



# Tapir Conservation

The Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group

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*The views 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 IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group and others concerned with the family Tapiridae, news briefs, opinions, and general information about this threatened mammalian genus.*

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## From the Chair

Future TSG newsletters will be taking on a new format. Both Sheryl Todd, TSG Deputy Chair, and I will be retrieving communications from tapir researchers and others, taking the highlights from these items, and presenting this in the TSG newsletter for everyone's information.

This will lead to the production of a more informative and dynamic resource which, we hope, will augment your information banks about the four species of tapir we are trying to conserve into the next millennium.

Recent tapir highlights include the spectacular fieldwork on going in Morro do Diabo State Park in southwestern Brazil. Laury Cullen and his dedicated staff are accomplishing important field investigations on *Tapirus terrestris*, adding information to the paucity of knowledge which exists about this species. While Patrícia Medici has returned to University, her history of exemplary work in Morro do Diabo with this species will continue to provide strong guidance to subsequent work involving this species.

A new tapir poster has been developed with assistance from Disney's Animal Kingdom and Rick Barongi. See the article in this section for further details. Money from the sale of the posters is slated to go into a fund which will be used to assist tapir conservation. The poster is brilliant. It depicts a Baird's tapir mother with young in a tropical forest stream setting.

The following information, contributed by some TSG members,

will provide a look into the latest occurrences with tapirs. As always, both Sheryl and I urge you to submit information so that your work can be shared with others interested in the conservation of tapirs.

## Conference to include tapir workshop

A tapir workshop will be included in the 4th International Conference for the Management of Wildlife in Amazonia and Latin America. The conference will be held on 4-8 October of 1999 in Asuncion, Paraguay. This event is co-organized by CITES-Paraguay, the Fundación Moisés Bertoni para la Conservación de la Naturaleza, and the Tropical Conservation Programs of the University of Florida, USA. One of the main goals of this conference is to discuss management of wildlife in all of Latin America. The conference will

*The drawing on our masthead was donated by artist Kevin Burkhill of Birmingham, England.*

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have plenary and workshop sessions solely devoted to starting a Latin American Wildlife Society. For further details, visit the conference web site at: <http://www.geoplan.ufl.edu/congreso4/index.shtml> or contact Patrícia Medici at [epmedici@uol.com.br](mailto:epmedici@uol.com.br). (Please note Patrícia's new e-mail address.)

### Tapir workshop

During the conference, a special workshop on tapirs will focus on conservation. The organizers of the meeting hope to convene tapir researchers from all over to discuss emerging issues in tapir conservation. Tapir research, management and conservation issues will be addressed. What strategy should tapir conservation take in light of the wildlife management programs currently underway?

As a first step for the meeting, the organizers will ask those present to make short presentations about the current research and management programs in various countries and how they are addressing tapir conservation. Questions such as the following will be considered for discussion:

What wildlife management programs are in place in the countries where tapirs exist? How are they designed to reduce tapir harvest? What are they doing to reduce tapir habitat fragmentation? What are they doing to deal with the habitat already fragmented?

Experiences of local people involved in management programs will be interesting and illustrative. The conference will ask how recent findings in tapir research can be used to improve current management programs. What type of action may be necessary and which are feasible for tapir conservation in the short and long term? Aspects of funding will also be discussed.

For the meeting to succeed, it is necessary to have as many interested tapir people as possible in Paraguay. The exchange of ideas and experiences, and discussion will contribute to tapir conservation everywhere.

### Papers

Two abstracts on tapirs have been submitted for the tapir workshop as of early June:

- Patrícia Medici e Cláudio Valladares-Pádua: Biologia da conservação da anta (*Tapirus terrestris*) e seu potencial como "detetive ecológico" na região do Pontal do Paranapanema - Estado de São Paulo - Brasil (Conservation biology of lowland tapirs and their potential as "landscape detectives" at Pontal do Paranapanema Region - São Paulo State - Brazil).

- Jessica Amanzo Alcantara: Estado de la población de tapir de altura (*T. pinchaque*) en el Santuario Nacional Tabaconas-Namballe - Cajamarca - Peru (Status of the tapir population at Tabaconas-Namballe National Sanctuary - Cajamarca - Peru).

Thank you. We hope to see you all in Paraguay!

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**Patrícia Medici**  
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## TSG web site

Our site at [www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/iucn-ssc/tsg/](http://www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/iucn-ssc/tsg/) is being visited in increasing numbers. Our main page had 163 visitors in March. The site is used by researchers and conservationists in the field, as well as students in many countries looking for detailed, quality information.

Our aim is to keep the technical side simple and the file sizes small in order to make the site as accessible as possible to people around the world. We recently learned that TSG members in Sumatra were able to download the Action Plan and Bibliography via their local Internet connection. Having the Action Plan accessible instantaneously and at no

cost other than standard online charges is a goal realized. In return, we were able to download photos and articles for this newsletter from Sumatra and Thailand. While Internet technology has become standard for some of us, it is still new or just on the horizon for others. For all of us, it's a remarkable way of keeping in touch and exchanging information.

## Action Plan

*Tapirs: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan* is available in paperback and on the web. For an online copy, see "TSG web site" article, above. Printed copies can be ordered from:

IUCN Publication Services Unit  
219c Huntingdon Road  
Cambridge, CB3 0DL,  
United Kingdom  
Phone: +44/1223/277894  
Fax: +44/1223/277175  
E-mail: [iucn-psu@wcmc.org.uk](mailto:iucn-psu@wcmc.org.uk)

Island Press  
Box 7  
Covelo, California 95428  
Phone: 800-828-1302 or  
+1-707-983-6432  
Fax: +1-707-983-6414  
E-mail: [ipress@igc.apc.org](mailto:ipress@igc.apc.org)

Hundreds of copies have been distributed throughout the world.

## Injured tapir keeper recovering

As we go to press, Lisa Morehead, the Oklahoma City Zoo keeper who was critically injured by a female Malayan tapir on 20 November 1998, is at home. She is undergoing intensive physical therapy to keep muscles usable. Her injuries were extensive, including the loss of her left arm. She has been corresponding by e-mail, and



last we heard was adjusting to her prosthetic arm. The Tapir Specialist Group was among the many donors who contributed to the total of \$1700.00 raised for Lisa. A month ago she had just begun to use the fund to buy special heating pads to aid her recovery and was considering the purchase of a special fitting for her new arm that would allow to her to work out in the gym. Keeping muscles of both sides of her body toned so they don't atrophy has been an ongoing challenge. There will be additional surgeries in the upcoming months. Lisa thanks everyone for the donations, cards, and good wishes. She says they have helped tremendously in pulling through the difficult times.

## TPF activities

The main page of the Tapir Preservation Fund's Tapir Gallery web site receives about 400 hits per week. This does not include those who may have come in on one of the other approximately 350 pages and never accessed the home page. This could mean usage of about 20,000 or more visitors this year to the main page alone. Our mailbag tells us almost daily that when people want to find out what a tapir is, our informational site is easily found. Material from the site is used by everyone from young students to professionals. Our high web visibility attracts researchers and others who are looking for a way to make contact with the tapir community. We routinely connect them with others working in their area of interest.

Not only use of the site, but our incoming mail and requests for materials have been growing this year, making it necessary to begin looking for office assistance on a regular basis.

Club Tapir, our monthly fundraiser for designated tapir projects, was one year old on April 1. During its 14 months in operation, Club Tapir has raised a total of \$3853.00 and funded the following:

Georgetown Zoo,  
Guyana: \$1055.00  
Craig C. Downer: \$1046.00  
Belize Zoo: \$912.00  
Patrícia Medici: \$270.00  
Ruben Nuñez: \$265.00  
The Foerstes: \$305.00

No expenses are taken out of the Club's donations, and recipients of the fundraising flyer also receive the monthly *TPF News*.

This year, TPF raised \$1700.00 for Lisa Morehead, the tapir keeper at the Oklahoma City Zoo who was severely injured by a Malayan tapir on 20 October 1998. A portion of this total was donated by the Tapir Specialist Group. Between April 1997, and April 1999, TPF donated \$4800.00 to Ruben Nuñez in Ecuador for his conservation education work with the people of Central Ecuador, one of the remaining strongholds of *T. pinchaque*. We also assisted in securing grants for this project from the Columbus and Pittsburgh Zoos. We are especially grateful to Kate Wilson, a professional writer and a tapir fan, who volunteered her time. She is now on our Board of Directors as Secretary, joining Marco Herranz, Vice-President, and Sheryl Todd, President.

On 6 May, the Tapir Preservation Fund celebrated its first year as a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Our future plans include watching Club Tapir grow, generating additional funds for tapir projects through grants, building and improving the Tapir Gallery web site, and conducting the Tapir Talk e-mail group, which this year has aided research in the field and tapir health in zoos. The amount of traffic and mail generated by the web site as well as the continued growth of our fundraising activities tells us that we are providing services that are needed, and to which the general public will contribute. Promoting awareness of these endangered species and providing information and material support that will help with their conservation and well-being have been our primary goals since the Fund's founding in 1996.

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Our online gift shop provides tapir fans with gifts and items featuring the tapir - often hard or impossible to find in stores. In return, the gift shop helps fund TPF's projects.

As of 1999, we are not a membership organization, per se, but a sense of membership is fostered by participation in Club Tapir. We are considering the possibility of organization memberships for 2000.

**Sheryl Todd**

*President, Tapir Preservation Fund*

## Funding sources: Lincoln Park Zoo

The Lincoln Park Zoo announced two available sources of funding, the Scott



Neotropic Fund and Africa/Asia Fund awards, which have awarded over 126 grants in 19 countries since 1986. The two funds support field research in conservation biology around the world.

The Scott Neotropic Fund focuses on projects undertaken in Latin America and the Caribbean. The fund emphasizes the support of graduate students and other young researchers, particularly those from Latin America. The Africa/Asia fund, launched in 1997, focuses on projects throughout Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Each fund supports projects of young conservation biologists. Between five and 15 projects for each fund are supported each year. The fund awards are seldom greater than US\$7500, and most awards fall in the range of \$3000-\$6000. Initial support is for up to 12 months from the date of award, and the maximum duration of support is two years. The current deadline for receipt of Scott Neotropic proposals is 1 September, and Africa/Asia proposals have no deadline for 1999. Additional information and application procedures can be obtained through:

Web: <http://www.lpzoo.com>  
E-mail: [steveed@ix.netcom.com](mailto:steveed@ix.netcom.com)

or write to:

**Lincoln Park Zoo, SNF/AA Funds**  
c/o Director of Conservation and Science  
Lincoln Park Zoo  
Chicago, IL 60614 USA

## Poster of Baird's tapir and young

This poster is from an original painting by former Disney Imagineer Ben Tripp. Ben was one of the original members of Disney's Animal Kingdom design team. Presently he is a freelance experiential designer and screenplay writer working for large entertainment companies. He donated this picture to support tapir conservation.

The painting depicts a mother and a week old calf in a forest stream. The local names for the tapir appear around

the border of the picture. Macho de Monte (Panama), Danta/Anta (Mexico and Central America), Mountain Cow (Belize), Moli (Kuna Indians) and Tzimim (Mayan).

The Spanish message on the bottom translates to:

**The forest is our home.  
Please do not destroy it,  
do not kill us.  
Extinction is forever.**

This poster will help to publicize the plight of the tapir and generate more support for its conservation in local communities in Central America. Unfortunately, the printing method for this newsletter cannot do justice to the poster. It is in beautiful color on heavy paper, measures 24 x 36 inches, and can be purchased for zoo gift shops. To find out more and see how you can help, please contact:

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Fax: (407) 9390-6386  
[rbarongi@aol.com](mailto:rbarongi@aol.com)



*Mother and baby Baird's tapir deliver a conservation message on this poster produced by Rick Barongi and Lewis Greene of Disney's Animal Kingdom and The Wildlife Conservation Society respectively.*

## Omnivorous tendencies?

We thought we would add this to the ongoing discussion about whether or not tapirs are strictly vegetarian. The following letter showed up in the e-mailbox one day in December, 1998.

Dear Tapirback people,

I found your site on the web and would like to add a little tapir knowledge. I grew up in Peru, near Pucallpa, and occasionally visited tribes in more remote locations. On one such visit when I was 12, there was a pet tapir in the village. I believe it was probably about half-grown. It was about waist-high on my mom, who is 5'2", and had lost its stripes.

Anyway... the indians found a boa in the small clinic they had there. Once the boa

was out of the clinic it was killed, chopped into pieces for the chickens, and tossed under the building. (The clinic, like many Amazonian homes, was on stilts.) Several minutes later, while I was playing with some of the boys, one of them looked up and said, "The tapir is eating the snake!" He surely was! He had wandered under the clinic and was eating the pieces of boa that had been left for the chickens!

Sincerely,  
Sam Gesch

## Next issue: Project Location Map

Please help us create a visual guide to tapir projects around the world. Send us your location, and we'll mark it on a map to be updated and printed each issue.

While we're soliciting your help, let us invite you to send in citations for new tapir literature - either an article you've written or something you come across. Also, please note countries which do not have reports in this issue. The editors will be grateful for your help in making *Tapir Conservation* as complete a guide to worldwide tapir projects as possible.

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## FROM THE FIELD

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All countries from which we have reports are listed. The arrangement is generally north-to-south beginning with the Americas and continuing to Asia. Please help by sending in reports from the country in which you work. Population estimates have been omitted this issue due to lack of accurate information, as much more research is needed. Reports are welcomed by the editors.

### IUCN Categories:

Mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*):  
Endangered (EN)

Malayan tapir (*Tapirus indicus*):  
Vulnerable (VU)

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*):  
Vulnerable (VU)

Lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*):  
Lower Risk (LR) - near threatened

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## Central America

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### México

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*)

Eduardo Naranjo is finishing coursework for his Ph.D. at the University of Florida at Gainesville and returning to México to concentrate on his dissertation research. For this project, he will capture and radio-collar six tapirs in the Lacandon forest of Chiapas. Funding for the first six tapirs has been

obtained, and additional funding is being sought to extend the number of tapirs collared. Peccaries will also be radio-collared for study.

Eduardo J. Naranjo  
[enaranjo@slc.ecosur.mx](mailto:enaranjo@slc.ecosur.mx)

### Guatemala

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*)

Sharon Matola reports having seen tapir tracks in the Sierra de Las Minas, near Motagua Valley at an elevation of over 3000 meters. There has been some discussion on Tapir Talk recently about high elevation sightings of Baird's tapir sign.

Sharon Matola  
[BelizeZoo@btl.net](mailto:BelizeZoo@btl.net)

### Belize

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*)

#### The Chalillo Scheme

The most robust populations of Baird's tapir found in Belize are under determined threat by the proposed development of a dry season storage dam. The flooding of the area proposed would eradicate 90% of the riparian vegetation found there, and

this is the very type of habitat which provides ample food sources for herbivores. José Fragoso found through his fieldwork in Belize in the 1980s that this riparian or floodplain vegetation was the preferred food for tapirs. This has been confirmed from later fieldwork. Feces collected and analysed were found to contain remains of herbaceous floodplain vegetation only. These findings reinforce the important role that floodplain habitat plays for the preservation of this endangered species in the central Maya Mountains. Unfortunately, the area slated for the proposed dam is not replicated in other area of Belize. It appears to be the single most important habitat for wildlife populations in the country.

#### Proposal developed

**Proposal for Vegetation Study in Threatened Central American Tapir, *Tapirus bairdii*, habitat in Belize, Central America**

In this region of the central Maya Mountains of Belize, a healthy population of *T. bairdii* is sustained within two remote Protected Areas, Chiquibul National Park and Chiquibul Forest Reserve, both having ample food sources for herbivores. Robust vegetation profile is due to the dynamics of the river network, experiencing frequent and aggressive floods during the rainy season, six



months each year. As a result of these floods, the riparian vegetation flourishes and is preferred food for herbivores, containing no toxins, growing fast and prolific on the sun-drenched river edges.

However, at this time, this unique ecosystem is under threat from a proposed hydro project. Should the storage dam and reservoir be developed, this riparian zone, so necessary for sustaining the remaining populations of *T. bairdii*, would be inundated.

It has been noted, after eight years of field investigations in this area, that this specific type of vegetation is not found in similar growth profiles along other Belize river systems. One species, known to be a food plant for *T. bairdii*, collected in 1995 and subsequently sent to botanists at Missouri Botanical Gardens, was discovered to be a new species record for the country, *Tripsacum andersonii*.

It is hoped that by collecting samples of the vegetation and having them classified by working with a botanist at Selby Botanical Gardens, Florida, a strong argument could be put forth noting that the unique vegetation profile of this river system defines the base of rich biodiversity found there, and therefore should remain protected and not altered.

Do note that implementing the above-mentioned dam scheme has not been fully accepted or approved by the Government of Belize (GOB). Further data from this area, suggesting that it is unique within the country's environmental profile, could contribute to seeing this region preserved into the next millennium.

**Sharon Matola**  
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Tropical Education Center  
Chair, Tapir Specialist Group  
BelizeZoo@btll.net

## Tapir attacks canoe

*Edited from Tapir Talk*  
Thursday, 20 May 1999

I just wanted to let the Tapir Talk crowd know that at our study site for

scarlet macaw, my field team had an older adult male tapir attack the canoe. The actual bite mark is on the bow! So sorry I missed it. I will report more as I learn about it. Andy, a National Geographic photographer, captured it on video.

**Sharon Matola**  
BelizeZoo@btll.net

## Costa Rica

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*)

### Charles and Sonia Foerster report: March 1999

A complete report of the Foersters' March, 1999, trip to Corcovado National Park, written by Sonia Foerster, DVM, can be found on the Tapir Gallery web site at <http://www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/bairds/foerster/99trip1.htm>

Proyecto Danta, the Baird's Tapir Project, began in 1994 as Charles Foerster's Masters thesis project. The plan was to capture and radiocollar five tapirs, learning what he could about their basic ecology. After eighteen months it seemed a waste to remove the collars, so additional funding was procured and the project expanded. Corcovado National Park contains the largest remaining tract of lowland rainforest in central America, and is estimated to hold approximately 300 Baird's tapirs.

Objectives for the March trip were to change the collars on seven animals before their batteries were spent, collar two offspring of previously-collared females, train two new field assistants, conduct ultrasound tests on immobilized females, obtain more detailed monitoring data on the anesthetic protocol used previously, collect fecal samples for possible pregnancy determination assay, and to work with a filming company commissioned by National Geographic.

Charles preceded the rest of the team by three weeks, spending that time to monitor tapir movements and formulate capture plans, and to train the two new assistants, Khanaki Caballero and Ricardo Rodriguez, both of Costa Rica. On 3 March, the entire team assembled in Corcovado National Park.

The transrectal ultrasound was practiced first on a male, Flash, who has been part of the project since 1995. The team was able to identify some of Flash's accessory sex glands in the process. They also collected more detailed anesthetic monitoring data than in previous years, and took the first of several sets of dental impressions made on the trip. These will be used to attempt to identify the ages of the animals and to contribute data on tooth eruption and wear. The Foersters are requesting any information that can be provided on correlating tapir dentition and age - particularly the ages at which various molars and premolars erupt.

One tapir was found to be pregnant. An ultrasound was performed on Big Mama, who has also been part of the project since 1995, and who has probably produced three offspring while collared. By her test, she was judged to be 25-30 days pregnant. An 8 mm embryo was seen with a visible heartbeat. Big Mama was most likely impregnated when she went into heat directly after giving birth to her current calf, named Dedo. The young calf was present at the anesthesia and provided opportunity for further observation of mother-calf interactions. The ultrasonographer for the trip was Dr. Robin Radcliffe of Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, assisted by Dr. Rolfe Radcliffe, veterinary equine surgeon of the University of Minnesota.

Nine tapirs were immobilized, several collars were changed, and two offspring of collared females were old enough to receive collars. In addition to ultrasound and dental impressions, the usual round of samples were taken: blood, feces, skin, hair and ticks.

Sonia reports very positively on working with the British film team,

Imago Films, commissioned by National Geographic to film an environmental series on a number of different species for television. Excellent footage was obtained of tapirs and numerous other animals, and a flyover provided evidence of how the land dries and deteriorates when forest is allowed to be cleared (contrasting the park with the area just outside). Besides shooting in Corcovado, the team also filmed at La Marina Zoo just north of San Jose. Here they were able to get close-ups of tapirs in a semi-natural environment that included a large pool.

Baird's tapir posters donated by Rick Barongi were distributed by the Foerstlers along with a conservation message in Spanish. The Foerstlers' new field assistants, Khanaki Caballero and Ricardo Rodriguez are Guaymí Indians who live on a reservation on the Panamanian border. Khanaki has expressed a great interest in educating the public about tapirs. He says with dismay that the children on the reservation do not know what tapirs are. He is interested in writing a children's book on the subject, and both Rolfe Radcliffe and Sonia Foerster have committed to helping with this. Funds are being sought.

Objectives for the continuation of the Baird's Tapir Project include developing a way to attach transmitters to young tapirs (one month old), returning in June to loosen the collars of the two juveniles if needed, continuing to work with a geneticist on DNA analysis, processing bloodwork and other samples, attempting fecal steroid assay for pregnancy determination, and creating and publishing a children's book on tapirs in Spanish. The next group of animals that will need collar changes will be immobilized in spring of 2000.

The Foerstlers report some disturbing observations involving ecotourism. This can be seen in the greatly increased size of the town of Puerto Jimenez, the largest town near the research site. At the site itself, changes were noted. Sonia reports: "The Sirena Station . . . now has solar panels providing electricity most of the day. They also finished the

construction of the new buildings meant to accommodate more tourists, researchers and school groups. . . . The new accommodations are very comfortable; however, it is contradictory to see so much money go into new buildings when a recent budget cut left them with only one park guard, a cook and two volunteers to care for the entire station. To me this translates to the fact that the park guards are so busy catering to the needs of tourists, making sure bathrooms are clean and meals are provided, that they cannot possibly patrol the surrounding areas."

**Charles and Sonia Foerster**  
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### Mathias Tobler studies Baird's tapir in montane cloud forests

Swiss student, Mathias Tobler, is in Costa Rica pursuing a study of Baird's tapir. In the next few months he hopes to learn more about the habitat use of *T. bairdii* in montane cloudforests at elevations between 2600 and 3200 m. From the field he took part in a discussion on Tapir Talk, requesting information to further his study. He also replied to a question posed on Tapir Talk regarding elevations at which Baird's tapir has been found. Tobler has personally encountered tracks and feces up to an elevation of 3300 m. in the Mount Chiripó area. "Some of the local people in Villa Mills told me that they have seen tracks and feces at higher elevations in the paramo." Naranjo and Vaughan encountered tracks at 3620m.

Contact:  
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## Panama

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*)

See report under "From Captivity."

## South America

## Colombia

Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*)  
Lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*)  
Mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*)

### Footprint investigation delayed

An expedition into the Farallones has been postponed until July or August due to the exceptionally heavy rains. Emilio Constantino reports that La Niña has produced the wettest season in several decades. In a joint project with the Tapir Preservation Fund, Emilio will lead an expedition into the Farallones to make casts of tapir footprints, hoping that they might be identified by a comparison with the prints of animals whose species is known.

This project also hopes to establish a footprint bank with the goal of helping researchers identify prints in areas where more than one tapir species may exist or where it is not known which species inhabits the area. We hope that differences observed in the feet of tapirs will be observable as noticeable differences in the tracks.

**Emilio Constantino**  
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**Sheryl Todd**  
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## Brasil

Lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*)

### Tapirs studied in forest fragments

While Patrícia Medici returns to the University for a year to obtain her Masters degree, her study continues in the Pontal do Paranapanema region of western Brazil under the guidance of Laury Cullen. Returning as often as possible to take part in the work, Patrícia plans to remove the collar from "Joana," the first tapir to be captured. The collar will have been in place for two years in June, 1999. While the batteries can last up to three years, Patrícia does not want to risk having tapirs in the field with collars whose batteries have gone dead. In addition, she has collected considerable data over the two years. Tapirs have been tracked going into and out of Moro do Diabo State Park, using the forest fragments outside the park as "stepping stones."

Additional tapirs will remain in the study until their two years are up. At the beginning of May, "Docinho," another female, was seen with a young calf. When caught, Docinho was considered to be the youngest of the collared animals.

Contact:

**Patrícia Medici**

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Belo Horizonte

Minas Gerais, CEP: 31010-000

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epmedici@uol.com.br

## Ecuador

Mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*)

Lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*)

### Craig C. Downer reports

The translocation project in northern Ecuador is still in progress, and a report will be made when it is completed. I am preparing to purchase

fencing materials partially with funds from TPF's Club Tapir.

Additional activities during recent weeks have included giving presentations both in Moran and La Bonita (three total here). The La Bonita area is particularly important for the survival of the mountain tapir and has some beautiful forests. I am in touch with a group of young people here who want to create a reserve and to conduct ecotourism. This activity has the potential to gain strongholds for the tapirs. However, funding is necessary to secure this area.

At the end of February, I gave two presentations in Quito and was invited to give one at the South American Explorers Club. Talk have also been given in Sucumbios, Monte Olivo, and Carchi, where I also had a chance to show film footage of the tapirs. In these areas there was no knowledge that it was illegal to kill the mountain tapirs, and recent kills were reported. We even met with the hunters, telling them it was against the law to hunt this seriously endangered species.

The political situation has been quite tense with the currency devaluating and three political assassinations. There is worry about guerrilla infiltration from the Colombian side and three North Americans were kidnapped by FARC just over the border in Colombia. They were trying to defend the rights of the U'we Indians.

I have made a nationwide radio address on the mountain tapir on Radio Colon recently and am scheduled to give a major talk in Quito in mid May, which is now being publicized. A national TV station also is intending to cover the translocation operation.

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## Núñez continues education programs

Ruben Núñez reports that in March and April he initiated a number of conservation education conferences in schools, mostly outside of towns on the borders of Sangay and Llanganates National Parks. He has also spoken in the communities of Chin Chin, La Merced, El Topo, El Placer, Rio Verde, Machay, Rio Negro, Bilbao, Juive Grande, Juive Chico, Puela, and others. Pamphlets about mountain tapirs are distributed at the talks. Work continues to help community members become aware of the value of maintaining wildlife and habitat while sustaining themselves in these poverty-stricken areas.

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## Peru

Lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*)

Mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*)

### Tapirus pinchaque to be studied

Jessica Amanzo Alcantara, of the Museo de Historia Natural in Lima, is undertaking a study to determine how many Andean tapirs might remain in the north of Peru. The actual situation is unknown, and estimates are outdated. Her study takes place in the departments of Piura, Cajamarca and La Libertad, the only places this species could exist in Peru. The National Sanctuary of Tabaconas-Namballe, located in the Dept. of Cajamarca, maintains the objective of conservation and protection of this species, which is under enormous threat of extinction. However, before any work can be done, it is necessary to make a diagnostic study of the tapir situation.



The objectives of this study are:

- To determine the status of the Andean tapir population in the Sanctuary and in the surrounding areas,
- To determine habitat availability and quality,
- To determine threats to this species.

To reach these objectives the following materials and methods will be used:

- Tracks: morphometric measurements, to estimate the population size.
- Habitat analysis, to learn preferences of habitat features.
- Aerial photographs to determine habitat availability
- Interview local people.

The present study will gather information about the status of this species past and present, and will develop an environmental education program for the region's inhabitants.

The project is partially funded by INRENA (National Institute of Natural Resources, Peru). The first period of the project begins in May 1999.

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## Southeast Asia

### Thailand

Malayan tapir (*Tapirus indicus*)

#### Camera-trapping reveals the status of Malayan tapirs in southern Thailand rainforest remnants

by Tony Lynam

Despite a plethora of studies of tapirs in Latin America, there is virtually no published information on the current status of Malayan tapirs (*Tapirus indicus*) in Southeast Asia. Existing databases provide only basic information on the known or expected occurrence of tapirs in protected areas, but not of distributions within these areas (e.g. MASS wildlife database for Thailand housed at Mahidol University). Interview surveys of forest guards and local people can point to specific areas where tapirs are present in remnant habitats. However, to gain detailed information on tapir abundance and habitat use, and threats to their survival, other methods are required.

Camera-trapping has offered one timely solution to this problem. Camera-traps have been used for recording wildlife since the early 1900's (Shiras 1906) and were actually used to document tapirs on Barro Colorado Island in the 1920's (Chapman 1927). In their most advanced form, wildlife moving on forest trails take their own flash photographs when they trigger infrared beams linked to automatic cameras (Wilson et al. 1996). The camera-traps are a camera and infrared device housed in a weatherproof housing. The units are secured to trees with bicycle locks, thus ensuring against loss or damage by over-curious humans. Despite the availability of this technology for over 10 years, only

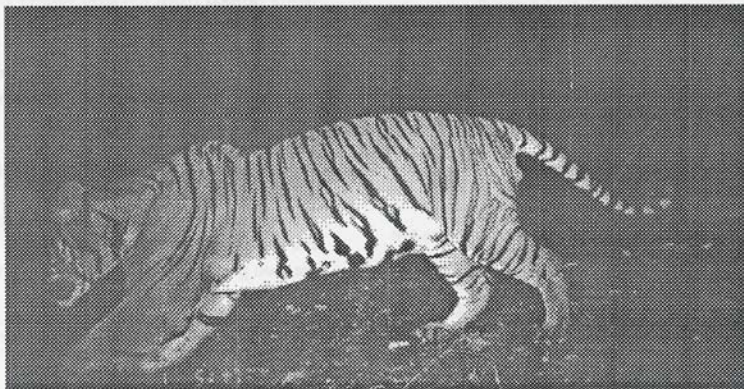
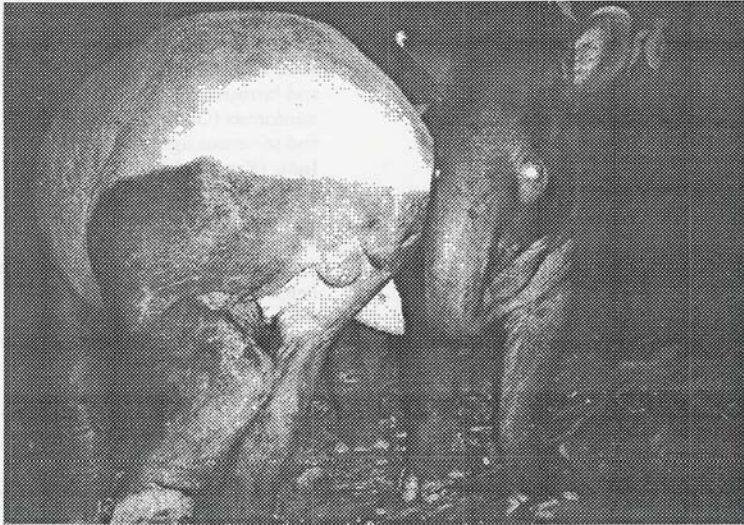
recently have camera-traps been used to systematically census wildlife populations. In the 1990's camera-traps were used to monitor levels of wildlife and human traffic in Sumatran rainforests (Griffiths and Schaik 1993) and to census tiger populations in India (Karanth 1998).

In Thailand, tapirs are one of fifteen species considered endangered by wildlife law (Royal Forest Department, 1992). Two recent ongoing studies are helping to rectify the paucity of information on tapirs in the country. In 1997, the Wildlife Conservation Society and Thailand's Royal Forestry Department embarked on an ambitious field program aimed at gaining information on large mammals in rainforest fragments via camera-trapping. Surveys of forests along the Thai-Malaysia border revealed that tapirs ranged from lowland valleys less than 200m ASL to high mountain peaks above 1,400m ASL. Tapirs occurred in forests recently disturbed by logging as well as primary unlogged rainforest. Tapirs coexist in the area with tiger, elephant, gaur and indigenous tribal people known locally as the Sakai or Jahai people.

Balahala is the local name given to the forests in the survey area. There are two parts to this forest; Hala is an extensive forest area of over 1,100 square kilometres which is contiguous with over 3,000 square kilometres of habitat in northern Malaysia. The second area, called Bala, is a 160 square kilometre fragment which is tenuously connected to the larger area via a fringe of vegetation on the border. Strangely enough tapirs appear to be at least as common in the Bala forest as they are in the larger Hala forest. At Bala, camera-traps recorded tapirs moving as pairs or single individuals. In one sequence of 11 photographs, a mother and young tapir lay down in front of the camera as the young suckled milk from its mother.

Camera-trap photographs of tapirs in the smaller Bala forest show animals with deep scarring, apparently not from hunting by humans but instead from attacks by tigers. Some individuals can even be identified in a series of photographs by their scarring





Malayan tapirs (*Tapirus indicus*) top, and tigers are caught by the camera in Thailand. Both of the above photos were supplied by Tony Lynam, Associate Conservation Ecologist with Wildlife Conservation Society, New York.

patterns. How do tapirs use the available habitat at Bala and how might they avoid predators and human disturbance? In a follow-up to the camera-trapping study, Mr Suwat Kaewsirisuk, Chief of the Royal Forest Department's Halabala Wildlife Sanctuary (the area was gazetted before officials realized they had got the name backwards!) is looking at how tapirs utilize different habitat types, including forest edges at roads and areas cleared for agricultural around the sanctuary. Tapirs tend not to follow predictable routes of travel so

instead of using camera-traps along established trails to monitor tapirs, transects are established away from forest edges, and tapir sign (tracks and dung) is recorded along the transects. The encounter rate of sign along the transects provides information on habitat use, and suggests which areas tapirs might be avoiding.

Both simple and technologically advanced methods of survey can each provide different but complementary information on the status and distribution of tapirs in habitat remnants across their range. The

ongoing studies of tapirs in southern Thailand described here are one attempt at filling in the gaps in information. Clearly there is a need for longer-term ecological studies of this endangered species in the region.

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## Indonesia

Malayan tapir (*Tapirus indicus*)

### Photo-trapping in Sumatra

The photo (next page) shows one of our phototrap pictures of a wild Malayan tapir taken in the forests of Sumatra. I am currently sorting through all the tapir images we have trying to identify individuals. This is usually impossible to do with any great accuracy because the only diagnostics are scars or wounds. These eventually heal or things are confused by new wounds. One useful diagnostic is damage to the ear. This seems a common injury, but whether torn by



thorns or rattan or by aggression between rival tapir we have no idea.

This photo shows an individual with both ear damage and one blind eye. It's unfortunate for the tapir but useful for me when it comes to identifying him in later photographs. This particular animal was living mostly in buffer forest comprising stands of old rubber trees and regrowth. At the time this picture was taken he had a mate with an almost-adult calf.

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*Malayan tapir (Tapirus indicus) on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. This photo was taken by a camera-trap set by Jeremy Holden of Fauna and Flora International. Scars on tapirs help to identify individuals.*

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## FROM CAPTIVITY

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### **Panama: A history of tapirs in captivity (1990-1999)**

*by Rick Barongi*

No other country outside of the U.S. has more Baird's tapirs in captivity than the Republic of Panama. Presently there are 15 (eight males and seven females). More encouraging is that six of these animals were born in captivity. On a global perspective almost one quarter (23%) of all the Baird's tapirs in captivity reside in Panama.

When I first visited Panama in 1990 there were only eight tapirs in captivity and no managed breeding program.

#### **Background**

The AZA Tapir TAG (Taxon Advisory Group) first got involved with tapirs in Panama in 1990. It began with a request for aid to five starving tapirs at the private estate of the recently deposed General Noriega. Noriega had a private zoo on the grounds of his ranch (called La Escondida) just outside of David in Northern Panama. When he was removed from the country in December 1989 the animals became "victims of war." With no way to pay the workers, the animals starved or subsisted on the sporadic charity of local neighbors.

In October, 1990, I visited La Escondida and provided temporary aid in the form of food and money. My trip was paid for by the San Diego Zoo. Most of the animals at Noriega's zoo had already died or were stolen or escaped, but the five tapirs were still there. One of the tapirs was just five months old, being born at La Escondida. He was able to survive by

squeezing through the gate of his pen and eating fallen fruits and leaves from a near by orchard. He would return to his mother, who by this time was too malnourished to provide adequate milk.

In order to attract more attention and assistance for these animals they were given individual names. The oldest male was named Noriega, despite having a far gentler disposition than his namesake. The others males were named Bravo and Santana after some American special forces units. The mother and calf were named Monica and San Diego. The local community suggested San Diego in honor of the help provided by the zoo. A complete story of the Noriega tapirs can be found in the August 1992 issue of the San Diego Zoo magazine, *Zoonooz*.

#### **Progress**

Since 1990, members of the AZA Tapir TAG have managed to visit Panama at



least once a year. In 1992 we took a team of tapir experts and veterinarians to Panama to perform immobilizations and physicals on all the tapirs. We also implanted transponders (identification micro chips) under their skin. In 1993, the Noriega tapirs were moved to a private zoo (El Nispero) in El Valle, two hours north of Panama City. In 1994 we conducted a one week conservation workshop for tapirs and other wildlife in Panama. Over 20 biologists and conservationists from Panama participated. The result was a comprehensive PHVA (Populations Habitat Viability Analysis) document in Spanish. At that time, Panama was the only range country that had an official published plan for the future conservation of the Baird's tapir in the wild and in captivity.

Presently, there are three facilities in Panama that hold and breed tapirs, two public zoos and one private facility. One of these zoos is the Summit Zoo just outside of Panama City in the Canal Zone. This is a beautifully landscaped zoo that is also a botanical garden. It is about 60 acres, but connects to Soberania National Park. They have had three healthy tapir calves born at the Summit but are prevented from breeding more due to lack of exhibit space. The next project is a new tapir exhibit and breeding complex. The facility has been designed and the location selected. Construction will begin when sufficient funds have been acquired.

### Challenges for the future

While there have been many improvements for the captive tapirs in Panama, there still remain some long-term challenges. The three facilities don't always agree on exchanging animals, so the best pairings are not always possible. More significant is the reluctance by Panamanian officials to export captive-born tapirs to other recognized breeding programs. The Baird's tapir is an endangered species and on Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species). There is some confusion as to the different designations for a wild caught tapir

and one born in captivity. Captive-born animals are much easier to export, as their removal is not detrimental to the wild population.

A bigger problem is, how do you reimburse a zoo that sends their tapir to another country without it looking like a commercial transaction? This problem has been successfully dealt with in other species such as the black rhinos and white rhinos of South Africa. In these cases, the animals are exchanged with the agreement that a certain sum of money is then donated to the owner zoo or conservation organization, with the expressed written consent that all the funds are used for the *in situ* conservation of the species. There is no dealer or middleman involved, and all of the revenue goes to help the species. The species essentially generates its own revenue through captive breeding and export of surplus animals.

Until we can find a way to convince the Panamanian authorities to allow a few captive tapirs out of the country, there will be no incentive for facilities in Panama to keep breeding. The Summit Zoo has already separated all of its breeding pairs to prevent more births.

Reintroduction programs could provide an outlet, but Panama is a long way from developing a secure place for reintroductions. So, we have a Catch-22 problem of not being able to export captive-born tapirs from Panama until we can provide funds for conservation programs in Panama. These funds, of course, would be much easier to secure if they were in exchange for captive-born tapirs from overcrowded zoos in Panama.

### Next steps

Panamanian authorities are working with us to resolve this problem. ANAM (National Environmental Authority of Panama) has drafted a proposal that would provide for a special agreement with the AZA Tapir TAG to assist in the development of a comprehensive conservation, education, training and captive reproduction project. The challenge will be to raise funds for this proposal

without using surplus captive animals as ambassadors to generate revenue for the species.

Our long-term relationship and commitment to Panama, its people and wildlife, should help us to resolve this dilemma. There is little time left for debate, as time is running out for one of the most endangered mammals in Central America.

### What you can do

Despite being the largest land mammal in the Neotropics, tapirs are still one of the least known large mammals in the world. A first step is to make people aware of tapirs, and their highly endangered status. The most effective communication mechanism to date is the tapir web site created by Sheryl Todd at

<http://www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/>.

There is also an IUCN/SSC Tapir Action Plan for global conservation and numerous articles on tapirs in zoos and in the wild. The Tapir TAG compiled a tapir bibliography with over 200 references on tapirs. In recent years this has been expanded to over 500 references and is available on the Tapir Gallery web site.

Tapirs are fascinating creatures and their babies are as cute as any newborn in the animal world. It would be a great tragedy of humanity if we let this species disappear forever. This can be prevented by supporting local and international programs and joining the Tapir Preservation Fund's Club Tapir program (also found on the web site). Another way to support tapirs is to buy a Baird's tapir poster (article on page 4). This beautiful painting of a mother and calf in a forest stream was donated by a very talented Disney Imagineer. All the funds for the posters go into a Tapir TAG account and will be used to support tapir conservation and education in Central America. For tapir poster information contact Rick Barongi (see info at the end of this report).

*This report and all the assistance given to Panama would not have been possible without the assistance of the following zoos and conservation organizations: San Diego Zoo, WCS/Prospect Park Zoo, Disney's*



Animal Kingdom, Audubon Zoo, Lincoln Park Zoo, Miami Metrozoo, Guatemala City Zoo, Belize Zoo, PJ Architects, and CBSG (Conservation Breeding Specialist Group).

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## Orphaned tapir

Both Rick Barongi and the Foerstes have informed us that a young male *T. bairdii* is being hand-reared in the office of Simon Bolivar Zoo in San Jose, Costa Rica. At last report, "Toto" (a local Indian name meaning "soft,") was doing very well, and was charming staff and visitors alike. Rick noted that the infant tapir looked very healthy and was eating well. Toto's mother was shot by a hunter in a national park, and the baby was brought to the zoo after being confiscated. Toto arrived at the zoo at the end of April, 1999, at the age of 5-6 weeks.

## The Tapirs of La Marina

by Rick Barongi

There is a small zoo in northern Costa Rica that is home to the largest group of Baird's tapirs in the world. I have visited the La Marina Zoo three times in the past 18 months and am always amazed at what they have accomplished for one of the most endangered mammals in Central America.

The La Marina Zoo is just outside the city of San Carlos, about two hours' drive from the capital, San José.

The zoo presently has eight tapirs (four males and four females). Of

these eight animals, five have been born there since 1996. They all have names and are personal pets of the owner, Doña Elba. Every tapir is very gentle and will roll over on their sides as soon as you start to scratch their flanks or belly.

While all the tapirs at La Marina receive excellent care, La Marina is a private zoo that is always in need of funds to improve its exhibits. With their incredible breeding success, they will need more space for all of the tapirs. A donation to La Marina will allow them to keep breeding tapirs so that these animals can be used to diversify the captive gene pool and maybe one day participate in a reintroduction project.

## Studbook news

### *Tapirus bairdii*

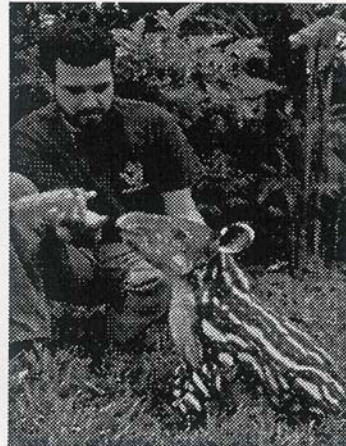
The Baird's Tapir International Studbook has moved from the Los Angeles Zoo to the Virginia Zoological Park, Norfolk, Virginia, where Joe Roman is beginning to work on updates. The newly-approved studbook keeper replaces Mike Crotty, who passed away in 1997.

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### *Tapirus terrestris*

Don Goff at Beardsley Zoo has begun putting together a regional studbook for the lowland tapir in North America. This will be a huge project, as the book is at least five years out of date.

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"Toto," the baby Baird's tapir confiscated from a hunter, is bottle-fed at Simon Bolivar Zoo in Costa Rica. Photo by Rick Barongi.

## TAG news

The AZA Tapir TAG is composed of a Steering Committee of nine members, all from AZA accredited institutions. The members, who have just been elected, are: Rick Barongi, Disney's Animal Kingdom (Chair); Lewis Greene, Wildlife Conservation Society (Vice Chair); John Carnio, Metro Toronto Zoo; Mike Dee, Los Angeles Zoo; Elizabeth Frank, Milwaukee Zoo; Carmi Penny, San Diego Zoo; Alan Shoemaker, Riverbanks Zoo; Alan Sironen, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo; and Diana Weinhardt, Houston Zoo. Dr. Donald Janssen, San Diego Zoo, is the Veterinary Advisor. Additional advisors are Sharon Matola, Belize Zoo; Bruce Read, Disney's Animal Kingdom; and Sheryl Todd, Tapir Preservation Fund.

Sharon Matola and Sheryl Todd, both officers in the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group, have been asked to help define the role of the TAG in international conservation programs.

Sian Waters has resumed the position of Chair of the Tapir TAG in Europe. She is now Curator of Mammals at the Rome Zoo. Her e-mail is: Bioparco@protonet.it

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1997-1999 Triennium

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