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Conservation

The second group of peccaries released in Rincón del Socorro

In our previous newsletter, we mentioned that six collared peccaries had been released in the Rincón del Socorro Reserve, next to Carlos Pellegrini. These animals were made up of four females and one dominant male, and another male living away from them. At the beginning of December, the good news was the birth of two young from one of the released females. It brought great joy to us when they were born and we saw them grow with their mother. Unfortunately, at the end of that month, we stopped seeing them and we assumed that they had died. This is common in new mothers, particularly if it is their first year in a new region. Since then, we have not seen any new young in this group. We are paying attention to see if new births take place.

The best news in the last months has been the release of seven other animals (four females and three males) from Estación de Fauna Autóctona in Salta. These animals successfully ended their quarantine at the facilities created for these purposes in San Cayetano. Then, they were kept for around one month in a pen built in El Socorro. Now, a critical phase begins where they will have to learn to eat by themselves in the woodland and savannas of the region and it must be observed how they relate with the other existing group, and among themselves. We hope that in the next bulletin we may give news about new births, and that the reintroduced population may definitely consolidate.

Tupa (1st group) and Marge (2nd group) getting to know each other.
Strengthening the Pampa deer in Rincón del Socorro

In our previous bulletin, we made reference to the efforts devoted to introduce a new population of Pampa deer in Socorro’s grassland. One of the difficulties encountered in the process is that the released deer may settle inside this private reserve, without hunting or dog threats, to improve survival. We have already talked about Mane, a female released who reached an area of small ranches in Uguai, and was found dead some days ago. When we started to note that another female called Juanita began undertaking the same journeys to explore insecure areas, we decided to recapture her and take her back into the pen. For the purposes of creating a consolidated group to join this female, we decided to translocate three deer (two females and one male) from the population reintroduced in San Alonso into this pen. Consequently, we currently have four animals waiting to be released in the area of Socorro in the next days.

At the same time, there is a male who has been able to settle and remain in the strict conservation area, together with another female who does not wear a collar and we see occasionally. One of our biggest headaches is caused by Sofía, one of the females brought from the forests of Aguará Cua on the Aguapey River last year. This female has not settled in the protected area with the other deer and tends to go on long journeys across the surroundings of Uguai and Estancia Cerro Verde. We are all extremely concerned by the prospect of an accident in those areas, with many neighbors and plenty of dogs. We hope that once the new group of deer is released, they will stay close to the male and female already settled and remain in the area.

As we have learnt up to now from these projects, the settlement and reproduction of the first animals is a critical and difficult phase during the first years. Once some animals stay in the protected area and begin to reproduce, the reintroduced population can grow fast. This was the case of the deer reintroduced in San Alfonso, showing very high calving and survival rates. This population can live by itself without the need for our intensive management or control.
The first male jaguar arrives at the breeding center of Iberá with the presence of local, national and international authorities

On February 23, the Experimental Jaguar Breeding Center (Centro Experimental de Cria de Yaguaretés -CECY in Spanish) received the first jaguar male. This male is called Nahuel, is 12 years old and was born in a zoo in Uruguay, where he was purchased by the owners of the zoo in Bubalcó, Río Negro. In order that Nahuel may have his new home in Iberá, many actions and steps were taken. First, we had to prove that Nahuel was not directly related to Tobuna, the female currently held at CECY and, at the same time, we had to verify that both animals were part of the pedigree of Argentine jaguars. This implied a genetic analysis coordinated by Doctor Patricia Mirol from the CONICET to study samples of dozens of Argentine jaguars, with the support of National Wildlife Authorities (Dirección de Fauna Silvestre de la Nación), provincial governments, researchers, experts and CLT. Once it was concluded that Nahuel was a genetically proper male for Tobuna, the zoos of Bubalcó and Buenos Aires supported the project and donated the male.

Before travelling to Iberá, Nahuel was in quarantine at the facilities built for such purposes in the Provincial Park San Cayetano. During the quarantine period, we verified that the animal was in good health, and he was treated for a teeth infection that might cause problems in the long term. After taking these steps, the male traveled from San Cayetano to San Alonso Island, going through San Miguel community, on February 23. The release of the animal in the area of 1200 m2, where he will live from now on, next to the area where the female Tobuna lives, was conducted in the presence of a reduced group of people, including the National Environmental Minister, Sergio Bergman, and the Provincial Senator Sergio Flinta. We felt intense emotion when the male came out of the transportation box and stepped onto Ibera’s land for the first time.

At the following day, a public event was organized to which the representatives of many national and provincial authorities were invited, including those already mentioned and the Minister of Tourism of Corrientes, Inés Presman, the directors of Natural Parks and Reserves and Resources of the province and the Vice-President of the National Parks Administration.
Attendees also included provincial park rangers, of Mburucuyá and El Impenetrable national parks, the Mayor of Concepción de Yaguareté Corá, the representative of the Environmental Department of Paraguay, the EBY and the wildlife refuge Atinguy (who are interested in donating the next animal to the CECY), the parish priests of Concepción and San Miguel, a representative of the company Techint, which donated more than one thousand iron pipes used to build the CECY, and the directors of the zoos of Bubalcó and Buenos Aires, who facilitated Nahuel’s arrival in Corrientes.

All of them visited the male jaguar in Corrientes, who was calm in his new environment, with his future “girlfriend” next to him. Once at the farm house in Estancia San Alonso, words of optimism were pronounced due to the return of wildlife to Iberá and the resulting local development. There was a moment of profound emotion when the inspiring role of Douglas Tompkins, who started the whole process, was remembered. The event concluded emotively when the singer Juan Carlos Jensen recited his poem “The Queen” in Tobuna’s honor.

We have to see now if there is “chemistry” between Tobuna and Nahuel and they can form the first birth colony of these beautiful felines marked with spots in the Iberá. In the meantime, conversations are already being held with the Paraguayan authorities to bring another animal to the CECY, and a fourth male is being looked for, hopefully coming from a prestigious jaguar breeding farm in Brazil.
A new training phase begins for red macaws, who will be released in Iberá

At present, there are five red macaws in the big acclimatization cage located in Monte Rey woodland, to the South of Ituzaingó. After the release in last October, we noted that animals scattered more than expected and that it was difficult for them to find refuge and food. Therefore, we decided to extend the acclimatization phase inside the cage to achieve two objectives: that they may get used to eating local fruits almost exclusively, so that they do not depend on fruits provided; and that they may improve their flying, as they had been held captive all their lives.

In this sense, in the last days, we were assisted by Fabián Gabelli, a biologist vastly experienced in animal behavior and in wildlife training. He will apply his expertise to help us create a training system and improve the design of our feeding troughs and facilities in order that macaws may develop the necessary musculature to fly several kilometers, enabling animals to feed themselves in Iberá’s jungle. Thanks to these training techniques, we expect that in mid-year a new release of macaws may be carried out, and that these macaws may be fully prepared to enjoy freedom.

Macaws having as a lunch the “Sangre de Drago” fruit, a wild fruit found in Corrientes woodland.
Corrientes becomes Corrientes again (Corrientes Vuelve a Ser Corrientes)

The Province of Corrientes is certainly one of the most traditionalist areas in Argentina. Those born in Corrientes and, particularly, in the interior of the province, have kept traditions alive. Pride in their origin and land is expressed at typical festivities celebrated in towns, the use of the Guarani tongue, the clothes of Corrientes “menchos” and the “chamamé” playing on the radio and in celebrations in every corner of the province.

However, maybe due to the exodus of the rural population to the cities, the replacement of livestock land by forests or the modern globalization, many of these customs are disappearing and losing value, which also affects the incredibly beautiful and diverse nature of the Province.

Fortunately, given the creation of large protected areas such as Iberá Natural Reserve and Mburucuyá National Park, added to advanced projects for the reintroduction of species carried out by the NGO Conservation Land Trust, Corrientes flora and wildlife are being recovered.

“Corrientes becomes Corrientes again” is a campaign that has been created as an initiative to show the result of many years in which efforts have been devoted to recover natural and cultural resources. It is important that Corrientes citizens may feel proud of their flora and wildlife because, as the saying goes, “the one who values what he/she has, takes care of it and defends it”.

The campaign has a simple objective: to travel across the province in a vehicle including the images of the campaign and visit municipalities, hospitals, police departments, schools, bus stations, shops and public entities, placing posters in visible sites such as windows, counters and walls. Of course, the vehicle causes a stir in each town it visits, and when people hear the news, they get close and ask for pictures. This campaign has
aroused so much enthusiasm that many posters have already been framed.

Having traveled hundreds and thousands of kilometers, we have heard wonderful stories of people, their experience in Iberá, their knowledge of nature and even some individuals who went across Iberá before it was declared a Reserve, and got to know the inhabitants of the wetlands; some of them have even seen animals and landscapes which do not exist anymore.

Images of each town; ancient Jesuit reductions; beautiful old houses; town squares full of life and history; old train stations; rivers and streams; museums; churches; all of them show us each step of the culture of Corrientes citizens who, together with their music, kindness, language and food evidence their deep attachment to the land where they were born. People receive us with the kindness typical of Corrientes inhabitants and show emotion and surprise when viewing the images, when they see certain animals whose existence in the province they did not know.

Being able to go around such a beautiful province is a privilege. Each site we visit is unique, but all of them have as an indelible mark the essence of Corrientes: the pride for their land. Corrientes becomes Corrientes again!

By Talia Zamboni. Talia studied biology at the National University of Córdoba. She completed a Master in Wildlife Management and Conservation at the National University of Costa Rica. She led the campaign “Corrientes becomes Corrientes again” until last December. She is currently living in Oxford, where she will apply for the Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation at WildCru.
Mburucuyá National Park

Mburucuyá National Park is located to the North East of the Province of Corrientes. It was named after its neighbor town and its name means “passion”, that’s how Mburucuyá’s flower is called. This name is the subject of many legends, the most famous one is Christ’s Passion, represented in the flower by the crown of thorns, the nails and the sores.

10 km away from Mburucuyá is the access portal to the park, and 15 km ahead is the farm house of Estancia Santa Teresa, with a public use area, visitor center and service area. The farm houses of farms Santa María and Santa Teresa and their 17,760 hectares were donated in 1991 by Mr. Troels Mindel Pedersen and his wife Nina, both of them Danish. They had to wait for 10 years for the National Government to take possession and carry out the necessary field work for the farm to become a National Park on November 27, 2001.

The Mburucuyá National Park is a magical site hosting three environments: the “espinal”, Parana jungle and Chaco woodland. To know its landscape, breathe the sweet and thick air of its wild fruits and flowers, meet some crab-eating raccoons, brockets, Pampas foxes or crab-eating foxes, giant armadillos, marsh deer and alligators, visitors can follow trails: Che Roda (2600 m) of low difficulty and Yatay (6200 m)

Visitors along the Che Roga Trail.
of medium difficulty.

Along the way, the four varieties of palm trees can be seen: Pindo, Mbocaya, Yatay and Caranday, as way as plenty of medicinal plants and many other varieties.

It is very interesting getting to know how farms and facilities were managed, as told by farm workers and foremen who lived there. You can also go along the historical trail or Tape Porá. This trail was devised by locals, who included posts on cultural attractions.

It is worth remarking the generosity shown by Mr. Troels Mindel Pedersen in the creation of the national park. Although he was a lawyer, he had a deep devotion to botany. He enjoyed going out early in the morning to go through the farm and pick up plants for research. He was a visionary leader in terms of natural wealth in the area; he compiled an inventory of more than 13,000 species and printed several copies of his inventory, which are now held by worldwide museums.

The park is open during the whole year and is visited by thousands of local, national and many other tourists coming from Germany, Italy, Spain, Paraguay, Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, Brazil, Israel and France. It is a quiet place to relax and enjoy nature, camp, have a barbecue or organize a picnic with hand-made food from town. The park is waiting for you. Come and enjoy it!

By Carolina Romero, Mburucuyá National Park Guides Association

Facebook Guias P. N. Mburucuya:
www.facebook.com/guias.p.n.mburucuya

Marsh deer in the grassland. (Photo: Leopoldo Bayol)
CONICET scientists discovered that Corrientes has more than 30 thousand lagoons

Almost by chance and as part of a college volunteer program with the Veterinary School of Universidad Nacional del Nordeste (UNNE) focused on how bats attacked livestock, Felix Contreras found a topic for his thesis when he found out that Corrientes was full of lagoons.

Mr. Contreras, who was now granted a doctor’s scholarship in the CONICET at the Litoral Center for Applied Ecology (Centro de Ecología Aplicada del Litoral) (CECOAL, CONICETUNNE) studied those bodies of water and made a map that indicates their distribution, morphometrics and evolution.

“When I took the scholarship, I realized that the National Institute of Agro Technology (INTA) had a digital record of lagoons, but only included those of a higher size and permanence due to the resolution of the satellite images used. 345 lagoons were recorded in an area where we detected 925. This difference is due to the size of the lagoons, added to floating macrophytes that make them imperceptible in Landsat satellite images –obtained through satellites put into orbit by USA for the observation in high resolution of the land surface. This is why we decided to use high resolution images, for example from Google Earth, to analyze the differences in terms of quantity, size, shape and distribution”, says Contreras.

These bodies of water are located in the surface forming a triangle between the cities of Ituzaingó, Esquina and Corrientes, where the landscape shows sandy hills giving rise to these thousands of lagoons. After the review, scientists discovered that there are more than 38,500 lagoons, three per km², taking up 20% of the surface of hills. Mr. Contreras explains that all the lagoons were reviewed regardless of the permanence of water.

“We started to make temporary comparisons of lagoons and saw that some of them change their shape fully, i.e. they become smaller or even disappear. We noted that if during the year rains are lower than 1,000 mm, many lagoons disappear. In Corrientes there are periods of two humid years and two dry years. We noticed that some lagoons completely dried up in less than ten months and one year later, after rains, they emerged again”, explains the scholar.

Mr. Contreras ensures that in addition to the ecological implications, he is interested in studying shapes, the evolution of the landscape and issues relating to men’s impact. The project is intended to cooperate with land planning through urban planning in order to reduce the potential environmental impact and avoid flood risks to which society is exposed, for example, when dwellings are built.

“As many lagoons disappear, there is real estate speculation. When they dry up completely, land is sold inside them and then, after a period of rains, the land goes underwater. From 1950 to 2012, 36 lagoons disappeared as a consequence of the growth of the City of Corrientes. At present, 18 lagoons, added to the other 36, show some type of alteration, either due to the construction of dwellings or given the street design. This is due to the fact that works are conducted in dry periods, without considering that when the humid period returns, water flows in those places. These issues affect “poor” and “rich” in the same way”, ensures the scholar.

By means of talks, scientists raise awareness among the population of the need to consider this resource.
this sense, Mr. Contreras explains that Corrientes has big “monsters” related to water: the Paraná River, the Guaraní aquifer and the Iberá wetlands, and that is why the lagoons are not taken into account. “Many people can tell you that they know ‘certain lagoons’ but they completely ignore the number and they appear surprised when we tell them about the lagoons, show them the lagoons on the map or even the curious shapes they form, such as the ‘duck’ lagoon. So they start making comments such as ‘now each time I travel I count the lagoons and pay attention with my family to see if they are circular or not’”, he adds.

On the other hand, Aldo Paira, chief professional of the CONICET at the National Institute of Limnology (INALI, CONICET-UNL) tells us that most of the lagoons in Corrientes have a round shape, and this is due to their genesis. Working on different measurements and calculation methods, they were able to define the specific morphometrics such as area, perimeter, length and maximum width or development of the coast line. “They are sandy hills shaping the paleo-channels of the Paraná River: formerly, the area occupied now by Santa Fe used to be a sea bed, and the Paraná River flew into Corrientes. A delta was formed which underwent different processes, dry and humid periods. In one of those dry periods, a “Sahara desert” was formed, with sand dunes, and then there was a period of rains and vegetation growth. So, plenty of water accumulated between them and those bodies of water still persist”, says Mr. Paira on their origin.


Source: CONICET /Cecilia Leone
Ecotourism

The Iberá Experience, find out your nature...

In March 2015, the “Iberá Experience” was launched. It is a proposal to enjoy the wild nature of the Iberá Wetlands and to disclose the natural and cultural wealth of the future national park, the biggest in the country.

As a consequence of the identity, biodiversity and magic of Corrientes Lisandro Braillard and Adolfo Cardozo, intrepid world travelers, joined Jorge Mazzochi, a naturalist marveled at the Ibera’s species and environments, to show this side of Corrientes, a province engaged in the reintroduction of species, local development, the living culture chosen by nature tourists, looking at the future, mounting a horse.

The project was focused on the new portals of the Iberá basin: Carambola Portal in Concepcion del Yaguarété Corá, San Nicolás Portal in San Miguel y Loreto and Mburucuyá National Park.

With bilingual tourist guides specialized in native flora and wildlife, food offering traditional dishes of the province, 4x4 transfers and accommodation, there

Trip by canoe at dusk.
are “experiences” for everyone.

“We are fairly happy about the possibility of working on what we love, imparting knowledge of local bugs, wetland plants and the popular heritage, with stories, legends and customs. The chamamé must be present in every event and describes the wetland experience”.

“We are pleased to note that developing this type of tourism implies a multidisciplinary work. This could not be achieved without local guides, canoeists, cooks, drivers, park rangers, tourist guides, CLT staff and hoteliers. It is a set of tourist providers contributing to the service quality and variety.”

The best way to “experience” the Iberá is by bird watching, trips by canoe dragged by horses, kayaks, nautical rides and trekking to go through lagoons and grassland of Corrientes’ woods. Traditional dishes such as Mbaipu, chipa cuerito or papaya jam, prepared by locals, delight visitors while they listen to the chamamé being played live. To rest and sleep, they propose a wide range of accommodation, from exclusive farms to cabins and hostels, or to enjoy the experience of living as an Iberá inhabitant, sleeping at a traditional home in the middle of wetlands.

A universal inclusion project with special chairs in order that the Iberá Wetlands may be visited by people with reduced mobility and braille is the next objective of these entrepreneurs. Committed to local development, the “Iberá Experience” earnest desire is that neighboring towns may grow based on responsible tourism and the conservation of the environment and species. A true invitation to experience the Iberá!

Contact: experienciaIberá@gmail.com, (011) 39377527 / (03795) 031573

Trip by carriage to Cañada Fragosa.
Training

Jaguar conservation in Misiones

Conicet researchers offered technical courses to farmers. This activity was conducted within the framework of the 19th Provincial Celebration of the Calf, in Montecarlo. The course “Livestock Raising and the conservation of jaguars in Misiones: an achievable challenge” was offered by Dr. Agustín Paviolo and Dr. Carlos De Angelo (CeBA- IBS-CONICET), and the information presented was related to this type of conflicts and the possible alternatives in order that the farmer may raise cattle and jaguars may go on living in the woods.

Scientists of the Jaguar Project set up a stand and offered a course at the Celebration of the Calf.
(Photo: Jaguar Project)
Sharing knowledge and flavors

To the West of the Iberá, where portals’ tourist activities and services are in the start phase, specific training is very useful and welcome. In order to cooperate with local development, the Food, Hospitality and Tourism School OTT took part in a 2-day meeting at San Miguel.

After the visit to Carambola Portal, Patricia Ott, Head of Ott School, was marveled at the extraordinary nature of the wetlands and the work being carried out with locals. She contacted CLT and proposed to offer training courses to local entrepreneurs through her school, as an invaluable experience for students.

The first workshop was organized in San Miguel, a town on the shore of the Iberá, of a Jesuit-Guaraní origin. Participants included members of the Yasí Berá cooperative and independent entrepreneurs from San Miguel and Paraje Mboy Cuá. The workshops host by Alejo Candia and Matías Amaro provided advice on how to prepare regional dishes with a contemporary mark.

Participants shared typical ingredients of regional food, such as andái (typical Guaraní pumpkin), “home-made” corn and mandioca flour, “Criollo” cheese, cane honey, lamb, farm chicken and regional liqueurs. Delicious and varied dishes were made: Chicken filled up with humita and cane honey sauce, chipá sandwich with filleted lamb, grilled corn flour polenta, sour orange liqueur sabayon, Criollo cheese stir fried with honey, a true banquet that was attended by all the participants at the end of the day. A participation and collaboration celebration!

By Hada Irastorza, coordinator of CLT local development program

Local food workshop in Miguel.
(Photo: Hada Irastorza)

Workshop participants.
(Photo Hada Irastorza)
Events

Nahuel, the jaguar, is already in Iberá

Nahuel, the jaguar, arrived at the Experimental Jaguar Breeding Center (CECY) located in the island of San Alfonso Reserve. The event started with the kind words of welcome of Marisi Lopez from CLT, continued with the presentation made by the Tourism Minister of Corrientes, Ines Presman, the Vice-President of the National Parks Administration, Emiliano Ezcurra, Senator Sergio Flinta and the Minister Sergio Bergman and was blessed by the parish priests of San Miguel and Concepción.

To meet Nahuel, guests visited CECY’s facilities, where CLT specialists explained the project thoroughly. A delicious farm lunch was served to recover strength and Juan Carlos Jensen recited a poem in Tobuna's honor, to end a day full of emotions.

Nahuel’s transportation. (Photo: Leopoldo Bayol)

Authorities who took part in the event. (Photo: Leopoldo Bayol)