

## **Project Update: March 2011**

During February and March 2011, we have monitored several ponds (locally known as “aguadas”) that are the only source of water for wildlife in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve located in southern Mexico. We have detected that several ponds located in the central and southwestern area of the southern polygon of the reserve (an area that includes the archeological city of Calakmul) are all dry, including the Calakmul pond, the largest pond in the area which is a very important site for two endangered species: the white-lipped peccaries (*Tayassu pecari*) groups and for the Central American tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*) according to a study we carried there in 2005 and 2006.

In 2006, we detected high mortality in groups of white-lipped peccary that were trapped in an area without water and several of them were in very bad shape physically. We observed also that tapirs visited the ponds during the day, a no-typical behavior for this species in this area.

We estimated that the area without water could be more than 200 km<sup>2</sup> and that some species that live in the area will struggle to find water sources for another two months. Usually the dry season ends at the end of May, with late April and early May being the hardest days for water dependent species.

Currently, the authorities of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve are working to install semi-natural places where water can be supplied by trucks as an emergency action. This is an urgent conservation action and we are providing help and support for this initiative. We have also installed some camera traps in some ponds to monitor who is visiting these ponds and which species uses the ponds.

Monitoring of ponds and the wildlife that visit them is very important for the Calakmul reserve because this protected area is the major hope of conservation for the two rarest tropical ungulates in Mexico (the white-lipped peccary and the tapir) as well as for jaguar, puma, king vulture and several other endangered species that inhabit there. Ponds are the key element in the landscape to monitor wildlife and its populations.