

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	14-028
Project Title	Conservation of Puna's Andean cats across national borders
Country(ies)	Argentina, Bolivia and Chile
UK Organisation	Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Oxford University
Collaborator(s)	Andean Cat Alliance (AGA); Mammal Behavioural Ecology Group, Universidad Nacional del Sur (GECM, Argentina); Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Salta, Universidad Nacional de Salta (Argentina); Colección Boliviana de Fauna (CBF, Bolivia); Fundación Biodiversitas (FB, Chile)
Report date	31 October 2006
Report No	HYR 1
Project website	www.wildcru.org/andeanecat

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

Field research and educational activities have progressed well in relation to our timetable. Collection of field data on Puna's mammals is progressing in all three countries. Two short field campaigns have been completed in Bolivia; the Chilean team conducted an exploratory field visit soon to be followed by a longer campaign; in Argentina researchers are presently engaged in a long field campaign. A line-transect protocol, developed and adopted by all teams in our Methodology workshop last year to ensure data compatibility, is the main method used for recording presence of carnivores and their prey base. Shortly we will be able to analyze the most recent transect data and run a more definitive power analysis to determine the methodology utility for strict statistical comparisons between areas, habitats and species (or groups of species most likely). The field manual on monitoring techniques is well advanced, and will be tested during the first training workshop with protected area staff to be held in Bolivia. The revised version will be published by January 2007.

We have started a new analysis of Andean cat diet, which uses DNA-based specific identification of faeces, in collaboration with Daniel Cossios (AGA – Peru, and University of Montreal, Canada). Preliminary results confirm the expected relative rarity of Andean cats in the study area. The faecal samples will be integrated into Daniels's PhD dissertation looking at population genetics of Andean and Pampas cats.

Three postgraduate students, one in each country, have been evaluated and research plans approved at their respective institutions. Data collection plans have been prepared in accordance to their research plans and the project's overall aim of understanding better the relationships between carnivores and their prey in this ecosystem.

Magdalena Bennett received a fellowship from the Society for Conservation GIS and ESRI (Environmental System Research System) to participate in a GIS training course and the Congress of Conservation Biology in California, where she presented results on her work on habitat use of the Andean cat in the Surire National Monument, Chile.

Education activities have expanded in Argentina with a teacher's training workshop attended by

8 local teachers from rural schools. The meeting led to the creation of a network of educators who will act as multipliers of our educational activities and will reach a total of 10 schools and 320 school children from the project area. In cooperation with a newly recruited member of this network, the project conducted a community meeting in a locality not previously reached by the education programme in Argentina. We have produced four educational banners and completed a guide for High Andes educators that is now in press.

Meetings with authorities from the local communities and the Eduardo Avaroa Reserve staff have been completed in Bolivia, introducing the project and its activities. In Chile, the team contacted local authorities of the CONAF (National Park Service), SAG (Wildlife Service) and CONAMA (Biodiversity Conservation Commission) during their last field trip. We are receiving strong support from CONAF personnel, and park guards are helping with talks at local schools.

Organization towards the first tri-national training workshop for protected area staff is well advanced. The workshop is programmed for November in the locality of Quetena in Bolivia's High Andes, with the participation of local authorities for all range countries.

The second project newsletter is out, dedicated to the progresses of scientific research on the Andean cat and the High Andes vertebrate community (www.wildcru.org/andeanecat). The teacher's training workshop was featured in a local newspaper (*El Pregon*, Jujuy). The project and its first outputs were presented at the 3rd Forum on *in situ* Conservation Projects for the European Zoos and Aquaria (Angers, France), 1st South American Theriological Conference (Gramado, Brasil), VIII Latin American Wildlife Management Congress (Ilheus, Brazil), and 5th Wildlife Conservation Network Expo (Los Altos, California).

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Project activities have been largely implemented according to schedule. We faced some uncertainty with respect to the feasibility of conducting field work and the training workshop in Bolivia due to political unrest in the country. Our team and partners decided that there were no risk involved in meeting in Avaroa and decided to proceed with plans.

We expect to advance with the revision of the ecological relationships between carnivores, particularly Andean cats, and their prey. Results of the various ongoing projects and field surveys would be available for the next report. A pilot training of sniffer dogs to identify carnivore species from faeces has been rescheduled for April 2007, pending a positive outcome from efforts to secure additional funds need.

Pablo Perovic had a serious horse riding accident during field work unrelated to this grant in October. Fortunately he is recovering well.

Administrative problems with fund transfers from Oxford to partners in range countries have resulted in under-spending. The delays resulted from a batch of receipts from Argentina that got lost in the post. We are in the process of sorting this out.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

No

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: No

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: No

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures? No

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Question: Whether and to what degree the project engages with the Andean cat action plan as mentioned in the original application?

Answer: The DI project was conceived chiefly as a response to the publication of the Andean Cat Conservation Action Plan (PAGA), on which guidelines this project has been based. Our activities and all the activities undertaken by the project contribute to the fulfilment of many of the PAGA's specific objectives http://www.wildnet.org/downloads/AGA_action_plan.pdf

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**