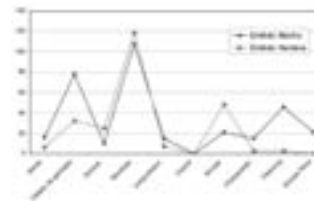
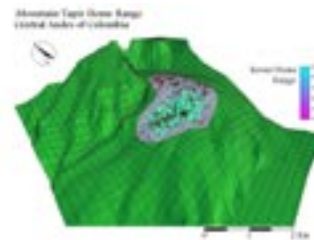
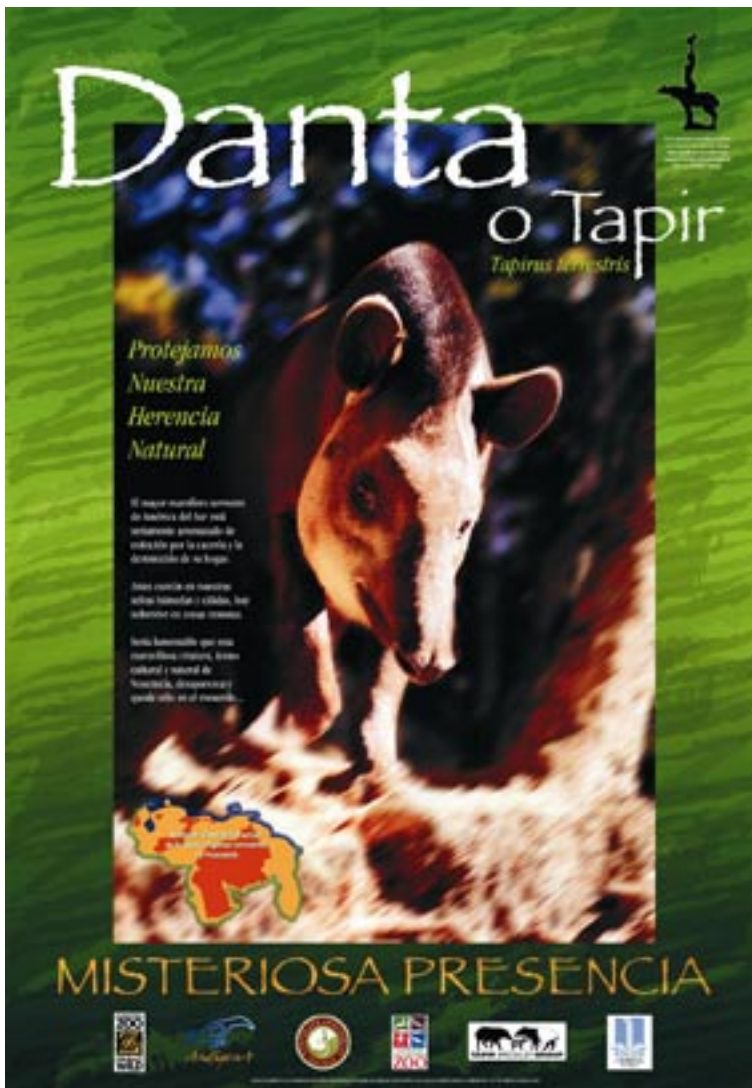


# Tapir Conservation

The Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group

[www.tapirspecialistgroup.org](http://www.tapirspecialistgroup.org)

Edited by Siân S. Waters and Stefan Seitz



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receiving strong response to the fundraising solicitation contained in these brochures.

The brochure features beautiful photos by TSG members and a cover photo donated by wildlife photographer Kevin Schafer; and most exciting, drawings of each of the four species of tapir drawn by Conservation International artist Stephen Nash, who provided them free of charge. We have definitely experienced “ask and ye shall receive” this year.

Please let Marketing Committee Chair Gilia Angell know if you'd like a handful of brochures to distribute to your community. Copies are limited, and only in English, so first come first served. Our goal is to use these colour brochures as educational and fundraising materials for those already familiar with tapirs, namely our colleagues, conservation NGOs, zoos, and citizens already engaged in conservation advocacy. PDF copies of the brochure may also be found at our website under

the Downloads section.

One more note: TSG logos, logo usage information and logo files are all now available in the Downloads section of the site. Please use these files for your speeches, web links, and other references, as they are the most up to date. Thanks!

### **Gilia Angell**

*Web/Graphic Designer, Amazon.com  
Marketing Committee Coordinator,  
IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG)  
Webmaster, IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG),  
www.tapirspecialistgroup.org  
270 Dorffel Drive East, Seattle, Washington 98112,  
United States  
Phone: +1-206-266-2613; +1-206-568-1655  
Fax: +1-206-266-1822  
E-mail: gilia\_angell@earthlink.net*

## Project Updates

### **Cooperative Efforts for Lowland Tapir Conservation in Venezuela**

*By Denis Alexander Torres*

The lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) is one of the least known and most threatened mammal species in Venezuela. Tapirs are key species in the ecological dynamics of tropical forests as well as being a cultural icon in Venezuela. Its current population status is uncertain in the country, which can be argued to be due to a lack of information and field research. Nevertheless, the species was classified as *Vulnerable* in the “Red Data Book” of Venezuelan Fauna (Rodríguez & Rojas-Suárez 1999). Its range has been severely fragmented by habitat conversion. These habitats, must be shared with humans and are, in fact, some of the most intensively-used and threatened landscapes on the continent.

The fact that important areas of tapir habitat still remain in the southern portion of Venezuela, gives us reason to assume that there are viable populations in this region. The opposite scenario is found to the north of the Orinoco River, where the species has vanished from many areas, and just a few populations remain in the region and are in decline due to poaching and

habitat destruction.

Although lowland tapirs are threatened with extinction, very few conservation initiatives have been implemented in their countries of origin. Consequently, AndígenA, a Venezuelan non-profit foundation whose mission is the conservation of Neotropical Biodiversity, has undertaken the only initiative focusing on tapir conservation in Venezuela. The project began in 1999 and during its preliminary stages “Proyecto Danta”, was focused on two main lines of action: 1) environmental education and 2) captive breeding (Torres 2000).

In 1999, we promoted a pilot captive breeding programme accompanied by a series of environmental education activities at Chorros de Milla Zoo located in Mérida city, Venezuela. At that time the zoo had only one lowland tapir male named “Pijiguao” in its animal collection. In order to achieve one of our actions, we were in touch with the authorities of Bararida Zoo & Botanical Gardens, located in Lara State, for the purpose of obtaining a female tapir. In 2000 we obtained a young female tapir called “Simona” from Bararida Zoo. A breeding pair was formed and in May 2002, a calf was born, this was the first tapir calf in the history of Chorros de Milla Zoo (Torres & Rodríguez-Hernández 2004). During this time, we received valuable support from the Tapir Preservation Fund, an American non-governmental organization devoted to tapir conservation.

As part of a preliminary assessment of the captive tapir population status in Venezuela (Naveda-Rodríguez

& Torres 2002), we verified that there were a number of individuals housed in many private collections and zoological parks. However, in spite of this, a coordinated breeding programme for the species did not exist. The main goal of this initiative was to build a database or studbook including information on most if not all the captive individuals in the country. In 2002 the first studbook was completed and distributed among all the Venezuelan zoos thanks to valuable support provided by the Houston Zoo Inc. We hope to continue this pioneering work and compile updates of the studbook for this species (Naveda-Rodríguez & Torres 2002). This will serve as a framework to promote the exchange of individuals between Venezuela's zoos, to develop captive breeding protocols and to promote a series of research projects both *in* and *ex situ*.

In 2003, the second stage of "Proyecto Danta" began by developing and promoting a pragmatic conservation programme for this species at the national level. We intend to develop the programme by focusing on three main topics:

1. Field research to determine the current distribution and status of the wild populations.
2. Environmental education in rural areas and zoos.
3. Awareness-building and training of governmental officials in order to prevent poaching.

Through a proposal entitled "PROYECTO DANTA: *Fostering International Cooperation for Tapir Conservation in Venezuela*" sent to several international organizations we propose as a first step to design and implement a series of environmental education activities to provide the public with information about tapir biology, ecology and conservation. The development of these initiatives will give us a base from which to strengthen the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG) at the local level and to develop more complex actions for the future. This approach has recently been used to coordinate and publicise a worldwide internet-based forum called "Tapir Talk" ([www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/tapirtalk](http://www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/tapirtalk)). During six months in 2002 we have coordinated this initiative thanks to support from Cleveland Zoological Society through a generous donation made by Mrs. Ann Griss. However, our limited capacity has not enabled us to continue this activity and "Tapir Talk" is currently coordinated by Patricia Medici, chair of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group.

After a lot of hard work and many setbacks we began work on the design, production and distribution of a high-quality poster and pamphlets. This was due to financial support from the Houston Zoo Inc. The experience gained by our organisation in environmental education issues has allowed us to propose launching a

campaign to heighten awareness about lowland tapirs amongst the people throughout the whole Venezuelan territory where the species is found. In order to make a public impact, we are relying on the effectiveness of the poster as an educational tool over time, attractive appearance and relatively low cost of production.

In this way, the lowland tapir poster was designed with the assistance of two professional graphic designers and the central image was taken by the photographer, John Márquez at Chorros de Milla Zoo. During the creative process we decided that this poster must be universal in content, whilst taking into account local variations in common names, public perception of tapirs, principal threats, and their importance for the conservation of the tropical forests and the local culture. The poster is illustrated in the photograph on the cover of this newsletter.

A thousand posters were printed and they will be distributed through national environmental agencies or private companies, who will deliver the posters at no cost to the project.

We have already established links with a number of organisations willing to serve as partners in each of the Venezuelan states where the tapir occurs. This partnership allows us to impart the information to schools, government offices, conservation memberships and, most importantly, the villages closest to tapir habitat. Their contribution will be acknowledged during the media campaigns, which will accompany the release of the poster.

Partner organizations will keep a detailed record of their activities while distributing posters, and will be invited to use them in the context of larger conservation programmes they may currently be developing. Special emphasis will be given to distributing the poster as part of environmental education programmes in rural areas near the rain forest, and in using it to promote tapir conservation amongst environmental law enforcement agencies. As the project progresses it will open the door for future joint activities. We also aim to produce an informative pamphlet directed at the general public with emphasis on the rural inhabitants as a future project.

This year we will be receiving additional support from Houston Zoo Inc. in order to:

1. To reinforce the environmental awareness campaign focused on tapir conservation.
2. To increase public knowledge and awareness about the importance of taking action in favour of tapir conservation. This will be achieved by:
  - Holding a public technical workshop for governmental officials and the scientific and conservation community.
  - Publicising the information gained from the

- project.
- The publication of a second edition of the lowland tapir studbook in Venezuela.
3. To help strengthen environmental organisations located in the tapir range areas by:
    - Holding a public technical workshop.
    - Creating a scientific advisory council led by Fundación AndígenA and its partners in Proyecto Danta.
  4. To assess the management of the captive tapir population in the Venezuelan zoos:
    - Through a survey supported by a questionnaire and personal visits to the zoos.
  5. To assess the status of *T. terrestris* in the western region of Venezuela.
  6. To determine the distribution pattern of *T. terrestris* in Venezuela.
  7. To compare the distribution pattern of *T. terrestris* with the current distribution of National Parks and determine if extensions of these areas are necessary to protect threatened populations.

This international joint effort among AndígenA, the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group, Tapir Preservation Fund and American zoos, is a good example of how it is possible to work for the benefit of a threatened species. With a small budget it is possible to have a big social impact. It is a pragmatic way to demonstrate that small actions can make a lot of difference.

#### **Denis Alexander Torres**

President, Fundación AndígenA  
 E-mail: fundación\_andigena@yahoo.com /  
 info@andigena.org  
 Website: www.andigena.org

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## **Is the Andean Tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*) Present in the Mamapacha Massif (Boyacá, Colombia)?**

**By Javier Adolfo Sarria Perea & Diana S. F. Vargas Munar**

**M**ountain or Andean tapirs (*Tapirus pinchaque*) inhabit the niche of montane rain forest and paramos, at elevations between 2000 to 4500m in the Northern Andes (Downer 1996).

Before 1500 AD, the species probably extended throughout the Eastern and Central cordilleras of the Northern Andes, in the territory of what are now Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela.

Recently, this distribution has been severely reduced and the population fragmented because of human activities such as deforestation, agriculture, cattle ranching, establishment of slums and cities, over-hunting and road building, leading the species to be classified as critically endangered (IUCN 1997).

In Colombia the species has been identified in several Andean forest patches of variable size, from the Andean Massif in the department of Nariño to the southern limit of the Los Nevados National Park and from the departments of Quindío and Tolima as the northern limit in the central Cordillera, and the Sumapaz National Park in the department of Cundinamarca as the northern limit in the eastern Cordillera (Lizcano et al 2002). However, its presence has recently been reported in the south of the department of Boyacá, located north of Sumapaz (Corpochivor 1997; Montenegro 2002).

The Mamapacha Massif in the department of Boyacá, is the most representative fragment of montane rain forest and paramo in the region, and has a total area of 27,511.77 hectares distributed among five municipalities (See Figure 1). Although this region has been affected by cattle ranching and agriculture over decades, these activities have been considerably reduced, and large expanses of the forest have been