastly improved understanding of forest characteristics at proposed reserve sites, and of the attitudes of villagers toward reserve establishment, both of which will be essential as we develop a plan for establishing the first forest reserves in the Comoros.



Soon after the end of this forest and village field work, our team took part in a conference in the Comoros on the future of conservation efforts for the critically endangered Livingstone's flying fox. We had an opportunity to present some preliminary results to a range of government officials, community leaders, and representatives of international conservation groups, and to receive valuable feedback that will help us improve our forest reserves implementation plan.

Our current work is less adventurous, but no less important, as we are entering and analyzing data, compiling our results, and developing the draft plan for the implementation of the small community-managed forest reserves. Once we complete the draft plan, our next step will be to travel around the islands of Anjouan and Moheli again to discuss the plan with the same villages, and with government officials and non-governmental organizations. The feedback we receive will enable us to finalize specific plans for reserves that will be beneficial to bat and forest conservation, have broad local and governmental support and promote sustainability.

#### **Tulbagh Renosterveld Project, South Africa (*Silver Award 2005*)**

We have completed our field work phase and at the moment we are doing feedback sessions with the various landowners in the Tulbagh Valley. This process had to be a bit delayed because the period from March to May is sowing time for farmers. However, we have had feedback sessions with two of the key landowners in the Tulbagh Valley, and our interactions with the landowners have been fantastic. We have managed to affect the mindset of farmers and they have been requesting our input into the management of their farms and natural veld.

The data we collected and products we produced, like the renosterveld fragments map, species locality map and the conservation priorities map, have already been extremely useful for land-use and conservation planning. The 'priorities fragments map' will be used to guide conservation stewardship extension staff to prioritise which farms will be targeted for stewardship agreements and contracts. Our partnership with the biodiversity and wine initiative (BWI) has worked really well. They have developed marketing materials for wine producing farmers in the area and the project team was consulted to develop biodiversity information sections for their pamphlet.

The Tulbagh Renosterveld project data has also been used on a national scale to input into the development of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations. South Africa is updating and developing a new set of Regulations that will be used to guide and streamline the EIA process. The project team has contributed to developing the biodiversity spatial layers that will trigger EIA assessments in particular areas. This has been an extremely exciting process for the project team and made us realise the value of our project and the need to have accurate data for threatened species and habitats.

The Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) will continue to monitor threatened plants in the Tulbagh Valley and will be looking for opportunities to fund the second phase of the Tulbagh Renosterveld project. To all the other BPCP winners, I am sure that all your projects are going well and that we have collectively made a difference to the conservation of biodiversity across the globe. Well done and keep up the excellent work!!

**Vision 2005: An integrated conservation and development project for the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest, Kenya (*Consolidation Award 2005*)**

The Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) team in Kenya launched 'Project Vision 2005: An Integrated Conservation and Development Project for the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest' in August 2005. Since then, various activities have been carried out. The group organised a teacher's workshop that brought together teachers who head environmental education programmes in their schools from Lari division. The workshop was aimed at enlightening teachers on environmental education and gave them an opportunity to share experiences. As a result of the workshop, the teachers have formed a support group, meeting once per term, to enhance environmental education in local schools.

The project also supported a capacity building workshop for the Forest Officers from Kiambu District, within which the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest falls. The workshop focused on building the capacity of foresters to carry out Participatory Forest Management (PFM) practices in their stations of work. This is the new management approach that is being adopted in the country with the principal aim to give the local communities an opportunity to co-manage the forest with the forest department. As a result, KENVO has expanded its activities and established local partnerships in all the forest stations in Kiambu District. Communities living adjacent to the forests have been proactive in advocating for protection and conservation of the forest, while at the same time continue to draw benefits from the forest.

Recently the group organised a huge sporting event to mark the World Environment Day, and to increase awareness about the importance of forests and address the theme of the year to fight off desertification. Activities included tree planting, a half marathon, environmental beauty contest, a football match and a competition in environmental music and artwork by local schools. The District Officer and the District Forest Officer, among other dignitaries from both government and civil society organizations, attended the event. While addressing the crowd, the District Officer challenged community members to take conservation seriously in order to reduce the high rate of desertification taking place throughout the country. He urged local leaders to spearhead conservation practices in the region and asked school heads to initiate tree planting in their schools. By developing tree nurseries and planting trees in their school compound, they can increase the Kenyan forest cover and produce their own fuel supply, making schools more self reliant. This was the first event of its kind to be carried out in the district, and local community members requested that KENVO continue to conduct the event annually.

The group has also set up the micro-credit scheme supported by the programme and the beneficiaries are in the process of receiving their loans. This opportunity attracted a huge number of applicants from KENVO Volunteers and community groups, and it's bound to change lives in the area. All beneficiaries have received basic training in micro-credit management and entrepreneurship courtesy of the project and Canada World Youth. It is because of the successful implementation and huge positive impacts of these projects that KENVO has received support from other donors, allowing the team to scale up and build on the initiatives of the original BPCP project.

**Evaluation, Present Distribution and Condition of Manatee in Cuanza River, Angola (*Silver Award 2005*)**

The shy and elusive African Manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*) is a little known, important and endangered species found in the rivers of Angola. Two years ago, Michel Morais of the Agostinho Neto University sought BP's assistance to conduct a study on this charismatic creature in the Cuanza River basin. With the aid of a grant from the BP Conservation Programme and local logistical support from BP, work began last year.

Objectives included the evaluation of the manatee habitat, an increased understanding of its conservation status and natural history, an increase in knowledge of threats to the species and the aim to reduce

pressure on the animal by proposing conservation initiatives using the skills of local people to manage protection programmes. The project has completed its first stage and a comprehensive report provides an insight of the Manatee's status, a 'sensitive areas' distribution map, results of interviews with more than 500 residents from 50 small villages and surveys of 30 river and lagoon sites – a major logistical effort in its own right.



The Manatee is a protected species in Angola and on the IUCN Red List as a species vulnerable to extinction, yet for centuries it has been a source of sustenance for villagers, hunted by traditional harpoon. One key finding suggests population decline is the shift to modern tangle nets and powerboats. In the dry season, hunters catch the animals in lagoons where they become trapped, making them vulnerable. Morais's report also recognizes the potential degradation in the animal's habitat due to increased human activities: mangrove destruction for charcoal and construction material, increased populations, villages and agriculture.

The report concludes with recommendations and an action plan to reverse the decline, primarily through education and raising awareness of the animal with the aim of re-establishing numbers to sustainable levels. Angola does not have sufficient resources to study the animal extensively and international efforts will be required for further analysis, while at the same time taking account of the local population's efforts towards sustainable development through fishing, agriculture and industry. The dangers are clear. Unless measures are taken to reduce the current pressures on manatees, their future is bleak.

#### **Bat Conservation, Madagascar (*Consolidation Award 2004*)**

Education and teacher training workshops, flying foxes captured in 20 meter high canopy nets and the giant leaf-nosed bat tracked to reveal its forest roosts for the first time ever – it's all happening for the *Bat Conservation Madagascar* team! Now in its second year, the national NGO called Madagasikara Voakajy, set up with a Consolidation Award, continues to go from strength to strength. Although Madagascar's other endemic vertebrates receive considerable attention from various conservation outfits, Madagasikara Voakajy carries the torch for bat conservation on the island.

Our ongoing research programmes on assessing forest dependency in microchiropterans and the ecological role of fruit bats are paying real dividends with both new and exciting data collected in the field and scientific papers published. We compliment our conservation science activities with education programmes that aim to reduce hunting and forest clearance at threatened fruit bat roosts. This has led to a new initiative to produce bat conservation fact books and resource kits for primary schools in Madagascar. We are now seeking ways of sustaining our activities to ensure the long-term survival for the organization and its staff.



### **ASIA / PACIFIC**

#### **CROC Project, Philippines (*Consolidation Award 2005*)**

The Philippine crocodile is the most endangered crocodylian in the world. In 1998, conservationists estimated that there were less than 100 Philippine crocodiles surviving in the wild. Hunting, habitat conversion and the use of destructive fishing methods continued unabated, and it seemed inevitable that this endemic freshwater species would be the first crocodile to go extinct in the wild. In 1999, a local fisherman accidentally caught a crocodile hatchling in the Northern Sierra Madre. It was the start of a small research and conservation project for the Philippine crocodile in Northeast Luzon: the Crocodile Rehabilitation, Observance and Conservation (CROC) project. In 2002, the CROC project won the BP Conservation Gold Award, in 2003 the Top Follow Up Award, and in 2005 the Consolidation Award.

Eight young conservationists from the Philippines and the Netherlands are collecting data, campaigning and working with rural communities and local governments to protect the Philippine crocodile in its natural

habitat. The CROC project is the first in-situ conservation project for the species. What started as an effort of a few young guys to collect data on a single species, has now transformed into an integrated collaborative conservation strategy for conserving wetlands in one of the most important global conservation hotspots.



There are more and more initiatives like the CROC project in the Philippines – motivated young conservationists who work around the clock and try against all odds to save endangered crocodiles, cockatoos, monitor lizards or rails. A network of small and local projects supported by the BP Conservation Program has developed and they are achieving significant results on the ground.

Interestingly, there is a lot of cooperation and mutual learning between these groups. In August 2005, for example, the CROC project teamed up with Calayan rail project and confirmed the presence of the Philippine crocodile in the Babuyan Islands: an

unexpected and exciting discovery! The CROC project is also working closely together with the BP Conservation winners from Pollilio Island and with the Katala Foundation in Palawan.

These are perhaps isolated and small initiatives. But they are about more than crocodiles or cockatoos only. Together they form a new powerful force in the Philippines. Together these young conservationists are actively challenging the forces of environmental destruction at the very local level. With the support of the BP Conservation Programme, these groups are determined to beat the odds, to make a difference, and to prove that there is a better future for people and nature in the Philippines.

#### **Extending Chelonian Research, Education and Conservation, Cambodia (Follow-up Award 2005)**

The project has been running since 2004 and is focusing on freshwater turtle and tortoise research in Central Cardamom Protected Forest, and was recently extended to all of southwest Cambodia. We have recently found one more endangered turtle species – the Yellow-headed Temple Turtle, *Hieremys annandalii*, and additional information on key sites for turtle conservation to add to the previous research. Our aim is to further research on globally threatened turtle species in Southwest Cambodia, to provide education to stakeholders, and to share turtle data with government departments and NGOs in Cambodia.

We recently returned from a 12-day fieldtrip to the plateau region of the Cardamom Mountains where we conducted timed searches looking for big-headed turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*) and impressed tortoises (*Manouria impressa*). Neither was found in the streams, which was not surprising considering the lack of fish or crab – typical food for big-headed turtles – and a muddy bottom, which is also not suitable for this turtle species.



According to our guide, the montane forests are rich with impressed tortoise. We found one freshly eaten at a hunter's camp. The shell was completely burnt. We also carried out timed searches in the forest and found that this high-altitude forest is very good for this species, full of food (mushrooms), good places to hide and wet, cool weather. We found a pile of impressed tortoise dung in front of a hiding hole under the root of a big tree. During our timed search we also found two adult and one juvenile Asian Leaf Turtle, *Cyclemys atripons*, along a flowing stream. We had thought this species would not be in such a high altitude, but it appeared to be quite common.

Based on our research, we have found that one serious threat to tortoise and turtles is that people use hunting dogs to find concealed animals, such as turtles and tortoises. But according to our observation and our guide, in this area hunters don't bring their dogs because they are afraid their dogs will step on cable snares and converted land-mine snares. As a result, even though turtles are sometimes caught for food, it is not a serious threat in this area. The area is threatened by poachers using effective equipment to snare preferred animals. In this case, it is important for government rangers to take immediate action and patrol this area to stop poaching activities. Otherwise, animals in this area will be extinct in a short time.

**Distribution, habitat preference and conservation status of the giant endemic rats *Solomys ponceleti* and *S. salebrosus* in Solomon Islands (Gold Award 2005)**

Finally! We have come across a giant rat – the Bougainville giant rat (*Solomys salebrosus*), which was caught by hunters in the interior village of Olivetti on Choiseul Island, Solomon Islands. The village is an eight hour walk from the coast, and accessible only by logging roads and trails. The forests here are old growth forests, and are threatened by logging. Poncelet's giant rat (*Solomys ponceleti*), the other target species, was not found. However, we have had reports of sightings from local hunters, but they are becoming rarer. Both species tend to be more abundant to the northwest of the island. It is not known why, since these forests have been exploited by loggers both traditionally and commercially.

Opportunistic surveys of other vertebrates, such as amphibians, have increased our species count to about 20 species of the known 28. One individual frog caught on the slopes of Mount Maetambe, the plateau summit of the central cordillera that dominates the island of Choiseul, seems to be new to us. We will be sending the specimen to a museum in Australia for proper identification.

We visited 10 sights and were able to present conservation awareness talks in schools and with local communities, which was appreciated by all. There is still much work to do to access unexplored areas in the rainforests. But thanks to the BP Conservation Programme, we were able to collect some results, which will hopefully be translated into the context of the local situation and benefit indigenous resource owners, and protect this rich biodiversity in east Melanesia. Tenkiu tumus (thank you very much).



**Conservation of *Tricholoma matsutake* Mushroom in Northwest Yunnan, China (Silver Award 2005)**

Nihau from Zhongdian, China! Project Matsutake is nearing completion after a long winter spent in labs collating and analyzing data collected by various team members. While we wrap up a small amount of field work, the bulk of our recent efforts have been disseminating our findings on sustainable harvest and reproductive biology of this mushroom to a diverse array of stakeholders.

In early June, our preliminary results were presented at the annual meeting for the Society for Economic Botany in Chiang Mae, Thailand and two papers from team members were recently accepted for the International Conference on Mycorrhizae in July. Closer to home, we are working with our partner organizations to prepare culturally-appropriate analyses to the villages in and around Shangri-la County to whom Matsutake exports are a fundamental aspect of livelihoods. An unforeseen collaboration with the largest Matsutake exporter in the province has proven fruitful for spreading results on harvest protocols to communities throughout the region. We are fortunate that in this system, the positive relationship between conservation and economics is so transparent.

**Action Tayam Peh, Nicobar Islands (Follow-up Award 2004)**

This year brought our team the much required and cherished experience of a successful field session on radio collaring the Nicobar flying fox and finally locating it in the day roost. A shy and elusive species, our team had been on the lookout for this endemic species for almost a year now. We were successful in radio collaring nine individuals and locating six during the day, while all nine were successfully followed during night foraging bouts.

Though the threat of hunting on the species has slightly reduced, the threat is still persisting in some parts of our study area. A breakthrough was achieved when, sadly at the cost of one individual, we were able to catch a hunter in action. A hunter had killed one of our radio collared bats and we were able to trace the signal to his house. The shocked hunter was handed over to the forest officials for some action. Luckily, the Divisional forest officer happened to be visiting the island and on our firm request we were able to initiate some action against the culprit and awareness about the vices of hunting in the area. Overnight the entire island was aware of the



incident and people cut down on hunting the species. The indigenous communities in some areas are now taking pride in their islands and this is a good success indicator to us.

Meetings and discussions with village heads as well as forest officials brought to the forefront the need to have conservation education and awareness at all levels in the islands. An introduction to Mike Pandey, a well known wildlife filmmaker, has helped the team raise awareness in the country. Mike's team came to the islands and filmed the team in the field, including interviews with several team members and local inhabitants. This is a good break for us, and will help the project gain national acceptance, which will hopefully improve the status of bats in India.

*Contact the BP Conservation Programme for a copy of the latest published report in Current Science, April 2006 – "Sighting of an Albino bat in a colony of cave-dwelling microchiropteran, Hipposideros diadema nicobarensis at the Nicobar Islands."*

## **Nepenthes**

Sumatra is the second island after Borneo that has the highest diversity of Nepenthes. A team of young students who received support from the Programme in 2002 to study Nepenthes in Indonesia have been working continuously over the past four years to gather data on Nepenthes. They were recently credited with the discovery of a new species of Nepenthes from Sumatra – *N. rigidifolia*. *Contact the BP Conservation Programme for a copy of the article published in Reinwardtia – "A new species of Nepenthes from Sumatra."*

## **EURASIA**

### **Sustainable Bat Conservation in the Caucasus Mountains of Romania, Georgia, Poland and Armenia (Leadership Award 2006)**

After couple of weeks of preparation, we are ready for this adventure!! We have purchased and prepared all the equipment, made the route plan, developed a workshop schedule, and arranged all kinds of paper work. We are now prepared to set up the next aims within this programme with each of our partners (database, web-page, conservation measurements). Our fieldwork will start the 21<sup>st</sup> of June when we depart from Cluj, Romania. Four team members will take the car and start our journey through Bulgaria and Turkey to Georgia. On the 26<sup>th</sup> we will have a meeting in Tbilisi with all team members and participants in the workshop. This will take place from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July. This will be followed by two weeks of fieldwork in Georgia, and then we will move to Armenia in mid-July for two more weeks of fieldwork. And finally, we will be back in Romania by the first week of August.

### **Developing Conservation Measures for Darevsky's Viper, Armenia (Gold Award 2005)**

The habitat for Darevsky's viper is concentrated in the volcanic highlands of the Gukasjan District of Armenia – specifically the Legli Wet Mountains of Armeno-Djavahet. The rocky, volcanic slopes rise 2000 to 2400 meters above sea level, with steep upward slopes. The landscape is represented by sub-alpine meadows with a high degree of degradation due to pastoral practices. The vegetation is medium-grass sub-alpine meadows, and along the talus slopes and rock outcrops, there is small shrub vegetation. Among the grass species, the following are dominant: *Cephalaria gigantean*, *Ranunculus caucasicus*, *Trifolium canescens*, *Stachis macrantha*, *Astrantia major*, *Anemonastrum fasciculatum*, *Ajuga orientalis*, *Plantago atrata*, *Primula macrocalex*, *Ornithogalum balansae*, and *Alchemilla* sp. Near snow crops are common *Scilla armena*, *Pushkinia scilloides*, *Corydallis emanueli*, *Ficaria ficarioides* and much more rare are the *Gagea* sp. and *Colchicum szovitsii*. Shrub species include *Daphne glomerata*, *Rubus bushii* and *Rosa* sp.



## **LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN**

### **Mannophryne olmonae: An ecological study in Tobago (Future Conservationist Award 2006)**

The project officially began on May 1st, 2006, which involved: 1.) logistical organisation (acquiring field license, accommodations, equipment etc); 2.) field reconnaissance; 3.) standardising field work protocols;

and 4.) developing and testing the histological protocol for Chytridiomycosis (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) detection.

The first month was spent becoming familiar with the area. Five of the six rivers that we proposed to study were visited and assessed. The assistance of a tour-guide is required for the first trip to the sixth river, Bloody Bay River. *M. olmonae* adults and tadpoles were encountered at Doctor's River, Argyle River and King's Bay River. They all provided long stretches of suitable habitat for *M. olmonae*, the former of which being the most easily accessible. Roxborough River had suitable habitats but no *M. olmonae* adults or tadpoles were encountered. Louis D'Or River however, was found to be the least suitable habitat but most accessible and workable river.



Five of the six team members, as well as the project advisor Dr. Adrian Hailey, were able to visit and experience the field conditions. Most equipment needed for fieldwork has been acquired and a field routine has been established. A good working relationship with Environment Tobago (ET) has been established, where ET have allowed the team the use of their office facilities and libraries, and have been able to contact schools about giving a brief presentation to their students in June.

#### **Red Siskin (*Carduelis cucullata*) Research and Conservation Programme (Bronze Award 2005)**

The team has been successful with the project thus far and we are progressing much better than expected. We have found Red Siskin now in six new locations and have had a 90% sighting rate at transects. I don't know how long this particular spell of luck will last, but we will enjoy it while it is around. I have a few photos of the bird, but my camera equipment is not as good as it needs to be to get some good shots. We have also run into another bird of interest here that seems to have eluded the surveyors of avifauna – the sun parakeet. Due to taxonomic reasons, it has become one of the rarest parakeets in the world. We are working to organise a survey of the area – it is 120 miles away from the nearest point in our area, so we will also use this opportunity to check for siskins at the same time.

#### **Saving the Blue-billed Curassow: Building a secure future in Colombia (Leadership Award 2006)**

The project to conserve the Blue Billed Curassow (*Crax alberti*) and the tropical humid forests of the Serranía de las Quinchas in the Colombian Half Magdalena has had a successful year thus far. The team from ProAves Colombia has been focusing on consolidating strategies for conservation and the establishment of good relationships with local communities, NGOs and other academic and governmental institutions. They have been developing an ecotourism strategy for the Paujil Nature Reserve that will target Colombians and foreign tourists.

The team has also been busy carrying out monthly bird censuses in the Reserve. In May they identified a mature Wild Swallow (*Notiochelidon minimum tibialis*), the only small swallow in the lowlands. The bird was ringed for the first time in the department of Boyacá. Other important species that have been identified include the Grooved Anoles (*Anolis sulcifrons*), endemic to the Colombian Half Magdalena and the Forest Elaenia (*Myiopagis gaimardii*) a new sighting for the Reserve. To date the group has identified approximately 35 species of amphibians, 32 species of snakes, 25 species of turtles, lizards and Caimans and more than 330 species of birds in an area no bigger than 1300 hectares.

Another recent and exciting sighting was a Spectacled bear sow (*Tremarctus ornatus*) with her two cubs. This sighting is very important – due to high deforestation and hunting in the Serranía de las Quinchas, many thought the bear had moved to higher elevations. The discovery of a large, globally threatened mammal in the low part of the Serranía, and specifically in the Paujil Nature Reserve, heightens the importance of conservation actions and education in the area.

#### **Assessment of Seabird Bycatch in Peruvian Artisanal Fisheries, Peru (Bronze Award 2005)**

We are just returning from field visits to fishing ports in Southern Peru, including San Juan de Marcona, Mollendo and Ilo. This time we also extended our visits to Iquique port located in Northern Chile. We gave several talks to personnel from Capitanías de Puerto as well as fishermen in these ports.

The main goal of this trip was to give talks about endangered marine fauna and to specifically address seabird bycatch in gillnets and longlines. We spoke with fishermen and authorities to let them know about our project and how they could collaborate with us; we had them fill out surveys before and after the talk, as well as a survey about seabird bycatch in gillnets. During the talk, we emphasized the importance of our observer program to gather information on different seabird species and the importance of collaborating with fishermen and authorities – not only respecting the laws, but informing us when they encounter a tagged or banded animal.

We also handed out printed materials – seabird identification guides, stickers, posters and pamphlets – to all present and raffled t-shirts. For members of Capitania (the ones in charge of enforcing laws concerning endangered marine species), we passed out copies of the existing Peruvian laws that protect endangered marine species. Press staff members were also invited to the talks, and in several of the ports team members were interviewed by local radio stations, giving us a great opportunity to spread our message about conservation of endangered marine species to more people.

Our last destination was the fishing town of Iquique in Northern Chile. There, we talked to at least 14 longline fishermen, all of whom were aware of the endangered status of seabirds. Our main objective was to let fishermen know about the bird bands, not to remove them if they happen to encounter an animal with those identification marks, and to contact us if possible. Some fishermen told stories about encountering albatrosses with bands from Australia. Overall, the fishermen in Iquique showed interest in our project with marine fauna and stressed the need for regional collaboration with Chilean agencies working with endangered marine fauna and interactions with artisanal fisheries.

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## Alumni: Where Are They Now?

### **Catching up with Santiago D'Alessio of the Marsh Deer Project, Argentina**

The seeds of the Marsh Deer Project were planted in 1995, back when Santiago D'Alessio was starting as a biology undergraduate at Buenos Aires University. After traveling to the north of Argentina and learning a little bit about the ecology of the Marsh Deer species, Santiago and his small team came back to Buenos Aires looking for information about a supposed population in the nearby Parana River Delta. There was none to be found.



But after traveling to the delta islands and speaking with local residents, they found that there was in fact a population of the species, which was under pressure from over-hunting. “Many people said, listen, this deer is going to disappear, we are watching, we are seeing how they are disappearing. There are many people hunting them. So something must be done,” Santiago recalls. “There was nobody else doing that work, and the people were so interested in somebody working with deer, we thought it was a very interesting issue to research because there was no previous research on this population. So we said let’s see what happens.”

There are no other organizations working with the marsh deer in the Delta del Parana, and according to Santiago there are not many other similar efforts in the rest of the country either. “One of the objectives of the new stage we are starting is helping and supporting the creation of new groups in the inner part of our country to work with marsh deer populations, some of them very poorly known.”

The role of the deer in the ecosystem has yet to be studied, but Santiago guesses that since its natural predator, the jaguar, has already been eradicated from the area, the only known threat now is human predation. One of the most effective ways to begin to curb this, then, is to reach out to people in the hopes of touching both those who hunt the deer and those who would want to see it protected. After interviewing 500 people from Buenos Aires and its surroundings, they found that less than 1% of the responders actually

knew about this endangered species. Since “the authorities have no pressure to work with this species,” and Santiago and his team do not have much experience with mass-communications, they incorporated a team member whose sole responsibility is to coordinate communications about the project.

So far, the team has met with some exciting success. After winning the Consolidation Award in 2005, both La Nacion and El Clarin featured the Marsh Deer Project in their papers. Around five television programs interviewed them, and the producers sent a camera crew to film the study area. “We have to get some points that are interesting to be communicated because it’s not useful if you have nothing to say. But also telling people that the biggest deer in South America is just 50 kilometers from the middle of the city, that’s enough news for most people.”

Santiago and his team, Pablo Herrera, Bernardo Lartigau and Gustavo Aprile, started the project with a grant from IUCN in 1998. They applied for a grant from the BP Conservation Programme because they knew there were few constraints on how teams could apply the money. Surprised to have received an award in 1999, they began to create serious objectives and actions to “make a ‘real’ project.” When asked if the project would have been able to proceed without the BPCP’s help, Santiago pauses and appears to think hard. He then contends that the BP Conservation Programme “helped us really a lot to understand what a project was, what it means to develop a project and research. And I think the BPCP has been the main funding for our project. It was not possible to develop this project without its help.”



In terms of skills, the BPCP also was beneficial to the Marsh Deer Project in many ways. Santiago believes that one of the most important aspects of the BPCP’s training program, besides allowing access to top funders and conservation researchers, was mingling with young conservationists from other countries: “[The workshops] offer the opportunity to see how other people from other parts of the world work in conservation biology.”

And there are very important connections to be made back at home, too. The interconnectedness of the deer and the rest of the ecosystem—including the people—is something that Santiago stresses as very important. Conserving the deer is good for all species, he says, and for the landscape that residents value: “[I]t’s very nice when you realize that the people that live here are very proud that they have this species. They love the environment, but I think they love the elements of the environment—they do not love a field. No, they love the island with the birds of that area, and they love the island with marsh deer inside the island, they want to keep that for the children and future generations.”

From raising awareness about the deer, Santiago says he is pleased that the team also had the opportunity to help change not just the perceptions but the behavior of the local communities. “They always loved the area,” he explains, but misunderstood the importance of using resources sparingly. Now if an unknown hunter is spotted in the area, residents call the naval authority to have them stopped. “They do it because they want to do it; nobody’s obliging them,” he said. If there’s one thing that Santiago found surprising about conservation work, it is how many teams just focus on the research and do not try to connect it to other “real-world” factors, such as economics and politics. So the fact that their work has translated into actual change on the ground, and has not just remained an idealistic exercise, is something in which Santiago takes a good deal of pride.

Changing the policies and attitude of the government is also another goal for this ambitious team. As to their success so far, Santiago is upbeat: “It’s working, and I see that people from the government are really very happy with the research they’re getting.” By going through the government, the Marsh Deer Project hopes that they will have instituted a lasting effect long after they are gone.

But then again, there may be another generation of conservationists to take up their reins in the future. In Argentina, conservation is increasing in popularity as a career option. Though it still needs to be developed, the government’s recognition that “nature is one of the most interesting things to show in Argentina” (in Santiago’s words) has begun to drive interest in the field.

As for Santiago himself, he knows now he would “like to dedicate my life to conservation biology.” Since he will have several more years to strengthen his work with the Consolidation Award, he hopes to have a better idea of how to “live off conservation biology – keep your family, keep your future, choose the school for your children, and put all the effort into conservation biology.” It’s a lofty goal, but the Marsh Deer Project team members have been known to accomplish some ambitious endeavors.



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## Final Reports Received

For a copy of the full report of this recently concluded project, send an email request to [bp-conservation-programme@birdlife.org.uk](mailto:bp-conservation-programme@birdlife.org.uk) or telephone +44 (0) 1223.277.318.

- Karumbé 2004, Uruguay (2004)
- Mpingo Conservation Project, Tanzania (2004)
- YARÉ: Yariquíes Assessment and Research of Endangered Species, Colombia (2005)

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## Project Websites

Check out project websites for updated news and images from award winning teams in the field:

- [Bat Census in Crimean Caves](#), Ukraine (*Bronze Award 2004*)
- [Conservation Comoros](#), Comoros Islands (*Bronze Award 2005*)
- [Giant Otter Conservation](#), Bolivia (*Follow-up Award 2003*)
- [Iranian Cheetah](#), Iran (*Future Conservationist Award 2006*)
- [Katala Quest](#), Philippines (*Silver Award 2003*)
- [Mpingo Conservation Project](#), Tanzania (*Consolidation Award 2004*)
- [Project Hapalopsittaca](#), Colombia (*Gold Award 2002*)
- [Project Karumbé](#), Uruguay (*Gold Award 2001*)
- [Sea Turtle Research and Conservation](#), Venezuela (*Follow-up Award 1999*)
- [Seabirds Peru](#), (*Bronze Award 2003*)
- [Tandroy Conservation Trust](#), Madagascar (*Consolidation Award 2003*)