



**IUCN/SSC  
Tapir Specialist Group**

Number 3

TAPIR CONSERVATION

AUGUST 1992

The Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC TAPIR SPECIALIST GROUP.

Issue #3 of the newsletter was produced with the support  
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Editor: Sharon Matola

The views in Tapir Conservation do not necessarily reflect those of the IUCN nor the entire IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG).

Special thanks to Conservation International for their assistance.

The objective of Tapir Conservation is to offer the members of the Tapir Specialist Group/IUCN/SSC and others concerned with the family Tapiridae, news brief papers, opinions, and general information about this threatened mammalian genus. Anyone wishing to contribute to Tapir Conservation please send material to:

Sharon Matola, Chairperson  
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Belize City, Belize  
Central America

Word From the Editor

TAPIR SPECIALIST GROUP UPDATE

Thank you to all TSG members who have sent letters and articles since our last newsletter publication.

We are still lacking a good deal of information in order to produce an Action Plan. If you are reading this and have access to any information pertinent to the production of an Action Plan for tapirs, please send it to me at your earliest convenience.

IUCN has specifically been in communication with me about the Action Plan, and it should be the goal of our Specialist Group to have this document finished in the very near future.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

A. PANAMA

While it was hoped that 1.0 *T. bairdii* could be sent to The Belize Zoo for breeding purposes, officials in Panama, after over a year of negotiations about this possible transfer, refused to have the animal leave Panama on breeding loan.

Rick Barongi will be coordinating with the Summit Zoo in the Panama Canal Zone and with the estate of Escondido in western Panama in hopes of further encouraging these two facilities to exchange and collaborate for captive breeding purposes.

B. BELIZE

The Belize government has recently declared a 265,000 acre National Park in the Maya Mountains, the Chiquebul National Park, and this now-protected area provides abundant habitat for the Central American tapir, *T. bairdii*.

The 1993 Expedition to the Upper Raspaculo, a pristine environment that is particularly productive for ungulates, due to the dynamic state of the flooded riverine forest, will occur once again between the months of May and June 1993. The Upper Raspaculo river has been the controversial subject of a possible hydroelectric project. Data collected on this expedition, funding provided by the Royal Geographic Society, will pay particular attention to the species

diversity found in this remote area of Belize.

Tapir Specialist Group chairperson Sharon Matola will be one of the field investigators on the six week long expedition.

C. ECUADOR

Update: Mountain tapir, *Tapirus pinchaque*.

Reports by Wildlife Conservation International Research Fellow Craig Downer are not good for *T. pinchaque* in Sangay National Park.

Even though UNESCO has declared this area a World Heritage Site, encroachment into the park is steady.

During the past two and one half years, Craig Downer has witnessed the killings of 30 mountain tapirs, including two which he had radio-collared. All killings occurred within UNESCO'S World Heritage Sangay National Park.

Another prominent problem is the intensifying of livestock grazing within the park, and apparently no action from the Ecuadorian government to halt this activity has occurred.

Another aspect of *T. pinchaque* hunting is almost to grim to believe, but Downer reports that certain Expeditions, led by licensed Ecuadorean guides, actually hunt the mountain tapir so that their tourists can sample mt. tapir meat.

Downer states that the most alarming threat to the mountain tapirs and their habitat is the pledge by leaders of a seventeen community, indigenous coalition inhabiting the western border region of Sangay National Park.

Using the slogan "where man has once set foot he will never retreat!", these locals, in defiance of government authorities, are adamantly intent upon burying fragile forests and paramo for the occupation by livestock, even up to the erodible, ashy-soiled base of Sangay Volcano.

Downer estimates that only a few thousand mountain tapirs remain within their geographic range high in the Andes, mainly in Columbia and Ecuador, and a small remnant population in northernmost Peru.

Besides the very possible extinction of *T. pinchaque* from its now restricted range, the human populations in this region of Ecuador stand to lose a great deal as their watersheds inevitably dry up due to overpopulation by settlers and over-grazing by cattle.



Craig Downer adamantly maintains that a program for the rescue of the natural high Andes, using the mountain tapir as a "flagship species" is imperative.

D. COLOMBIA

Meanwhile, 1992 has seen the beginning of field research on mountain tapirs by Hernando Acosta and Sebastian Londono of Los Andes University in Columbia.

E. MEXICO

Joann M. Andrews, President of PRONATURA, reports that her organization is engaged in several projects in the region of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. These projects include basic studies of the flora and fauna as well as starting programs in the villages in and around the Reserve, trying to promote economic alternatives compatible with the conservation of the natural resources, as well as a program in environmental education.

Two field projects, as reported by JoAnn Andrews, have indicated that *T. bairdii* is hunted in significant numbers by subsistence hunters. Their conclusions suggest that *T. bairdii* is in danger of extinction in this region due to overhunting.

PRONATURA is developing an aggressive program aimed at saving the tapir from extinction in that area of Campeche.



From PRONATURA: Where the Central American tapir is found in Mexico.

2. The Situation of *T. bairdii* in Mexico as reported by:

Ignacio J. March  
ECOSFERA - Centro de Estudios para la Conservacion  
de los Recursos Naturales, A.C.  
Chiapas, Mexico

The southern part of Mexico is the extreme northernmost range for

*T. bairdii*. This includes the states of Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo. This constitutes approximately 25 percent of the total range of *T. bairdii*.

Colonization and development are the greatest threats to *T. bairdii* in Mexico.

Currently, more than 50 percent of *T. bairdii* range in Mexico has been eliminated or transformed into unsuitable habitat. It could be possible that at this time, *T. bairdii* is gone from the states of Veracruz, Yucatan and possibly Tabasco.

At this time, "official" protected areas or reserves total 1,702,082 hectares.

Conservation of *T. bairdii* in the remaining parts of its range depend upon the following:

- development of studies specific to current distribution of *T. bairdii* in Mexico.
- implementation of a massive education campaign.
- place wardens in protected areas where the presence of tapirs have been verified.
- control of sport and subsistence hunting in areas where *T. bairdii* is present.
- begin programs in various zoos in Mexico for captive breeding *T. bairdii*.

#### Relevant Literature

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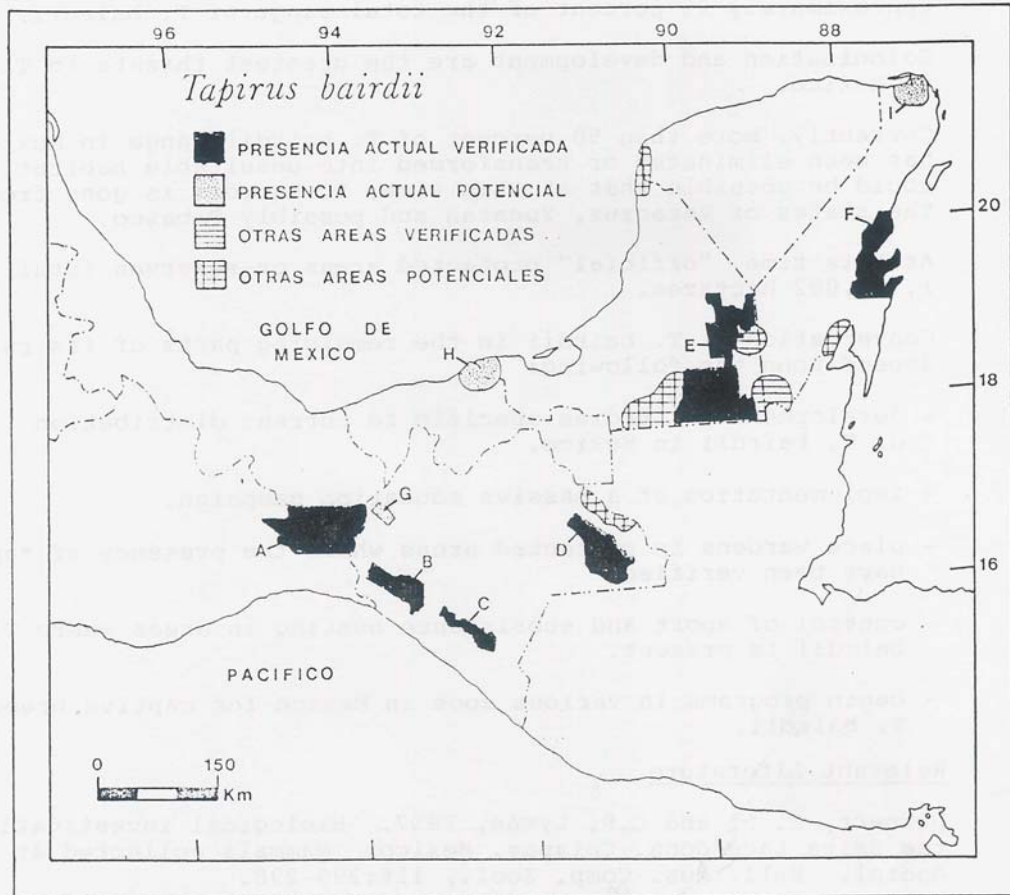


Fig. 2.- Areas con presencia verificada y potencial del tapir en México.

- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| A - Los Chimalapas, Oaxaca.         | F - Reserva Sian Ka'an, Quintana Roo. |
| B - La Sepultura, Chiapas.          | G - Reserva El Ocote, Chiapas.        |
| C - Reserva El Triunfo, Chiapas.    | H - Humedales de Centla, Tabasco.     |
| D - Reserva Montes Azules, Chiapas. | I - Zona Norte de Quintana Roo.       |
| E - Reserva Calakmul, Campeche.     |                                       |



Cuadro 1.- Principales áreas del sureste de México con presencia verificada o potencial de tapir (Tapirus bairdii).

A R E A	EXTENSION (Hectáreas)	ESTATUS LEGAL Y FECHA DE ESTABLECIMIENTO	SITUACION ACTUAL DE LA ESPECIE (1991)
Región Los Chimalapas, Oaxaca.	> 300,000	Propuesta de Reserva	VERIFICADA
Reserva Ecológica El Ocote, Chiapas.	48,800	Establecida (20-October-1982)	POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Reserva de la Biósfera Montes Azules, Chiapas	331,200	Establecida (12-Enero-1978)	VERIFICADA
Reserva Ecológica La Sepultura, Chiapas	73,800	Propuesta	VERIFICADA
Reserva Nacional Forestal La Frailescana, Chiapas	60,450	Establecida (03-Enero-1978)	POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Reserva de la Biósfera El Triunfo, Chiapas	119,550	Establecida (16-Marzo-1990)	VERIFICADA
Márgenes del Río Usumacinta, Chiapas.			POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Reserva de la Biósfera Calakmul, Campeche.	723,185	Establecida (23-Mayo-1989)	VERIFICADA
Zona Los Petenes, Campeche.	130,000	Propuesta de Reserva	POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Area oeste del sector Sur de Calakmul, Camp.			POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Reserva de la Biósfera Sian Kaan, Quintana Roo	528,147	Establecida (20-Enero-1986)	VERIFICADA
Area de la Laguna de Bacalar, Quintana Roo			POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Zona Norte de Quintana Roo.		Propuesta como Reserva	POTENCIAL NO VERIFICADA
Zona Sur de Quintana Roo.			VERIFICADA

F. Tapirus indicus, Malayan tapir.

Ed Ramsay, DVM and TSG member has reported on *T. indicus* in Indonesia (Central Sumatra).

At this time, no field studies involving *T. indicus* occur. It is known that *T. indicus* prefers low browse, but exact vegetation preferences are unknown.

Also, according to Dr. Ramsay, the movements, as well as time of calving of *T. indicus* are also unknown.

In Central Sumatra, the Malayan tapir is not valued by local people. Sometimes tapir nail or skin is marketed as rhino, but this is uncommon. The Indonesian word for rhino and tapir is the same - "Badak".

As is true with the other three species of tapir, reserves for the protection of *T. indicus* need to be created and these reserves must be protected.

G. Research Tapirus terrestris

"Strategies of seed dispersal and seed predation in Amazonian ungulates". Richard E. Bodmer.

Plants produce pulpy fruits to attract animal vectors which, in turn, disperse seeds. Seeds are protected against predators by physical characteristics such as hardness or spines, chemical toxins, and saturation strategies via mast fruiting. (Janzen 1971, Waller 1979, Kiltie 1982, Bell 1984, Dirzo and Dominguez 1986).

Ungulates maximize nutritional intake from forest fruits by exploiting the entire fruit resource, including the protected seeds (Kiltie 1981, Smythe 1986).

Richard Bodmer found, through his extensive field research, that the lowland tapir, *T. terrestris*, is the only ungulate that frequently disperses intact seeds through the digestive tract.

Bodmer, R.E. 1991. *Biotropica* 23(3)

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