

Project Update: May 2010

Since late 2009, several efforts are underway to reach the objectives of our work. The activities in this research include key support staff of the National Parks Administration of Argentina. We are currently carrying out numerous activities in the study area:

Artificial Nests

We carried out an experiment with ñandu (*Rhrea americana*) artificial nests. These were constructed to assess the potential impact of the wild boar on the clutches of this species. Unfertilized eggs were used from the Cordoba Zoo, Argentina. Using trap traces and traces found in the nests and eggs consumed, it was found that possibly the crab-eating fox (*Cerdocyon thous*) and the armadillo (*Euphractus sexcinctus* o *Dasyus hybridus*) may be the cause of the damage in artificial nests. We believe that predation on ground nesting birds eggs by the boar may be more accurately determined through analysis of stomach contents of hunted individuals.



Left: Artificial nest building. Right: Rhea eggs marked.

Data Collection

Since the beginning of the study we have collected data from the Control of Exotic Mammal Invaders Plan in the NPEP. These data include: the number of wild boar hunted; hunting site; man-hours used for hunting; and standard morphometric measures. These data complement the information to obtain the density of wild boar and help to define priority conservation areas for native species. These data are being analyzed thoroughly and provide key information for managing the species.

The activities and preliminary results obtained so far have been shown at internal workshops in the NPEP and the International Congress of Fauna Management held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia during May 2010.

Stomach Content Analysis

For more than 7 months we have been collecting wild boar stomachs of culled animals from hunting control in the National Park El Palmar (NPEP). With these samples, we are determining the seasonal diet of the invasive species and their impacts on local biodiversity.

So far, we have collected more than 40 samples, and these are being analyzed in the laboratory. The stomachs analyzed are showing very interesting results, such as the importance of yatay palm fruits in the samples collected in summer. Yatay palm, the reason for the creation of protected area, is a native species whose populations are declining in the study area and whose fruits are important food source for native species of conservation importance such as the ñandu.



Left: Stomach of a wild boar. Right: Contents of the wild boar's stomach.