Project Update: December 2013

Raptor and Migration Festival - October 2013

Twice a year the Darién of Colombia hosts one of nature's great spectacles, the migration of thousands of hawks, vultures and falcons. To draw attention to this natural phenomenon and to promote the observation of raptors as a tourist attraction that could assist in the sustainable development of local communities, we carried out a series of activities during October and November 2013. Activities were centered on the village of Sapzurro and involved the observation of migrating raptors with both visiting tourists and local people. The most important activity included a series of environmental education activities with children from the local school, culminating in the design and production of raptor masks, to be worn during a parade through the village. The festival was successful in generating interest within the local community for holding a larger event in 2014, with the support of SELVA and our local partner Tacarcuna Reserve.

Photo 1: Pupils from Sapzurro wearing raptor masks (Photo – Martha Rubio). Photo 2: Parade through Sapzurro celebrating the migration of raptors (Photo – Martha Rubio).

Wildlife Surveys - November 2013

Before promoting wildlife observation tourism as an economic alternative in the Darién, it is necessary to determine what species of interest are present and where and when they can be observed. During October and November surveys were carried out for migrating raptors and for mammals using camera traps around Sapzurro. Raptor counts were extremely successful, recording a remarkable passage of over half a million birds for a second year running and placing Sapzurro within the top six sites globally for observing raptor migration. Camera traps revealed a healthy community of mammals in the area, including both rare and endangered predators such as the margay cat and prey animals like white-tailed deer and collared peccary.

Photo 3: The female great curassow (VU) captured by camera traps. Photo 4: A tayra captured by camera traps.