

Project Update: July 2014

General Summary

The bufeo is a unique, endemic species; it is threatened by several human activities including killing. Following the designation of Freshwater Protected Area (PA) in the Bolivian Amazon, this project aims to support the Municipality of the City of Trinidad, in creating an effective plan for bufeo conservation and establishing local community participation to ensure bufeo awareness and protection. The project includes a local education and outreach programme, monitoring and conservation activities, work with local authorities and engagement of local businesses. The overall approach is based on a holistic, highly successful model shared by Natütama – a Colombian conservation organisation.

Background and situation of the project

As mentioned before Bolivia suffered one of the worst flooding in the last years

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/04/brazilian-dams-accused-aggravating-floods-bolivia/>

<https://nacla.org/blog/2014/3/31/are-brazil%E2%80%99s-dams-blame-record-floods-bolivia>

http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/Blogs/2309820/bolivia_and_britain_a_tale_of_two_floods.html

More than 180 000 cattle drowned in the area; also an undetermined amount of wildlife mortality was reported, without any study or register in the area. The water levels were so high that they covered my entire study site, including all the local indigenous communities living along the rivers, Therefore, all the agreements and logistics have to be suspended. Unfortunately this situation was denied by our government to avoid any international help.

Until mid-June 2014 some areas at north of the country were still underwater, but waters are slowly receding. There are no evaluations for the wildlife or the effects on this. With all this disaster going on, the Beni Department (State) Government stopped any activity that was not related to the flooding. However, we still managed to continue with the project, and maintained the interest of some local authorities related to river dolphins and did the following activities:

Conservation

Tourism

As a part of the conservation efforts, we have the support of the Tourism department of the Beni Government and we are developing a strategy for the river dolphins.

Video

We finished a short time video (5 min). This idea took 2 years but the video is ready and will be launched by the Beni Government, hopefully in September 2014. The video presents the basic ecology, threats and the tourism opportunities of the species.

Protocol- “Buenas prácticas para la observación responsable del bufeo boliviano”; The protocol for good practices for the Bolivian bufeo observation. Authors: Enzo Aliaga-Rossel, Fernando Trujillo, Erich Hoyt (draft in appendix 1). This protocol, was finally approved by the Tourism main office of the Beni

Government, and will be printed and officially launched in September 2014 (with the video). Along this protocol, a series of workshops are planned. These workshops are to socialize and work with the tourism companies.

Environmental Education

USA Embassy.



Enzo Aliaga-Rossel and the Host of the USA Embassy.

Invited by the USA embassy, department of press and culture, to give a presentation for the earth day via Webinar “The Bolivian bufeo – Threats and conservation efforts”. The demographics of this presentation are in the following table

Demographics	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The event drew 143 individuals to the CO.NX portal site the day of the event • The event drew 108 individuals to the CO.NX portal site in the hour before and after the event • The event drew 75 individuals within the event window; the majority (81.8%) of the remainder came in the hour before the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 21.3% were returning visitors; 78.7% were new visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 31.3% of Return Visitors were referred to the site by a Direct Link; 6.2% through Twitter, 56.3% through Facebook; 6.2% through CO.NX newsletter ▪ 25.4% of New Visitors were referred to the site by a Direct Link; 1.7% through Twitter, 72.9% through Facebook • Programme media was viewed through several different platforms, including 21.3% mobile consumption – which is above average (16.9%) for the WHA Region • Participants came from 12 different countries from four geographic regions – 74.7% of the audience came from the WHA region <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bolivia – 68.0% 2. United States – 14.7% 3. India – 5.3% 6. Chile – 1.3% 7. Dominican Republic – 1.3% 8. Spain – 1.3%

	4. Austria – 1.3%	9. Gambia – 1.3%
	5. Belgium – 1.3%	10. Panama – 1.3%

Universito. Mayor de San Andrés- La Paz

Presentation at the University Mayor de San Andres “Biogeography of the Bolivian river dolphin and its threats” - 38 people listened to this presentation, the majority of 2nd and 3rd year of Biology. The students showed a lot of interest in the species and its threats. The goal is to interest and recruit more passionate people to work in river dolphins

Museum of Natural History, La Paz

Bufo and baby, model

We are preparing a model of the bufeo (adult and a baby) to be donated to this Museum. The artist doing this model finished the baby (painted in pink). This model will have a plaque with all the necessary and basic information about the river dolphin and its threats. This model will be presented early August, and will be part of the permanent exposition of the museum in La Paz.



Exhibition, Long Night of Museum

We participated in a La Paz- County initiative, where all the museums of the main city (La Paz), are free for visitors (called a Long Night of Museum). After two meetings with the director of the Natural Museum of Natural History we were able to have a space to present a stand for the river dolphin conservation (The bufeo, the guardian of the rivers). With four volunteers we have organised several activities, including river dolphin origami; we prepared two banners for this games and presentation about the threats.



Banner used in different presentations, it shows the biology, distribution, threats and bufeo pictures.

In total we have around 3500 visitors; we distributed 250 posters and 1000 leaflets (appendix 2) that included easy activities for kids. At the same time, the volunteers played with 400 kids doing origami.



Exposition, night of the Museum (In the Natural History Museum of La Paz). “The bufeo, the guardian of the rivers”, presentation, talks and origami activities.

Other activities

Report to the main authorities, of all the activities we did during the last 4 years (Report in appendix 3). This report presented to: Ministry of Environment and Water (General Direction of Biodiversity and Protected Areas); Government of Beni Department; to the Major of The Santísima Trinidad- Beni; to the Director of The Institute of Ecology- UMSA.

Meetings

28th- 30th April 2014. II Workshop for the Action Plan for Dolphins and Manatee in the Peruvian Amazon. Meetings with authorities and local NGO's, Helping Cedric Gilleman from Solinia. I presented, River dolphins of Peru, status and conservation.

April 12th 2014 Meeting with the director of Tourism Rene Sanchez of the Trinidad city. We discussed the flooding, negative effects against tourism, priorities for the Municipality and the continuous support to the Ibare-Mamore protected areas.

March 18th 2014. Luis Guizada travels to Trinidad to evaluate the possibility of travelling. Local people are moved into tents near the road, is not possible to start the project in the area. There is not support or interest of the Authorities to help the project.

June 2104 Meeting with the authorities of de Beni Government. Director of Tourism, this meeting was to receive the approval for the protocol, and to plan some of the future activities (workshops, and communication with the tourism companies).

Meeting with the Environment and Protected Areas Director, discussing several issues related to the flooding, and the effect on wildlife, including bufeos. I asked for their continuous support (not economic, but logistic), they are interested in continuing supporting and giving us permits to work in the area.

Immediate activities

In July 2014, we are doing a long survey in the north (Baures and Magdalena region), Mamore, central Trinidad and Ibare-Mamore department Protected Area; we will monitor the abundance, possible mortality and threats.

This trip will include environmental talks and a series of activities planned, to schools in these remote areas, we will give to each student, a bufeo kit, that includes a biodegradable bag, colour pencils, a notebook, paper for the origami, a poster. At the end of each workshop we will evaluate their participation and new bufeo perception to give them the certificate indicating that they are the River Guardians.

Finally, we will continue with the workshop and informal meetings, with locals and fishermen in the area.

We have to continue with all the issues related to the Interpretative center. The authorities decided to convert a small medical centre instead of the interpretative center but we will discuss other options.

Certificate for the schools, indicating the kids are recognized as the Guardians of the river.

