

BIOLOGICAL INVENTORY NEWS

Nº 2

ASUNCION, PARAGUAY - DEC. 1981

The Biological Inventory News is designed to inform readers about the Biological Inventory of Paraguay. We welcome any questions, comments, or additions to our mailing list. Write to participants at Servicio Forestal Nacional, Tacuary 443, Edificio Patria 6° piso, Asunción, Paraguay, Sud America.

Project Background Information

The National Biological Inventory, sponsored by the Paraguayan Forest Service, is a long-term project which will establish a national museum of natural history. The purpose of the project is to conduct floral and faunal surveys. This information will be used to develop environmental education programs and to aid national park and wildlife management efforts, which will help insure conservation of Paraguay's natural resources.

The Biological Inventory was planned and developed by Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) Dave and Diane Wood. The project gets technical support from U.S. Peace Corps, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US/FWS), Smithsonian Institute, and Missouri Botanical Garden. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and U.S. Agency for International Development (US/AID) have provided funding, and Missouri Botanical Garden and Carnegie Museum have granted scholarships to Paraguayan project participants.

Since March, 1980, scientists from US/FWS and Smithsonian Institute have regularly visited Paraguay to conduct field studies and work with Paraguayan participants. A temporary natural history museum has been established in the Forest Service Office, which serves as headquarters for the Biological Inventory.

WWF Equipment Arrives

Materials have been purchased in the United States with the \$5000 World Wildlife Fund (WWF) grant of June, 1980. The equipment has been brought to Paraguay by visiting scientists. The shipments have included mist nets, fish nets, headlamps, traps, reference materials, and a variety of museum supplies. The Inventory thanks WWF for their generous donation.

Training Participants Selected

Three project participants have been chosen to receive museum training at Missouri Botanical Garden and Carnegie Museum. Lidia Perez, botany group, will study herbarium curation in Missouri. Lucy Aquino, herpetology group, and Nancy Lopez, ornithology group, will work with vertebrate curators at Carnegie. Training will begin March 1, 1982 in Washington, D.C., where the recipients will take an intensive one month English course to augment their current proficiencies. The three month training courses follow, during which it is hoped that each participant may attend a scientific conference. We express gratitude to US/AID, Missouri Botanical Garden, and Carnegie Museum, who have funded the training programs and provided scholarships.

Visitors Center in Chaco

An interpretive center has been established in the 780,000 hectare Parque Nacional Defensores del Chaco. Peace Corps Volunteers working with the Biological Inventory, national parks, and environmental education teamed up with six Paraguayan counterparts to complete the center in early December, and the Forest Service published a brochure for the park. This is Paraguay's first interpretive center, and it is hoped that visitors centers will soon be put in the country's other national parks.

Wild Kingdom in Paraguay

Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom recently filmed "The Unexplored Chaco," an episode featuring the work of the Biological Inventory. Marlin Perkins will appear as host of the show, visiting Parque Nacional Defensores del Chaco and La Golondrina, a ranch in the Chaco wetlands. He is assisted by PCVs Lee Fitzgerald and Jody Stallings, and Forest Service Technician Silvino Gonzalez. Dr. Mercedes Foster of US/FWS will appear with Nancy Lopez of the project's ornithology

group capturing birds. The program should be televised in February or March, 1982.

Scientists Visit Paraguay

Dr. Mercedes Foster and Dr. Norman Scott of US/FWS recently made visits to work with the Biological Inventory. Dr. Foster was in country seven weeks, arriving in late August. She did field work with the Inventory's ornithology group in Parque Nacional Teniente Enciso, and curatorial work in the temporary museum. Dr. Scott arrived in late October to work with the herpetology group. Field work included capture and marking of caiman for future population and growth studies. He also served as the first speaker in a series of seminars that visiting scientists will present. Dr. Scott addressed the role and importance of a national museum of natural history.

In addition to giving technical support to the Biological Inventory, these scientists play important ambassadorial roles meeting with Paraguayan administrators to help plan and coordinate the project.

Dr. Don Wilson of US/FWS and Dr. James Solomon of Missouri Botanical Garden, will arrive in January, 1982, to work with the Inventory's mammal and botany groups in eastern Paraguay. Dr. Ralph Wetzel of the University of Connecticut will visit the Inventory's museum in January as part of a tour of South American museums.

New PCVs for Inventory

The Biological Inventory welcomes John Kochalka and Dave Norman to the project. John took leave of absence from a Phd program at University of Florida to work with the invertebrate group. He has field experience in Colombia. Dave will work with the herpetology group, and was a PCV in El Salvador where he worked with high school science teachers. He has additional field experience in the Manaus, Brazil area.

Jody Stallings will leave Paraguay this January. He worked two years as a wildlife management specialist, having studied the Gray Brocket Deer (Mazama gouazoubira) in the Chaco. He worked the past year with the mammalogy group of the Inventory, and we thank him for his outstanding work.

The two year assignments of Milan Vavrek, project botanist, and Larry Naylor, ichthyologist, soon finish, and replacements are being sought. One position to work with the mammalogy and ornithology groups is also available. Persons interested in participating in the Biological Inventory as a PCV should write:

JJ Earhart, Cuerpo de Paz,
c/o Embajada EEUU,
Asunción, Paraguay

AND: Dr. Mercedes Foster, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Museum of Natural History, room 378, 10th and Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20560

Applicants should have a masters in zoology or biology, or a bachelors in these subjects with field experience. It should be remembered that the goal of Peace Corps work is to train host-country people so that the work continues when the volunteer leaves.

New Mammals for Paraguay

Work of the mammal section of the Inventory has resulted in the documentation of four Paraguayan species that merit special attention. The Black-tailed Silvery Marmoset (Callithrix argentata, fam. Callithricidae) and Peter's Sac-winged Bat (Peropteryx macrotis, fam. Emballonuridae) represent new country family records. The rare fossorial Burmeister's Armadillo (Chlamyphorus retusa) was also collected, as was a spiny rat (Proechimys sp.) which had not been collected in the country since 1830. These finds demonstrate the lack of knowledge concerning Paraguayan fauna and the importance of the Inventory work. Special thanks goes to Philip Myers, Russell Mittermeier, and Ralph Wetzel for verifying the identifications and for their continued technical support.

Status of the Chacoan Peccary

The Chacoan Peccary (Catagonus wagneri) is endemic to the Gran Chaco of South America. The tagua, as it is known in Paraguay, was discovered by Dr. Ralph Wetzel in 1975. The genus was previously known only from Pleistocene fossils.

The future does not look particularly bright for the survival of this largest of three species in the peccary group. According to observations of Dr. Lyle Sowls based on several field trips to the Paraguayan Chaco, the herd size of the tagua has diminished, suggesting increased hunting pressure. It is highly valued as a hunting trophy and for the meat, and there is some market for the hide. In addition, development in the Chaco of Paraguay is accelerating rapidly. Huge expanses of undisturbed habitat are being cleared for the cattle industry. Dr. Wetzel, in his recent report to the Pig and Peccary Specialist group of the IUCN Conference in New Delhi, expressed his concern regarding the status of this species.

Paraguay has established two large national parks in the Chaco Boreal. These parks, Defensores del Chaco and Teniente Enciso, may serve as refuges for the tagua and insure viable breeding populations. Hopefully conservation efforts, improved land and wildlife management, and control of poaching, will enable the Chacoan Peccary to be removed from the vulnerable status of the IUCN Red List.