



IUCN/SSC TAPIR SPECIALIST GROUP

NUMBER 6

TAPIR CONSERVATION

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The Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC TAPIR SPECIALIST GROUP

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The Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group

Editor: Sharon Matola, TSG Chairperson

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

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 should send materials to:

Sharon Matola, Chairperson
Tapir Specialist Group/IUCN/SSC
P.O. Box 1787
Belize City, Belize
Central America

WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This ISSUE # 6 of TAPIR CONSERVATION discusses field work, and other issues of interest to the Tapir Specialist Group.

News about tapirs, in the wild, in captivity, historic information or any appropriate items relative to the TSG should be sent to:

TAPIR SPECIALIST GROUP NEWSLETTER C/O
P.O. Box 1787
Belize City, Belize

Central America

A. UPDATE: TAPIR ADVISORY GROUP

CHAIR: RICK BARONGI
Walt Disney Company

- Tapir CAMP document is completed and available from the CBSG office.
- Elizabeth Frank, Milwaukee Zoo, has assumed the Malayan tapir species coordinator position.
- Lewis Greene, Prospect Park Zoo/NYZS, has assumed the Baird's tapir species coordinator position.
- The most comprehensive bibliography of Tapiridae has been compiled by Dr. Don Janssen of the San Diego Zoo. Contact TAG Chair for copies.
- The number of AZA institutions holding Malayan tapirs has increased by 30% in the past two years, for a total of 22 facilities.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

The following is a summary of only those tapirs held in AZA institutions:

Malayan tapir	28.31 = 59
Brazilian tapir	42.48 = 90
Baird's tapir	21.10 = 31
Mountain tapir	6.2 = 8

PRIMARY CONCERNS

- Encourage more institutions to stop breeding their Brazilian

tapirs to free up more space for the three other more endangered species.

- Select a Brazilian tapir coordinator and studbook keeper to update the four year old information on this species.
- Follow up on all the initiatives formulated at the 1994 tapir TAG mid-year meeting.
- Finalize application for tapir SSP for WCMC approval.
- Schedule a joint tapir TAG and IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group meeting to work on regional and global action plans.
- Acquire more captive bred female Baird's tapirs for AZA population.
- Become more involved with in situ projects, especially the mountain tapir which is the most endangered tapir species.

RESEARCH

The tapir Veterinary Advisory Group is coordinated by Dr. Don Janssen, San Diego Zoo, Fax: 619-557-3959. Necropsy protocols and chemical immobilization data are also available from Dr. Janssen.

B. NOTES FROM THE FIELD

1. THE CENTRAL AMERICAN TAPIR, *Tapirus bairdii*

Charles Foerster of Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica, has been studying *T. bairdii* in Corcovado National Park, a 41,789 ha Protected Area on the western portion of the Osa Peninsula (8 26' - 8 39'N and 83 25' - 83 44'O). The altitude ranges from 0-745 msnm, and the rainfall varies between 3,800mm on the seacoast up to 6,500 mm in the more elevated regions.

Foerster has successfully captured and attached radio collars to three female and two male tapirs. No complications were experienced in any of the captures or recoveries, and no adverse effects of the collars have been noted.

As expected, Foerster has found, after his pilot study, that activity patterns were mostly crepuscular and nocturnal. Also, in his pilot study, Foerster has found home range sizes much smaller than what was expected. In June of 1995, data showed that the average home range for all animals was 1.4 km². The average female home range was 1.1 km², while the average male home range was 1.8 km².

The following data is being recorded:

1. Species of plant eaten.
2. Part of plant eaten.
3. State of activity.

Foerster will continue to gather data until May of 1996, however the radio collar batteries will last for an additional 15 months.

*NOTE: Charles Foerster and advisor Chris Vaughan are looking for someone to continue this project. All inquiries and communications are welcome. Contact:

Charles Foerster
PRMVS
Universidad Nacional
tel/fax: 506-237-7039/7036

2. DIETARY HABITS OF TAPIR, T. BAIRDII, IN A TROPICAL HUMID FOREST IN COSTA RICA, by Eduardo J. Naranjo Pinera has been published in :

VIDA SILVESTRE NEOTROPICAL Vol. 4 No. 1

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Miami, FL 33102

Latin America		Other
Student	8.00	15.00
Professional	12.00	24.00
Institutional	15.00	30.00

3. PRIME HABITAT FOR CENTRAL AMERICA TAPIR IN BELIZE, CENTRAL AMERICA.

Once again, sponsored by Wildlife Preservation Trust,

International, a ten day field trip to the remote Upper Raspaculo River Basin was undertaken in December 1995.

Seven tapir were observed over a period of ten days. Faeces was collected and analyzed at the country's central veterinarian laboratory. However, no parasite analyses could be determined due to the length of time the faeces had remained in water.

Plants of the family Compositae were collected and sent to the Natural History Museum in London for id, at this time, positive id is uncertain. These plants were noted to have been eaten by tapir. Tapir tracks led to the plants along the riverbanks. This species of plant was obviously a browse choice for *T. bairdii* in the Upper Raspaculo, as there was repeated evidence of the plants being bitten off, mid-height.

A Maya indian who took part in this trip was familiar with the plant as a food plant for tapir.

4. MORE NEWS - T. BAIRDII

Tapir TAG Chairperson Rick Barongi reports that biologist Tom Carr, while rafting a portion of the Rio Platino near the border of Nicaragua and Honduras in mid-1995, saw 47 tapir events, which included tracks, dung, and visual sightings.

He saw two different females with young calves and feels confident that this area has a healthy population of Central American tapir.

5. THE LOWLAND TAPIR, TAPIRUS TERRESTRIS

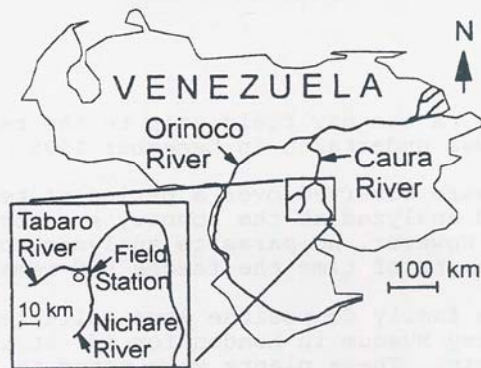
Leonardo Salas and Scott Fuller of the University of Massachusetts, with support from Wildlife Conservation Society, have completed a study of *T. terrestris* in the Tabaro River Valley in southern Venezuela.

Two manuscripts have been produced from their field work:

1. HABITAT USE BY LOWLAND TAPIRS, *TAPIRUS TERRESTRIS* L. IN THE TABARO RIVER VALLEY, SOUTHERN VENEZUELA.
2. DIET OF THE LOWLAND TAPIR, *TAPIRUS TERRESTRIS* L. IN THE TABARO RIVER VALLEY, SOUTHERN VENEZUELA.

Their work presents questions about the role *T. terrestris* plays in this particular ecosystem as a seed disperser.

Their study area:



6. THE MOUNTAIN TAPIR, TAPIRUS PINCHAQUE

In mid-1995, Craig Downer, one of the world's leading experts on *T. pinchaque* ecology, sent an alert to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Heritage Centre, to draw attention to the development of roads into Sangay National Park, Ecuador's World Heritage Site, and home to many endangered species, including the Mountain Tapir.

Since 1991, efforts to push a road into the high altitude ranges (over 13,000 ft.) of Sangay National Park have been undertaken by both local inhabitants and government officials.

Besides providing sanctuary for many rare and endangered species, this ecosystem is a critical watershed for the Morona-Santiago province.

The northern Andes are recognized as one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. And most of the Andean valleys and mountain ridges have dozens of species of birds, butterflies, and plants that can be found nowhere else on earth.

The Tapir Specialist Group Chairperson has sent a letter to the Ecuadorean Minister of Natural Resources drawing attention to the importance of Sangay National Park and the imperative need to maintain its biological integrity.

TSG members are urged to be proactive in this matter. A letter citing the critical need to preserve this unique ecosystem can be sent to any of the following:

- Excelentísimo, Sr. Presidente de la Republica de Ecuador
Arq. Sixto Duran Ballen, Presidencia de la Republica
Garcia Moreno 1043, Quito, Ecuador, South America.
- Ecuadorean Ambassador to the USA
2535 15th St. NW
Washington, DC 20009

- Ing. Jorge Barba, Director Ejecutivo (INEFAN)
Instituto Ecuadoreano Forestal y de Areas Naturales
Eloy Alfaro y Amazonas (Edificio M.A.G.), 8 Piso
Quito, Ecuador South America
- Excelentisimo, Sr. Ministro, Ministerio de Obras Publicas
(MOP)
Avenida 6 de Diciembre 1184
Quito, Ecuador, South America

For an excellent overview of Craig Downer's field work in Ecuador, see THE GENTLE BOTANIST in Wildlife Conservation Magazine, August 1995. Or write to TSG Chairperson for a copy.

At this writing Craig Downer reports that Diego Lizcano is working under Jaime Cavelier to earn a Biology degree through Universidad de Los Andes in Bogota. They are planning to capture, collar and radio track several Mountain Tapirs in the Ucumari Regional Park, Columbia. They also hope to gather more information on the role which these animals may be playing as seed dispersers.

Craig Downer reports that during a three month stay in South America in mid-1995, he spent time in Ecuador, Columbia and Venezuela. In Ecuador, Downer radio tracked three Mountain Tapirs which still had active radio collars. All three of the adult female tapirs were doing well, as expressed from their activity patterns. Downer is requesting support to replace the batteries in the radio collars, so that field work can continue. Craig Downer can be contacted:

c/o P.O. Box 456
Minden, Nevada 89423

Downer also reports that he presented numerous public slide shows and talks while in South America about the endangered Mountain Tapir. Downer has noted a raise in both awareness and interest in Mountain Tapirs from the local populations.

C. PROPOSED MEETING!!!

Dr. Jeffrey Jorgenson and Amanda Barrera de Jorgenson are working with the Colombian organization, Colombian Association for the Advancement of Science (ACAC), to organize a Tapir/Andean Bear meeting in Columbia sometime in early 1997. Dr. Jorgenson has been instrumental in the development of the Andean Bear Specialist Group, based in Santafe de Bogota, Columbia.

The proposed meeting would extend over a period of four days which includes standard research presentations, population viability analyses (tapirs and bears), and workshops that focus

on conservation and research matters at a community level. Specific topics such as deforestation in the neotropics and biodiversity monitoring will be discussed.

The goals of the meeting are to:

1. Assess the current status of bears and tapirs.
2. Develop or refine conservation and research strategies for these species.
3. Develop communication networks between researchers in the different countries with tapirs and bears.

The target audience includes zoos/captive breeders, field researchers, University students, conservation organizations, government officials involved in natural resources management, and members of ethnic groups and rural communities.

For further information, contact:

Jeffrey Jorgenson, PhD
Amanda Barrera de Jorgenson
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Apartado Aereo 56487
Diagonal 43 Numero 44-38
Barrio La Esmeralda
Santafe de Bogota, DC
Colombia tel/fax: 571-221-1489

D. SKIN DISEASE IN TAPIRS

Tapir Specialist Group member, Ed Ramsay, DVM forwarded an article entitled, "Vesicular Skin Disease of Tapirs". This was published in The 1993 Proceedings of the American Association of Veterinarians by Mitch Finnegan, DVM, Linda Munson, DVM, PhD, Sean Barrett, DVM, and Paul P. Calle, VMD.

For general information, many tapirs held in captivity in North American zoos develop skin lesions. A survey of North American zoos housing tapirs regarding dermatological disease resulted in a 45 percent response.

Fifty-three percent reported vesicular skin disease in tapirs (18 *T. indicus*, 9 *T. terrestris*, 5 *T. bairdii*).

Among the 32 affected individuals, approximately 122 episodes of vesicular skin disease were identified. Many affected animals had unexplained neurologic signs (e.g. hind limb lameness, weakness) associated with skin lesions.

In addition, many of the affected tapirs had histories of chronic intermittent respiratory infections preceding or interspersed with the episodes of dermatitis. Females and males of all

species were affected equally, but females, once affected, tended to have more repeat episodes of skin disease than males.

To date, no etiologic agent has been identified.

There appears to be a high prevalence of lesions within the captive tapir population in North America which are inconsistent with the known clinical and epidemiological characteristics of these diseases in other species.

Similar diseases have not been reported by institutions holding tapirs (*T. bairdii*) in Mexico, Guatemala, Panama or Belize.

E. ADDRESS CHANGES/TSG MEMBERS

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3. Daniel Brooks
University of Houston-Downtown
Dept. of Nat. Sciences
1 Main St.
Houston, TX 77002

F. TAPIR ACTION PLAN

Tapir Specialist Group member Daniel Brooks reports that the Tapir Action Plan is coming into final draft.

NEWS, COMMENTS, QUESTIONS - - - SEND TO:

Sharon Matola, Chairperson
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