

BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY NEWS

Nº 1

ASUNCION, PARAGUAY - APRIL, 1981

The Biological Inventory News is designed to inform readers about the Biological Inventory of Paraguay. We welcome any questions, ideas, or comments. Write to participants at Servicio Forestal Nacional, Tacuary 443, Edificio Patria, 6º piso, Asunción, Paraguay, South America.

Project History: 1979 to Present

The Paraguayan Forest Service's National Biological Inventory is a long-term project which will establish a National Museum of Natural History. The goal of the museum is to insure conservation and proper management of Paraguay's natural resources.

Initiated in 1979 by Peace Corps Volunteers David and Diane Wood, the Servicio Forestal project gained support through correspondence with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US/FWS). An invitation from Minister of Agriculture Bertoni to Lynn Greenwalt of US/FWS was answered, and in September of 1979 Drs. Curt Freese and Don Wilson arrived in Paraguay to discuss cooperation in the Inventory Project. During their visit, Paraguay acceded to the Convention of Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere, a step which demonstrated Paraguay's sincere interest in international collaboration. The two agencies defined responsibilities, including a commitment by the Ministry of Agriculture to construct a Natural History Museum.

Eventually the project gained support from the Smithsonian Institution, Missouri Botanical Garden, New York Botanical Garden, U.S./Agency for International Development (US/AID), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Dr. Freese formed a team of scientists who would conduct biological surveys and train counterparts. In March, 1980, Don Wilson, Norman Scott, Mercedes Foster, and Gary Hartshorn led a two week collecting trip in National Park Ybycui, training fifteen Paraguayans in biological field techniques. Dr. Paul Spangler arrived in April, and his entomology group collected over twenty thousand specimens.

The project progressed rapidly in 1980. Peace Corps Volunteers and their counterparts continued making collections, and a temporary museum was set up in the Forest Service, housing liquid collections and museum cabinets. Mercedes Foster returned

in September, and Norm Scott made trips in October, 1980, and January of 1981.

1981 started with the Biological Inventory in National Park Ybycui. The ornithology, mammalogy, ichthyology, and herpetology groups worked three weeks, gathering data for a guide book to common vertebrates of the park. 1981 promises more field trips, visiting scientists, and funding possibilities for the Inventory; important steps that bring the project closer to the goal of a working museum staffed by Paraguayan scientists studying, conserving, and protecting Paraguay's floral and faunal resources.

World Wildlife Fund Donates \$5,000

During a June, 1980 World Wildlife Fund board meeting, \$5,000 was granted to the National Biological Inventory. Collection equipment, museum supplies, and reference materials, will be purchased with these funds. Stateside purchasing of materials is being arranged by US/FWS scientists, and arrival in Paraguay is expected in the immediate future.

US/AID Donates \$25,000

A major project objective is to get out-of-country training for Paraguayan participants. In April of this year, US/AID was presented with a proposal that would allocate sufficient funds to send one participant to Carnegie-Melon Museum and one to Missouri Botanical Garden for three month training courses. US/AID granted \$25,000, \$16,000 of which will pay these training expenses. Field equipment and museum supplies will be purchased with \$7,000 of the remaining funds. Candidates will be selected this year, and will attend the courses in 1982.

Carnegie Museum and Missouri Botanical Garden Donate Scholarships

The Carnegie-Melon Museum recently donated two scholarships, and Missouri

Botanical Garden one. The Carnegie scholarships include air fare, room and board, and a three month museum course. The Missouri Botanical program includes room and board, and a three month course. Because of these generous donations, the US/AID funds can be used to train more than the original two participants.

Project Participants

The Inventory project is receiving strong in-country support from Minister of Agriculture Ing. Hernando Bertoni, and Forest Service Director Ing. Pedro Calabrese. Project director Ing. Hilario Moreno works closely with Peace Corps Volunteer Lee Fitzgerald, the project coordinator.

There are six study groups comprised of eight Peace Corps Volunteers and fourteen national counterparts. The herpetology group consists of Lee Fitzgerald, Lucy Aquino, and Gilberto Bareiro. Ichthyology is represented by Carlos Cuevas and Larry Naylor, who is also project photographer. Ron Cave, Hernan Feireira, and Tomás Lopez are the entomology group. Ornithological collections are made by Richard White, Mario Rolón, Nancy Lopez, Christian Bogado, and Elena Escobar. The mammal team consists of Jody Stallings, Silvino Gonzalez, and Isabel Gamarra. Botanical specimens are collected by Milan Vavrek, Lidia Perez, and Elvio Enciso. In addition, Mark Ludlow and Brian Abrell are participating as wildlife management specialists.

The project also has stateside participants. Dr. Foster is co-ordinating US/FWS activities, while Dr. Freese of US/FWS International Affairs handles budgeting and travel allocations. Participating US/FWS scientists have been mentioned above. Hopefully as the project develops, more scientists in all fields will participate.

Plans for 1981

One of the most significant developments of 1980 for the Biological Inventory was the allocation of funds for the construction of the first section of the National Museum of Natural History. The construction of this 150 square meter structure will begin in 1981, and will be designed in a manner that will permit the addition of other sections, the first of which will be added in 1982. The museum will be located at the Ciudad Universitaria near Asunción.

The National Biological Inventory will prepare its first printed material in 1981, which will be a field guide to some of the common vertebrates of National Park Ybycuí. The guide will be geared toward people who visit the park, and will include color photographs or drawings of forty

species, with text containing basic life history information for each species.

Inventory personnel will also investigate the possibility of initiating a weekly newspaper column about natural history in Paraguay. Plans to develop environmental education programs, using the collection of natural history slides that are being accumulated by the Inventory are also in the making.

Perhaps the most important work of the Biological Inventory is to train Paraguayans to do state-of-the-art scientific investigation, and to develop, maintain, and operate the National Museum of Natural History. Scholarships will be solicited for some counterparts that are ready to continue their education and more counterparts will be sought.

Dialogue has been established with personnel of the Organization of American States/Pilcomayo Project, which has the major responsibility for planning development of the Pilcomayo region of the Gran Chaco. The section under consideration includes the area between the Trans-Chaco Highway and the Río Pilcomayo, South of the Bolivian border. OAS/Project Pilcomayo has indicated a strong interest in cooperating with the Biological Inventory. Information gained in studying this area will be of great scientific value, and will presumably be used to help develop the area in an environmentally sound manner.

Northern Anaconda Caught in Cerro Corá

Nobody was sure the species occurred in Paraguay, and they never expected to find a 5.1 meter anaconda (Eunectes murinus) in a creek barely a meter wide. Lee Fitzgerald, Mark Ludlow, Norm Scott, and Gilberto Bareiro caught the 66 kilogram snake where a tiny, wooded creek drains a small swamp in National Park Cerro Corá. After a short struggle involving no injuries to man or beast, Mboi'Jaguá (Guarani for "dog snake") was photographed, measured, weighed, and released at the site of capture. This specimen is a fine symbol of Paraguay's rich fauna, and may represent a range extension for the species.

Special Thanks

Special thanks goes to those scientists who have supported the work of the Inventory by donating or loaning equipment. Drs. Dieter Wasshausen, Phillip Myers, Don Wilson, Paul Spangler, Norm Scott, and Mercedes Foster have been kind enough to aid the Inventory in this manner.