

TReeS News

No.8 : Oct/Nov.1987

INTRODUCTION

In both Peru and Britain, a great deal has happened since the last newsletter. The work of AMETRA 2001 is progressing, with Michel Alexiades' visits to Europe to raise funds, and the first building of the Ethnobiological Centre (see July 1987) being built. The Resident Naturalists at Tambopata have had a busy summer, and there have been some exceptional mammal sightings in the Reserved Zone. TReeS in this country is set for change, as Kevin Morgan is going abroad, and Pete Lawson is leaving the post of treasurer. Both of them have invested many hours in the founding and running of TReeS in the last two years, for which they deserve the thanks of all of us.

Finally, I have inherited the production of the newsletter from Helen Newing. Sophie Allington will continue to produce the graphics for this, and to be responsible for TReeS publicity- especially the new leaflet about the Reserved Zone. I would like to hear from all members what you want to see in your newsletter. I have also written a brief questionnaire; please can you complete it and return it to me at the address below. In addition, any material which can be used in the January/February 1988 issue e.g. graphics, cartoons, poems, pieces about Tambopata etc. will be most welcome!

Paul Wilkin
Wantage Hall,
Upper Redlands Rd.,
Reading RG1 5JG.

AMETRA UPDATE

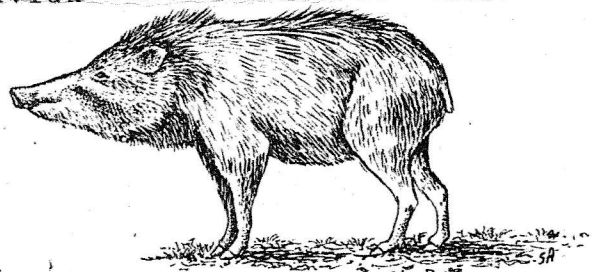
With the pressing need to raise funds for AMETRA following the ending of temporary funding from the WWF in July, TReeS has been trying hard to help. Now that the Native Community of Infierno is going ahead with the Ethnobiological Centre on the 2000 Hectare overlap area between the Reserved Zone and their land, this need is stronger than ever. The centre

will help the indigenous people to affirm the value of their culture, by acting as a general meeting place, and as a centre for medicinal plant teaching and research. Crucially, it is hoped that it may become the focus of community-led sustainable development at Tambopata. The first building of the Centre is now being built and two 'caretakers' have been elected. The rest of the Centre has been costed and designed by the architect, Tanith Ortegui.

The long-term funding of both the Centre and AMETRA's medicinal plant courses is still uncertain, but things are looking promising. Michel Alexiades' slideshow to an enthusiastic audience at the Latin American Centre in Kilburn, at the end of July, was a great success, but didn't bring any major support. Similarly, a mailshot of medical charitable trusts does not seem to have been very fruitful. Things are easier outside the UK - various groups across Europe have offered help and are considering major funding. Meanwhile, the newly-founded AMETRA support group of the New York Rainforest Association is set to raise money. TReeS is sending out occasional sums of a few hundred pounds to help keep the project going. The BBC wildlife magazine (October edition) has just published an interesting article on AMETRA, which has brought a good response, in particular an offer of help from the Students Association of the School of Herbal Medicine and Phytotherapy. In Peru, a successful course was run in August, with 12 native communities from Madre de Dios participating, and by the time you read this the FENAMAD (Federación de Nativos de Madre de Dios) conference will have taken place, where the Ethnobiological Centre plans will be discussed.

RESERVE NEWS

In the 18 months that TReeS has been in existence, the most urgent of our aims has been to see the proposed expansion of the Reserved Zone go ahead. We need not reiterate how important this is to ensure the continued existence of the Reserved Zone as an area for conservation. Unfortunately, however, there is still no progress in this area. The various plans (see previous newsletters) are still on ice in the Peruvian Agriculture Ministry. All we can really do in Britain is hope to bring together all the different groups and individuals involved; we are in touch with all the organisations that have made proposals for the area's future and hope that they will co-ordinate more closely in future.



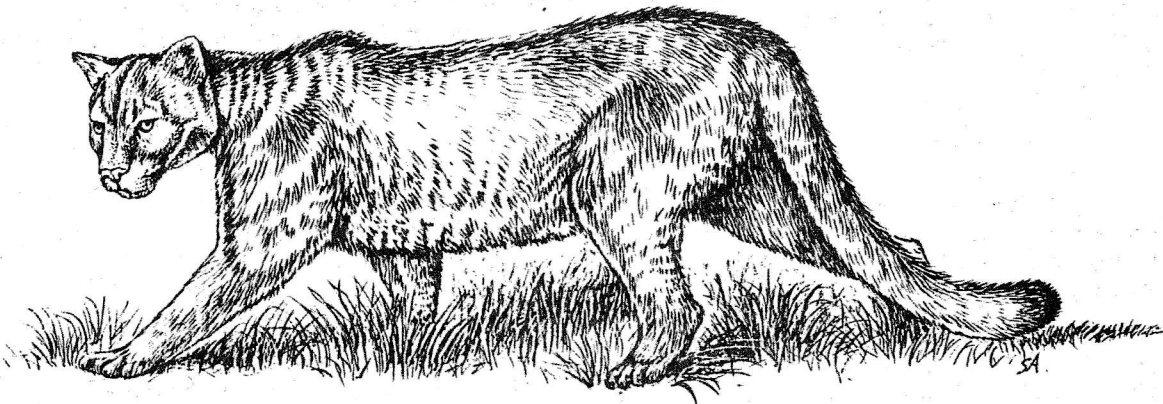
The TWR and its surrounding area is still suffering from logging and shooting. A jaguar was shot recently in the vicinity of the Reserved Zone, and September was the chacra-burning season, where forest is cut and burned to make new small farms. This year has seen more burning than ever before along the Rio Tambopata. These events highlight the real current threat to the Reserve.

In the long-term, however, this could be greatly increased. In July, the Presidents of Peru and Brazil met in Puerto

Maldonado to discuss linking their countries by means of a road from Puerto Maldonado to Inapari. It is also proposed to re-locate 50,000 people and 11,000 cattle, and settle them on either side of the new road. There are already rumours of Brazilian families from the Acre region (adjacent to Madre de Dios) crossing the border to find land illegally. In addition, the price of gold continues to rise, and large areas of land are being doled out to wealthy Peruvians to make cattle ranches, including 60,000 Hectares along the road to the Tambopata river. We can only hope that an expansion plan is implemented before the Reserved Zone is swallowed up by the pace of development in Madre de Dios.

LIFE ON THE RESERVED ZONE

AND AT EXPLORER'S INN.



At last, on to happier events. Throughout a busy summer for all the Resident Naturalists there have been many exciting animals seen and a lot of valuable scientific work done. The most incredible day of the summer must have been September 16th: some of Larry McQueen's adventures on that day are quoted below from the naturalists' log.

"I then came to a point in the trail which overlooked a low open area forming a comparatively wide place in the trail right beside the lake. There I startled two pumas. One was noticeably larger. I concentrated on the larger animal which was quite beautiful in colour and muscular. It bounded up the bank in a few strides and was gone.

As I was standing there, filled with this vision and my mouth open, two white-lipped peccaries suddenly erupted before me, charging down the trail in my direction. At once I realised this charge was caused by the bolting of the pumas and that I was in their way. I jumped aside into the nearest tree and the first peccary got to me when my feet were but two feet from the ground. As it went by it took a swipe at my leg, letting out a loud bark emphasized by a louder snap, presumably caused by its teeth and jaw coming together forcefully. The following peccary then charged, making the same awful noise and just making contact with my leg. I dropped to the ground realising that the peccaries were only trying to escape the pumas and, after all, I had

got in the way!" Later that day, Larry was able to observe three giant otters feeding at close range for a considerable length of time.

There have been many other interesting and unusual sightings, including a puma and an ocelot. Shortly after the jaguar was shot, another was seen in the early morning by visitors returning to Puerto Maldonado by boat, actually swimming across the river! A few days later, another jaguar sighting was made when one was seen lying on the riverbank during a night boat trip to look for caiman. Apart from the cats which seem to be trying to take over the reserve, a pair of giant otters was seen regularly at Laguna Cocococha over the summer. Ten new bird species have been added to the reserve list since the last newsletter, by Carol and Ted Parker and Tom Schullenberg (who are working on a book about ant birds) and Paul Donahue and Ken Rosenberg. One of these species was a grey-bellied hawk, one of the rarest birds in South America. Finally, Katherine Renton, a Resident Naturalist, saw a rare zig-zag heron in the swamp section of the main trail, and was able to observe it feeding for over half an hour.

Some of the Resident Naturalists working on the Reserve recently were:

Katherine Renton and Nora Cominskey, who supplied much of this information.

Rachel Byers.

Jeff Marlow and Brad Boyle (see last newsletter) who left at the end of September. Brad has just compiled a report- "Getting high- a guide to tree-climbing and the tree platform at Tambopata" on his work at the Reserved Zone.

Others visiting the Reserve:

Diana Silva, from the Museum of Natural History, Lima, continuing an inventory of spiders on the Reserve.

Martha Condon, doing research on tropical vines.

Antonio del Aguila, La Molina University, Peru. Antonio is working on the effect of natural fertilisers on maize, beans and cucumbers in the Amazon garden. This is part of a long-term study.

Larry McQueen, working on the plates for the forthcoming book "Birds of Peru".

Many thanks to Katherine Renton, Nora Cominskey, Didier Lacaze and Max Gunther for all their fascinating information, and to Oliver Phillips and Helen Newing for help in writing this newsletter. Also, thanks to Sophie Allington for all the graphics.

N.B.

Next TReeS meeting: Sat. January 16th. Including a slideshow for new members and an open meeting. We really do need volunteers for Treasurer and Membership Secretary by then- any keen lawyers, accountants or printers among you?

2nd Birthday Party- Feb 6th, details to be arranged. (Any offers of help?).

XMAS PRESENTS: TReeS goods for sale, see July newsletter. TReeS for Life Calendar 1988 an excellent present!