EXPLORER'S INN

*** Lodge from Peruvian Safaris S.A.
At the Tambopata Natural Wildlife Reserve

NEWS LETTER NO. 1 - AUGUST 1984

FOREWORD

This is the first newsletter from the Tambopata Wildlife Reserve. It is hoped that through these occasional newletters we can keep people informed about what is happening here and to generally publicize the Reserve in Peru and abroad.

This first newsletter aims to provide an introduction to the Reserve, together with a brief description of the status of the wildlife here. A lot of the material used comes from the report of the preliminary Floral and Faunal Survey, carried out at the Tambopata Wildlife Reserve in 1979. Future newsletters will be used to discuss developments in the Reserve and its relationship with the local community.

We would be grateful for any comments onthe contents of this newsletter that you may have - these should be addressed as follows:

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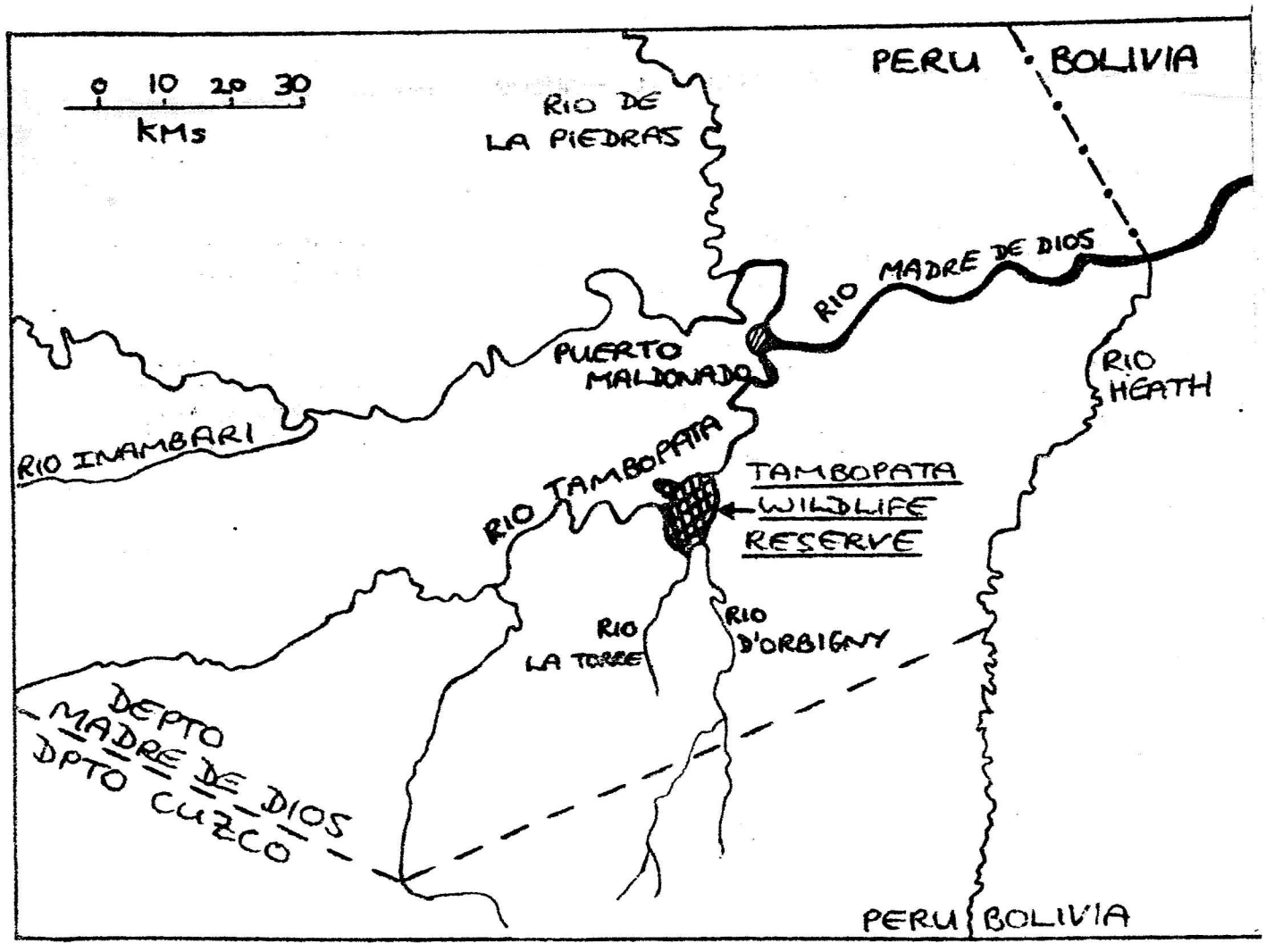
THE TAMBOPATA WILDLIFE RESERVE

LOCATION

The Tambopata Wildlife Reserve (T.W.R.) is located at 12 50 - 55' South and 69 17'West, 30 km South of Puerto Maldonado in the department of Madre de Dios, Southeastern Peru. It consists of 5500 hectares of undisturbed tropical rainforest, and was created around the Explorer's Inn - a tourist lodge owned by Peruvian Safaris and set in a two hectare clearing close to the Rio Tambopata. Through the efforts of Dr. Max Gunther, the principal owner of Peruvian Safaris, the T.W.R. received official status in 1977 and the custodianship of the Reserve has been assigned to Peruvian Safaris S.A.

MAP OF THE LOCATION OF THE TAMBOPATA WILDLIFE RESERVE



TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Physiographically, the T.M.R. is dominated by the flood plains of the Tambopata and D'Orbigny rivers. General topography is relatively flat at about 260m in elevation. The most striking features are the isolated former river channels generally containing ox-bow lakes such as Cocococha Lagoon which is 2km long, 250 m wide and some 10 m lower in elevation than the extensive alluvial terraces.
The T.M.R. itself is located entirely within the Subtropical Moist Forest Life Zone according to the Holdridge Life Zones Classification. Climate is warm and humid; mean annual rainfall about 2000 mm and mean annual relative humidity about 75%. The rainy season is from December to April. Between June and September temperatures may occasionally drop to as low as 7oC as a result of the cold frontal systems which approach from the South Atlantic. These cold spells, known locally as 'Friajes' may last 3-6 days and are characteristic of the region.

VEGETATION

The T.M.R. is almost completely forested; only along the navigable rivers and in the vicinity of the Explorer's Inn has the forest been substantially modified. The forest vegetation ranges from impressive stands of tall trees typical of forest further North, to low scrubby vegetation under scattered emergent trees. Vegetation types on the alluvial terraces appear to be primarilly controlled by soil drainage. The well-drained levees of the tributary streams as well as along the former river channels support a well-developed forest with nearly continuous canopy between 30m and 40m in height. A few trees(e.g. Huberodendron swietenoides) attain 50-55 m in height on the levees. With increasing distance from stream channels or isolated meanders, drainage becomes poorer and even swampy in shallow depressions. Thickets of scandent bamboo with vicious, recurved, spiny hooks are common on these poorer-drained soils. The Brazil Nut tree (Bertholletia excelsa) which is economically very important in the region is one of the most conspicuous trees on the Reserve.
Hectare study plots have been set up throughout the Reserve to investigate the dynamics of forest growth. A 1979 inventory of one hectare plot made by Dr. Gary Hrtshorn revealed 584 woody individuals 10cm or more in diameter at breast height, representing 153 species. Hartshorn considers this to be exceptionally rich in woody species. Inventories of the other plots are being carried out at present.

BIRDS

The avifauna of the T.M.R. is well documented through the combined efforts of Paul Donahue, Ted Parker and many others. To date **547 species of birds** have been recorded within an 8km radius of the Explorer's Inn, representing a world record for the number of bird species for one location. This exceptional diversity is due in part to the presence of species characteristic of three important areas of endemism within the Amazon Basin: - the upper Amazon foothills, the Rio Ucayali - upper Rio Amazonas drainage, and the Rio Madre de Dios - Rio Madeira drainage. The unusual diversity and abundance of parrots (18 species, including 6 macaw species) and toucans (8 species) on the Reserve indicate that human pressure has not yet been particularly damaging to the bird populations - even the Harpy Eagle (Harpyia harpyia) is still present in the area.

There are a number of bird species resident on the Reserve that have not been found in Manu National Park, such as the Pavonine Quetzal (Pharomachrus pavoninus) and the white-tailed Trogon (Trogon viridis) and certain species such as the Flammulated Pigmy-Tyrant (Hemitriccus flammulatus) and the Striated Antbird (Drymophila devillei) which are dependent on bamboo thickets for cover. this microhabitat is scarce in Manu, and fairly common in Tambopata. Also known to occur at Tambopata but not in Manu are some inhabitants of savannah eg. Red-Bellied Macaw, (Ara manilata) and drier forest eg. Black Manakin, (Xenopipe atrenitens).

MAMMALS

The mammalian fauna of the T.W.R. is rich, and differs from that of Manu National Park in a number of ways, due in part to the presence of species characteristic of the drier Southern portion of the Amazon Basin. One such species is the little-known and extremely rare Bush Dog (Speothes venaticus) whose presence on the Reserve may be a result of the proximity of the Bolivian Pampas to the East.

Many mammals typical of Western Amazonia are also found on the Reserve. Six species of monkey, the Giant River Otter (Pteronura brasiliensis), Agoute (Dasyprocta variegata yungarum) and two species of peccaries are amongst the mammals seen regularly. More unusual sightings this year have included Tapir, Jaguar, Ocelot and Prehensile-tailed Porcupine.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Knowledge of the herpetofauna of the Reserve is at present limited, but is increasing as a result of more extensive field effort, particularly by Roy McDiarmid and Rex Cocroft. The 1979 survey produced 80 species of reptiles and amphibians including 3 turtles, 3 crocodilians, 14 lizards, 1 amphisbainian, 16 snakes, and 43 frogs. The up-to-date figure is not known since classification of new species is still being carried out, but it is estimated that the herpetofauna of the Reserve may include as many as 200 species. A large number of the species recorded from the Reserve are new to Science. The T.W.R. represents an important refuge for the rare and endangered Black Caiman (Melanosuchus nigir).

INVERTEBRATES

Relatively little is known about the invertebrate fauna of Tambopata, but certain groups have been well-studied. Dr. Gerardo Lamas has extensively studied the Lepidoptera of the T.W.R. and more than 1,100 species of butterflies have been recorded. This is the greatest number of butterfly species for any limited locality in the world. The T.W.R. also holds the world record for the number of species in several other insect groups, including dragonflies and tiger beetles. Much more will be known about the tree-canopy invertebrate fauna as a result of the extensive studies being made by Dr. Terry Erwin of the Smithsonian Institution. Preliminary studies also indicate an extremely rich spider fauna.

THE NATIVE COMMUNITY OF INFIERNO

To the East along the Rio Tambopata, the Native Community of Infierno adjoins the T.W.R. This community of about 45 families was given a charter and a reservation of about 9000 hectares in 1973, although the area has been settled for far longer. The people live mainly by slash and burn agriculture and hunting, with occasional revenues from the sale of castanas (Brazil nuts), turtle eggs and palmiche (palm-roof thatching).

The Community and the T.W.R. share some 2000 hectares of land to the North of Cocococha lagoon, so co-operation between the T.W.R. and the Community is essential; in April 1984 a liason officer was elected from the Community, and there have been encouraging developments in the relationship in recent months. In the near future it is hoped that several projects will be implemented to further this progress, the three most important projects being:

AMETRA (Application of Tradicional Medicine)
AMETRA 2001 is a project which has already been established in the Ucayali region of Peru, aiming to raise the general level of health and sanitary awareness of forest people by promoting the concept of integrated medicine. By encouraging the use of local resources as well as teaching essential elements of modern medicine such a project will not only raise the health standards within the Community, but will in addition increase respect for and appreciation of the natural environment.