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## ***Darwin Initiative Annual Report***

### **1. Darwin Project Information**

Project Ref. Number	14-028
Project Title	<b><i>Conservation of Puna's Andean cats across national borders</i></b>
Country(ies)	<i>Argentina, Bolivia and Chile</i>
UK Contractor	<i>Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Oxford University</i>
Partner Organisation(s)	<i>Andean Cat Alliance (AGA); Mammal Behavioural Ecology Group, Universidad Nacional del Sur (Argentina); Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Salta, Universidad Nacional de Salta (Argentina); Colección Boliviana de Fauna (Bolivia); Fundación Biodiversitas (Chile); Universidad de Chile, Universidad Mayor, Universidad Católica (Chile); Wildlife Conservation Network (USA)</i>
Darwin Grant Value	£159,186
Start/End dates	01 October 2005 – 30 September 2008
Reporting period	1 Oct 2005 to 30 Apr 2006, Annual report # 1
Project website	<a href="http://www.wildcru.org/andeanecat">www.wildcru.org/andeanecat</a>
Author(s), date	<i>Claudio Sillero-Zubiri, Mauro Lucherini, María José Merino and Jorgelina Marino; 30 April 2006</i>

## **2. Project Background**

The Andean cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*) is the rarest South American felid, and one of the most endangered wild cats in the world. Endemic to the Central High Andes, this carnivore is a specialized predator of a community of high altitude vertebrates and can be used as a flagship species for the conservation of the Puna's endemic-rich biodiversity. Our work is centred on the triple frontier of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, a remote region where most recent Andean cat sightings have occurred and with existing adjacent conservation areas in all three countries. The causes of the Andean cat's rarity and the factors affecting its conservation status are still little understood. This project supports the work of local scientists united under the Andean Cat Alliance to advance our incipient knowledge of the species ecology, while increasing the capacity of researchers, educators and protected area staff. The ultimate objectives of the project are a) raising awareness of the importance of high-altitude natural resources for the local communities, b) mitigate human persecution of wildlife, and c) enabling protected area's staff in all three countries to deliver their conservation goals.

## **3. Project Purpose and Outputs**

We aim to achieve biodiversity conservation by promoting collaboration across national boundaries and using the Andean cat as a flagship species. We seek to improve knowledge of the Puna's vertebrate biodiversity and the efficiency of existing protected areas in securing its long-term conservation, and to encourage more tolerance for wildlife outside them through local community education and participation. Projected outputs are:

- a) identification of areas of key conservation value from high quality data on vertebrate ecology and distribution;
- b) enhancement of local community environmental awareness;
- c) training of stakeholders, particularly local conservationists and biologists;
- d) increased capacity for conservation by strengthening conservation networks across boundaries; and
- e) a mechanism for monitoring cat presence and prey availability.

The outputs and proposed operational plan have not been modified from the original version (see attached project logical framework).

## **4. Progress**

- This project only started in October 2005, thus some of the outputs proposed for year 1 are still in progress and the full impact of our activities in some cases is not yet apparent.
- Project activities have been implemented according to schedule (see Annex I). The first few months were mainly devoted to project planning and coordination with partner organizations, culminating in a fruitful meeting in San Pedro de Atacama, Chile, last November, with the participation of all project's team members. Swift progress has been achieved in devising and agreeing upon common methodologies for ecological research across participant countries and the training of students in field techniques.
- Collection of field data on Puna's vertebrates has started in all three countries; master students are developing their research plans; and the amalgamation of data for habitat mapping has commenced.
- Education activities kicked off with an international workshop in Salta (Argentina) in November. Education activities have mostly concentrated on the Argentine side during the reporting period, with development and testing of new

educational material and assessments of people's attitudes towards conservation and natural resources. All these activities have cemented partnerships among the institutions involved and progress has also been made on developing partnerships with protected areas management. Dissemination of information on this new initiative included reports in the local and national media, an incipient website, and the production of a project leaflet and newsletter (see attachments).

- Achievements:

Ecological research and training. The Research Workshop in San Pedro de Atacama achieved broad consensus on ways to research Andean cats, their prey, and identify key areas for biological conservation. The team developed methodologies and a work-plan for collaborative ecological research, including:

- a) A precise definition of the project study area and sampling locations.
- b) Agreement on the application of standard field-methods to be applied across countries.
- c) Identification of study subjects for graduate and honours students. One honours and one MSc student are soon to start field research on the prey vertebrate community in Chile and Bolivia and they are incorporating standard methods into their study plans and defining their respective study sites. A PhD student is already working in Argentina.
- d) In consultation with specialists in the UK partner institution, field methods to assess Andean cat habitats and prey were revisited and standard protocols drafted and circulated among team members for further refinement.
- e) Pilot tests of line-transect methods were recently conducted in two study areas in Argentina and Chile (analysis in progress). The pilots will serve to refine the method's statistical power to detect differences across habitats and study areas. Due to the extension, remoteness and ruggedness of the study area, it was decided that standard intensive surveys will be concentrated on a sample population of study "windows", from which extrapolations to the larger area will be derived (assisted by the GIS mapping process).
- f) The two members from the UK partner institution travelled extensively throughout the study area in all three countries for 4 weeks prior to the workshop in Chile, accompanied by the local biologists. They visited the three protected areas in the study area and established communication with management authorities.
- g) During this field trip, quick habitat assessments were conducted, which informed the initial stages of the mapping process using satellite images (work in progress). With the standard protocol similar ground-truthing data has been collected in Chile and will continue during subsequent planned field trips elsewhere.
- h) During this first phase of the project, local biologists from the three countries continued field surveys in their respective countries, with the participation of students that were trained on field techniques. Visits to Vilama (Argentina), Avaroa (Bolivia), and Salar de Tara (Chile) have provided further information on the distribution of Andean cats in areas with little or no past information.

Education and environmental awareness. The Darwin project has been crucial in providing extra impulse to ongoing education activities in the study area. Firstly, the AGA Education Workshop in Salta, Argentina (part-funded by Darwin and attended by the project leader), served to cement collaborations and to collate the lessons learnt from previous experiences by other AGA members involved in conservation education across the Andean cat range. Following on this, the project produced and tested new education materials in a sample of schools in Argentina. The team in Chile started education work in the Antofagasta Region, including the training of a

park scout who will be in charge of a school education campaign in the region (May to August) in collaboration with the CONAF which will assist with logistics.

A great achievement has been the first formal assessment of adult and school children's attitudes towards environmental issues in Argentina, which will enhance our capacity to assess the impact of future awareness campaigns. The Teacher Training Workshop planned for June 2006 will provide a suitable opportunity to interview and select community education officers for the project.

Protected areas networking. From the initial field visits it became apparent that the PAs within the study area in all three countries differ markedly on their protection status, implementation levels, financial resources and use for tourism or other human activities. In view of the limited communication that exists among them, our first attempts to establish some level of collaboration and networking are first of its type in the region, and perceived as potentially very valuable. The overall positive attitude of management staff met during our visits are a good omen for future success.

- Project work plan for the next six months: the timetable for the next reporting period will largely follow the plans on the original project.

## **5. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

Not applicable.

## **6. Partnerships**

Collaboration between WildCRU at Oxford and local partners continues to build up on previously established relationship within the AGA framework. In this context WildCRU provides expertise to improve capacity to undertake ecological research and implement conservation actions. Collaboration within the AGA network has been further strengthened during recent workshops in Salta, Argentina (Education), San Pedro de Atacama, Chile (Darwin project planning and research) and La Paz, Bolivia (biannual AGA Meeting).

Conversely, the Darwin project is setting an example to all AGA members for a stronger and more efficient multi-team and cross-border collaboration. Other AGA members showed great interest in the initiative, and are interested to involve other institutions engaged in conservation and research across the Andean cat range countries.

In Chile our initial partnership with Fundacion Biodiversitas has been expanded to include institutions where our partnering scientists are based, namely: Universidad Mayor (Agustin Iriarte), Universidad de Chile (Constanza Napolitano) and Universidad Catolica de Chile (Magdalena Bennett).

The project is working to develop collaboration between Protected Areas management staff via the organization of cross border meetings and workshops. Our ultimate ambition is to broker an international agreement between all PA authorities that may ultimately lead to a cross-border protected area. This will bolster wildlife conservation and local community development in the region, while overcoming historical competitive conflict between these neighbouring countries.

## **7. Impact and Sustainability**

Since our project started only six months ago it would be premature to expect any measurable impact on wildlife conservation and management practices on the ground. However, local authorities and PA administration have shown great interest in our initiative and particularly in its cross-border approach. We perceive an increasing interest and positive attitudes among the education community and local community leaders which, combined with the training of local people and students from regional universities, is contributing towards the long-term continuation of conservation initiatives in the region, which is compatible with our exit strategy.

## 8. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

The project has largely achieved the outputs within the project implementation schedule. The production of educational materials and the training of local partners are more advanced than anticipated. The collection of ecological data has started in all countries at various levels of intensity and will intensify in the next few months. There were further improvements to the project design with regards to education, including:

- a) testing of educational materials in three schools in Argentina, which will reflect on improved quality and effectiveness of delivery,
- b) the completion of a preliminary survey of people's attitude and awareness levels in Argentina's target communities, which will help in designing future awareness activities.

Given the collaborative and trans-national nature of the project, we invested time on disseminating the news of this initiative to various relevant forums, but particularly among the partner institutions to ensure maximum synergy on the implementation of subsequent activities. The meeting in Chile last December was crucial in achieving this. The information material (brochure) produced with the consensus of all partners will serve to further publicize the project and to inform stakeholders, together with the website.

In parallel various team members gave personalized presentations of the project to local leaders, educators, and government officers etc, to raise awareness of our objectives and secure further endorsement and support.

**Table 1. Project Outputs (According to Standard Output Measures)**

Code No.	Description	Year 1
15A	Article in Argentina's national broadsheet La Nacion <a href="http://www.lanacion.com.ar/736038">http://www.lanacion.com.ar/736038</a> (Annex 2)	1
15 D	Press release to various websites in UK (Annex 3)	1
15C	Local press release in Chile announcing workshop in San Pedro (Annex 4)	2
4A	Local undergraduate students (Argentina) short-term work experience and training on field techniques during field surveys in Argentina	4
4B	Training period during the above activities	3 (3 students) and 7 (one student)
4C	Local graduate students (Argentina and Chile) short-term work experience and training on field techniques during field surveys in Argentina and Chile	3 (Argentina), 1 (Chile)
8	UK staff - Project leader and Ecologist - visited the three countries involved in the project, met local partners, local communities and conducted quick field assessment	5

16 A	A leaflet introducing the project (objectives, activities and partners) and first project newsletter reporting on education activities (attached)	2
16 B/C	Electronically circulated to various websites and people	
14A	Research workshop in San Pedro de Atacama, Chile to introduce the research plan, discuss specific studies and standard methods (Annex 5)	1
14A	International Workshop on Conservation Education for the Andean cat, organized in Salta, Argentina (in collaboration with AGA and co-funded by WCN) (Annex 6)	1
14B	Attendance to the Annual AGA in LA Paz, Bolivia meeting when the project was explained and opportunity was used to discuss DI project workplan and progress	1

**Table 2: Publications**

Type *	Detail	Publishers	Available from	Cost £
Report	Informe a Gestión Educativa Jujuy, Gobierno de Jujuy. M.J. Merino, M. Lucherini and J.I. Reppucci, 2006	Digital copy GECM, Bahía Blanca, Argentina	Digital copy can be obtained from GECM, luengos@criba.edu.ar	Nil
Note on International Journal	Planning a common educational strategy for Andean cat conservation, M. Lucherini and M.J, Merino. 2006.	Oryx, April 2006 (in press?)	Oryx, Blackwell Publisher. Digital copy can be obtained from GECM, luengos@criba.edu.ar	Subscription
Report	Informe de Actividades para los establecimientos Educativos, M.J. Merino, M. Lucherini, J.I. Reppucci and I. Amellotti, 2006	GECM, Bahía Blanca, Argentina	Digital copy can be obtained from GECM, luengos@criba.edu.ar	Nil

## 9. Project Expenditure

**Table 3: Project expenditure during the reporting period (Defra Financial Year 01 April to 31 March)**

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- Highlight any recently agreed changes to the budget and explain any variation in expenditure where this is +/- 10% of the budget.

## 10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

We monitored progress during the first six months of the project on the bases of the following indicators of achievement (in addition to the outcomes listed in Table 1):

- 3 schools and 3 communities reached by outreach activities and 2 new education materials produced
- 2 local community outreach meetings (one in Bolivia and one in Argentina)
- 37 preliminary interviews completed
- 3 thesis planned
- 3 reports of educational activities delivered to 5 local authorities
- 1 field trip to Argentina/Chile/Bolivia November 2006 (3 weeks); 1 field survey in Argentina October-December (10 weeks); 1 field survey in Argentina April-May (3 weeks); 1 field survey in Chile (1 week); 12 field surveys in Bolivia October-April (18 weeks)
- 3 ad-hoc questionnaires designed and implemented to measure the success of workshops and educational activities

An important lesson we have learnt is that the success of this project depends on good planning, constant monitoring and the commitment of all partners involved. Up

to now we have achieved all of these elements, and allowed us to kick start the first year of the project successfully. It is also apparent that the roles of the project leader and the local coordinator are central to keeping all partners focused on and actively involved in the project, and remind them of their respective responsibilities.

**11. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum)**

We are pleased to have supported the International Workshop on Conservation Education for the Andean cat, organized by EduGat of our partner institution GECM (Mammal Behavioural Ecology Group, Universidad Nacional del Sur, Argentina). The workshop, co funded by WCN and Darwin Initiative and endorsed by the IUCN Cat Specialist Group.

The workshop participants represented seven teams working to increase public awareness and acceptance of the Andean cat in the four range countries. Delegates shared experiences, discussed achievements and problems, and finally agreed on a common educational strategy to support the conservation of this small felid through the participation of local communities. The strategy will be summarized in a manual for environmental educators that will include specific formal and no formal activities and tools targeted to a range of audiences spanning from school-age students to adult local inhabitants and the general public.

Overall this workshop was a greatly innovative and participative output that will help maximize the efficiency of available resources and will set an example for similar conservation initiatives in the region.

■ **I agree for ECTF and the Darwin Secretariat to publish the content of this section**



Annex 1. Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year: 2005/2006

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2005-Mar 2006	Actions required/planned for next period
<p><b>Goal:</b> To draw on expertise relevant to biodiversity from within the United Kingdom to work with local partners in countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to achieve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conservation of biological diversity,</li> <li>• The sustainable use of its components, and</li> <li>• The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Purpose</b> <i>To facilitate long-term protection of the vertebrate biodiversity of the Central Andes Puna across national frontiers, through establishment of the Andean cat as a conservation flagship, local community participation and protected area (PA) staff training.</i></p>	<p>New knowledge on the distribution of Andean cats and prey and identification of key conservation sites for vertebrate species. Increased local environmental awareness. Increased capacity of scientists, practitioners and PA staff to implement conservation measures and train their successors to do the same.</p>	<p>Surveys in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile collated and/or confirmed records of Andean cat presence in several areas. Extensive surveys of vertebrate distribution in progress; habitat mapping process on its initial phase. More specific ecological studies in planning phase. First interview-based diagnostic of public attitude towards environmental issues in target people in Argentina. Educational activities reached a number of local communities and schools. Local graduate students identified; some already started field activities under the supervision of local partners. Organization of a tri-national PA staff training workshop in progress.</p>	<p>Preliminary analysis of data collected by local partners led to the selection and refinement of standardised line transect method for forthcoming surveys of Andean cat and prey distribution across study areas. We identified a clear need for increased local environmental awareness of local communities; future outreach activities are being planned accordingly. Participating students currently enrolling in postgraduate courses at regional universities. Respective research projects will complement project activities. PA authorities showed interest in staff training; cross border coordination will require time and dedication.</p>
<p><b>Outputs</b> <i>Key conservation areas for Andean fauna identified.</i></p>	<p>Basic understanding of cat / prey ecology by yr1.</p>	<p>Field surveys in progress in all 3 countries; standard methods identified. 3 theses (1 in each country) by local students in advanced planning phase. Preliminary analysis of field data in progress.</p>	<p>Ongoing widespread field surveys needed to inform the process of qualification and identification of habitats types from satellite images. Good planning required for effective data collection to achieve a good representation of vast study area, with special consideration to logistics.</p>

<p><i>Enhancement of local community environmental awareness.</i></p>	<p>1 teacher training workshop and production of education materials by yr1. All relevant local communities &amp; schools reached by yr 3.</p>	<p>Education material designed, and tested in Argentina, on the bases of previous experience of local partners.</p> <p>2 local community stakeholder outreach meetings (Argentina and Bolivia)</p> <p>Pre-education campaign awareness interviews conducted among adults and school children in Argentina.</p> <p>Report of the first educational campaign delivered to local authorities.</p> <p>Organization of teacher training workshop in progress.</p>	<p>Site- and nation-specific strategies are necessary to account for local variations in traditions and political organization. Adaptive conservation education campaigns to expand to Bolivia and Chile.</p> <p>Local teachers and school authorities showed great interest on environmental issues training; they can act as powerful multipliers of awareness actions.</p> <p>Teacher training workshop to be held in June/July; selection of teachers to be trained as community education officers.</p>
<p><i>Training of future local conservation biologists.</i></p>	<p>In-country training of at least 6 project members from 4 partner institutions on survey techniques by yr 1.</p>	<p>Research workshop with all partner institutions in Chile. Standardisation of field methodologies agreed; workshop report completed; standard protocols drafted.</p> <p>Standardized field methodologies are being tested across boundaries, involving the participation of the local students.</p> <p>Compilation of a multi-author monitoring methodology manual in progress (in collaboration with AGA).</p>	<p>Logistics of fieldwork require careful expedition planning; focus on adequately trained, motivated personnel.</p> <p>Local students are the potential wildlife managers of the future and provide crucial manpower for the project. Their support to field work play a key role in project implementation. Two levels of training offered: short-term (3-4 weeks) and long-term (12 weeks/year minimum).</p> <p>Testing of field methods provides ecological information while helping to develop future common protocols for all partners.</p> <p>Deadline for production of monitoring field manual extended to allow for all AGA scientists to provide their input.</p>
<p><i>Capacity for biodiversity conservation increased through trans-frontier cooperation between protected area</i></p>	<p>3 PA management and field personnel training workshops by yr 2.</p> <p>Agreement on a framework for</p>	<p>PA authorities contacted in the 3 countries.</p> <p>PA managers showed interest in cross-</p>	<p>3 PAs differ significantly in protection status and implementation level. Communication between them very limited; development of network will</p>

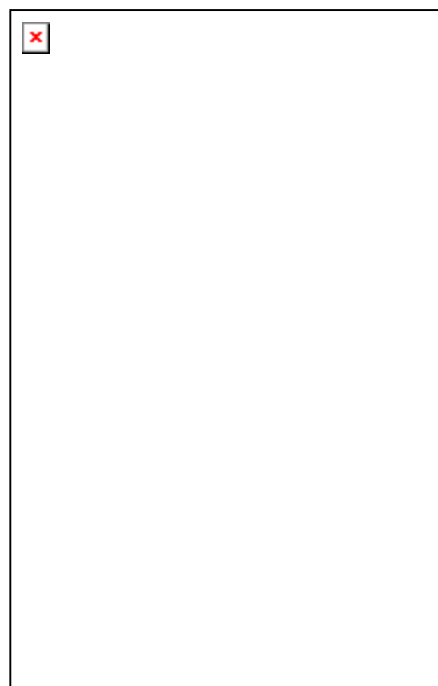
<i>staff and biologists in three countries.</i>	communication and collaboration across frontiers.	border communication and collaboration; they agreed to attend training workshop.	help improve management capability.
<i>Guidelines for good practice for conservation of the Puna disseminated more widely.</i>	Local media coverage (newspapers, radio & TV), 1 training manual by yr 2.	<p>Environmental Education workshop with educators from all local partner institutions. Standard education strategies and workshop report.</p> <p>Leaflet describing the project and first issue of the project's newsletter published in electronic form.</p> <p>Note on the common conservation education strategy in international journal (Oryx) and IUCN Cat Specialist Group website.</p> <p>Two articles in local and national newspapers (Argentina and Chile).</p> <p>Training manual for local teachers in progress. Sections of the manual currently being tested in local schools.</p>	<p>Dynamic evaluation and feedback process of workplan established.</p> <p>eed for a project newsletter identified during community meetings as a tool for informing all stakeholders of project progress. Newsletter will be published every six months.</p> <p>Local media coverage to be extended.</p> <p>The first PA training workshop to be held in November 2006.</p>

*Note: Please do NOT expand rows to include activities since their completion and outcomes should be reported under the column on progress and achievements at output and purpose levels.*

## **Científicos argentinos obtienen apoyo para salvar al gato andino**

Todavía se lo considera un enigma

OXFORD.- Pocos han escuchado hablar de él. Los expertos que lo han visto se cuentan con los dedos de una mano, pero un grupo de científicos argentinos ha logrado despertar interés internacional por la suerte del enigmático gato andino. Tanto es así que lo han convertido en especie "bandera" para la protección de la diversidad natural de la Puna sudamericana.



Todo comenzó durante un asado en la localidad bonaerense de Coronel Dorrego, en el cual el tortuoso destino de la especie *Oreailurus jacobita* surgió espontáneamente en la charla de dos parejas de biólogos, Claudio Sillero y su esposa Jorgelina Marino, y Mauro Lucherini y María José Merino.

Claudio y Jorgelina pertenecen a la prestigiosa unidad de conservación salvaje Wild CRU, de la Universidad de Oxford. A Claudio, egresado de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata, muchos lo conocen como el "muchacho de los lobos de Etiopía" por haber ganado hace cinco años el equivalente al Premio Nobel de su especialidad, el premio Whitley de Conservación Animal de la Real Sociedad Geográfica, por el rescate de esos carnívoros con problemas similares al del gato andino. También coordina iniciativas para preservar otras especies en India, Mongolia, Mozambique y Zimbabwe.

Mauro es graduado de la Universidad de Siena e investigador del Conicet; trabaja con María José en el Departamento de Biología de la Universidad Nacional del Sur (UNS).

De esa casual conversación surgió la determinación de iniciar un proyecto en la frontera entre la Argentina, Bolivia y Chile, y de cementar la colaboración internacional para la preservación de la especie a través de la Alianza Gato Andino, una agrupación de científicos de los tres países. Claudio Sillero coordinará todos los esfuerzos. Otros argentinos, Pablo Perovic, del Museo de Ciencias Naturales de la Universidad Nacional de Salta, y Estela Luengos Vidal, de la UNS, integrarán el equipo.

Si este grupo goza ahora del respaldo de la Wildlife Conservation Network, en San Francisco (Estados Unidos), y de la Darwin Initiative, mediante un subsidio de 300.000 dólares del gobierno británico, es porque el desafío que se plantearon va más allá de una mera investigación zoológica.

La escasa información disponible sobre el gato andino sugiere que tiene características únicas, al diferenciarse genéticamente de otros felinos pequeños -como muestra su frondosa cola de barras

morochas-, y por residir en hábitats rocosos por encima de los 3500 metros de altura en los Andes de la Argentina, Bolivia, Chile y Perú.

Es muy poco lo que se sabe sobre la historia natural de este animalito. Ni siquiera se ha podido determinar el tamaño de su población, aunque se considera que su distribución está naturalmente fragmentada y se presume que es de baja densidad.

Mauro Lucherini tuvo que recorrer más de 90.000 kilómetros cuadrados de Puna argentina durante seis años para poder captar una de las pocas fotografías obtenidas de esta especie, que LA NACION es el primer medio en publicar.

La información que existe sobre su pasado también es limitada. Se presume que la desaparición de su principal alimento, la chinchilla, y su forzoso reemplazo por la vizcacha, sumado al acecho de los seres humanos y a la competencia con el gato de las Pampas (*Oncifelis colocolo*), virtualmente ha acorralado a este felino en las cimas más altas.

Sólo los aborígenes de la región lo conocen bien porque para ellos la especie es sagrada para su religión animista. "Y éste es uno de los principales problemas que debemos enfrentar porque utilizan sus pieles en la fabricación de lo que llaman «mesas», que cuelgan en las paredes de sus casas y usan en ceremonias relacionadas con el marcado del ganado camélido o el inicio de la época de siembra o de cosecha -explicó Claudio Sillero a LA NACION-. Es por eso que estamos tratando de convencerlos con campañas educativas, espectáculos de títeres y otros medios, de la importancia del animal vivo y de que, al menos, se limiten a no más de una piel por familia."

Un obstáculo serio en esta misión son las actividades de algunos grupos evangélicos, que en su fervorosa tarea de conversión al cristianismo obligan a los aborígenes a quemar públicamente las pieles de los gatos andinos. "Cada piel quemada crea una oportunidad de negocio para los cazadores porque impide su reciclaje para otros aborígenes fieles a su tradición", indicó el biólogo argentino residente en Oxford.

### Condiciones adversas

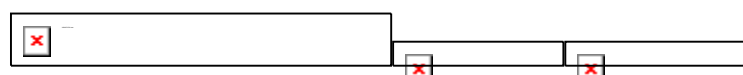
Altura y aridez crean condiciones muy difíciles de trabajo en la Puna, una región poco explorada, ocupada por enormes salares y con la mayor concentración de cumbres que superan los 6000 metros de altitud.

"La zona es supuestamente ideal para el gato andino, pero su conservación sólo será posible si logramos que participen todos los expertos interesados y las poblaciones locales. Aquí no hay espacio para la defensa de «quioscos» académicos o nacionalistas por parte de ningún experto", destacó Sillero.

El proyecto trinacional, con asistencia británica y norteamericana, comenzará en noviembre próximo y durará tres años. De tener éxito, la experiencia podría extenderse a toda la Puna y servir para preservar otras especies en riesgo de extinción, como la vicuña, las dos especies de flamenco parina chica y grande.

**Por Graciela Iglesias  
Para LA NACION**

*Link corto: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/736038>  
Noticias | Ciencia/Salud | Nota*





**WildCRU's Claudio Sillero receives a Darwin Initiative grant to carry out conservation research on Andean cats in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile**

*Dr Claudio Sillero has been awarded a Darwin Initiative Grant for a new project – 'The Conservation of Puna's Andean cats across national borders' – to study and protect South America's rarest wild cat (and the second most endangered felid in the world) – the Andean cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*). Claudio and Dr Jorgelina Marino, also at WildCRU, will collaborate with the Andean Cat Alliance and local scientists. The project will focus on the Central Andes Puna around the triple frontier of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, a relatively undisturbed region where most recent sightings of this rare animal have taken place.*

*The chief aim of this initiative, totalling £158,000 for three years, is to achieve biodiversity conservation by promoting collaboration across national boundaries, using the Andean cat as a flagship species. Field activities will be spearheaded by Dr Mauro Lucherini of Universidad Nacional del Sur in collaboration with colleagues in Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Salta (Argentina), Colección de Fauna de Bolivia, and Biodiversitas (Chile), and receives additional support from the Wildlife Conservation Network.*

*We seek to improve the efficiency of existing protected areas in securing long-term conservation of the Puna vertebrate biodiversity, and to encourage more appropriate resource practices outside them. The focus of this work will be to gather high quality data on vertebrate distribution, identify areas of key conservation value, train stakeholders, strengthen conservation networks, deliver community education to reduce pressure upon the Puna's fauna, and establish a mechanism for long-term monitoring of the cats and their prey.*

*The Andean cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*) is the rarest South American felid, and second most endangered wild cat in the world. Endemic to the Central Andes Puna, this carnivore is the top predator in a specialist high altitude vertebrate community. Most recent Andean cat sightings have occurred around the triple frontier of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, a relatively undisturbed region. We aim to achieve biodiversity conservation by promoting collaboration across national boundaries, using the Andean cat as a flagship species. We seek to improve the efficiency of existing protected areas in securing long-term conservation of the Puna vertebrate biodiversity, and to encourage more tolerance for wildlife outside them. The focus of our work will be to gather high quality data on vertebrate distribution, identify areas of key conservation value, train stakeholders, strengthen conservation networks, deliver community education to reduce pressure upon the Puna's fauna, and establish a mechanism for monitoring cat presence and prey availability.*

July 2005



## **Proyecto de Conservación Transfronteriza del Gato Andino**

### **PRESTIGIOSO FINANCIAMIENTO DEL REINO UNIDO PARA LA PROTECCION DEL GATO ANDINO**

*En San Pedro de Atacama se reunieron, entre los días 27-30 de noviembre, un grupo de Biólogos Chilenos, Argentinos, y Bolivianos para el lanzamiento de un proyecto internacional para la conservación del gato andino (*Oreailurus jacobita*) y de la biodiversidad de la Puna. El estudio contará con un subsidio de la "Iniciativa Darwin" de Reino Unido. Este ambicioso proyecto estará centrado alrededor de la triple frontera entre Argentina, Bolivia y Perú, con el objetivo de promover la colaboración transnacional y el uso del gato andino como especie bandera para la protección de la diversidad de la Puna.*

*La Puna es una región muy poco conocida, ocupada por enormes salares y con la mayor concentración de cumbres por arriba de 6.000 m de altitud en América Latina. Esta remota región alberga las **únicas poblaciones del gato andino en el mundo**, uno de los felinos más desconocidos, misteriosos y con mayor riesgo de extinción del mundo.*

*Los tres países participantes pertenecen a la Alianza Gato Andino, iniciativa apoyada por Wildlife Conservation Network, que ya lleva siete años de colaboración conjunta en el estudio de esta especie y su ecosistema.*

*Los participantes de Chile pertenecen a la Organización Biodiversitas, dirigida por el Biólogo Agustín Iriarte, que está involucrado en estudios de investigación sobre el gato andino desde 1998. El Proyecto Gato Andino Chile desarrolla actividades de investigación y educación a lo largo de todo el altiplano chileno, con el propósito de conocer la ecología de este felino y concientizar a las comunidades que viven en el área de distribución de esta especie a través de diferentes herramientas.*

*Este proyecto será dirigido por el Dr. Claudio Sillero, zoólogo de la Wildlife Conservation Research Unit de la Universidad de Oxford, quien posee una amplia trayectoria en el estudio de los carnívoros.*

*Teléfono De Contacto En Chile*

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