Project Update: November 2009

We had difficulties exporting/importing samples from Brazil/Canada but they have all been sorted out and they have finally arrived in Canada in October 2009. We are expecting a second batch of samples to arrive in the New Year, from the last 5 months of sampling.

As we gain experience with the site we have found that sampling in the dry season yields more samples than in the wet season. So, we have focused our last sampling in the dry season from July to November. In fact, Tripa our field assistant is just finishing off our last round of sampling.

We have also been training two local Master's students (Adriana Barcelos and Gabriela Medeiros) on tapir genetic sampling and lab techniques. Adriana and Gabriela are interested in applying the same techniques from this project to two new areas in the Amazon. One is north of the field site, in a National Park in the state of Roraima, and the other is in a State Park created to offset the forest loss due to the flooding of the Balbina hydroelectric dam. We have also finished developing the molecular markers that we will use in this study and have successfully applied them to evaluating the genetic health of the Argentinean captive lowland tapir population. Also, during my last visit to Manaus I was able to give a talk to the National Institute for Amazonian Research about the use of modern genetic techniques to tackle questions related to ecology and monitoring of the Amazon biodiversity. While in Manaus, I was also able to talk with a local woman who has created a wildlife sanctuary in Manaus. She has had plenty of experience taking care of tapirs, and has given me a few anecdotes which I am writing up for the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group newsletter. In this forum, I have been writing with the objective of drawing the *Tapir Conservation Newsletter* audience's attention to important methods, tools and concepts for tapir conservation published in the scientific literature. I am currently writing a piece talking about the "10k vertebrate genomes" initiative launched by the San Diego Zoo and the National Institutes of Health, which will sequence the whole lowland tapir genome, and with the recent publication of the horse genome, will give us a number of tools to evaluate the health of tapir populations by examining genes directly associated with resistance to disease, or tolerance to climate change.