



# Summer 2013 Newsletter

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## The Huallaga-Marañon Landscape: Five Years of Primate Conservation in Northern Peru

Community Conservation's partners in Peru, Neotropical Primate Conservation, have been working now for 5 years in the northern forests in Peru. They began the conservation work as a small project to develop a community protected corridor between two protected areas near La Esperanza, in the cloud forest, focused on the Critically Endangered yellow tailed woolly monkey (*Oreonax flavicauda*). With CC's help they have expanded the project to focus on an area of primate endemism called the Huallaga-Marañon landscape which is almost entirely surrounded by the Huallaga and Marañon rivers in Amazonas and San Martin Departments which is inhabited by 3 endemic primate species including the yellow tailed woolly monkey, the Critically Endangered San Martin titi (*Callicebus oenanthe*), and the Vulnerable Peruvian night monkey (*Aotus miconax*). The area of high cloud forests and other lowland tropical forests is rich in primate species and also includes the white-bellied spider monkey (*Ateles belzebuth*), 2 capuchin species (*Cebus albifrons* and *C. apella*), the common squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*), the red howler (*Alouatta seniculus*), the saddleback tamarin (*Saguinus fuscicollis*), the red titi (*C. cupreus*) and the bald Uacari (*Cacajao calvus*).

The project has established 10 new community reserves of over 70,000 hectares and is participating in management and research activities in an additional 6 other NGO and government reserves of almost 383,000 hectares. Under Peruvian law, the project is helping communities to establish two kinds of reserves) privately-owned lands, such as titled family plots or community lands that can be registered as Private Conservation Areas (Area de Conservacion Privada - ACP) for an unlimited time through application to the Ministry of the Environment, and 2) state-owned land (not titled) that can be registered with the

respective Regional Government as a Conservation Concession (Concesion para la Conservacion - CC) for up to 40 years, renewable.

The project has also pioneered a third kind of community reserve with the Ronda Campesina, a legal grassroots organization in Peru that helps communities provide security where there is no government protection. Our project partners have developed a new model for the creation and protection of conservation reserves called *Areas Rondarils de Conservacion Ambiental* (ARCA: in Spanish, *arca* means "ark").

The same law that recognizes the Ronda Campesina also asserts that one of the functions of the organization is "to contribute to the preservation of their natural environment". This means that the Ronda has the legal capacity to declare rural areas as conservation areas.

These new community reserves are establishing natural protected forest corridors of vital habitat for the primates and for hundreds of species including 60 wildlife species endemic to Peru or the Andean mountains such as the spectacled bear, the small pudu antelope, and the rare whiskered owl. The project has encouraged research on the three endemic primates and the whiskered owl. The research on the primates that began in 2008, shows that group sizes of the yellow tailed woolly monkey increased by 37% and the capuchin monkey populations increased even more and there are now almost 50% more than in 2008. The project has confirmed that local communities

that we have worked with are respecting their own decision to stop

deforestation in the area, and almost no new forest has been cleared since 2008. Many deforested areas are now regenerating and will soon become primate habitat again. These

results prove that our methods of community conservation give tangible results for the conservation of endangered species and encourages the community to make decisions on how and what to conserve, decisions that are based on stewardship and respect for nature rather than on direct economic benefit.

In May 2013, CC Director Rob Horwich accompanied Drs. Sam and Noga Shanee of Neotropical Primate Conservation in another workshop to bring many of these community groups together for the common purpose of protecting their community forests and wildlife. The meeting was held in Huicungo, located at the entrance to the Rio Abiseo National Park so Horwich with many other workshop participants took launches on the lower Huallaga River to Huicungo. Later he and the Shanees brought members of two community protected areas together to discuss how they can work together protecting their adjacent new community reserves. These kind of actions will help to create a network or federation where communities within the Huallaga-Marañon landscape can strengthen community protection by working together to support each other. Workshops that bring diverse communities together have proven in Peru and other countries to create conservation contagion which encourages and strengthens community conservation action. ♦



Group workshop exercises bring communities together in Peru

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## Creating Agroforestry Corridors for the San Martin Titi Monkey in Peru



*Keefe Keeley currently serves as the president of the Community Conservation Board and is also pursuing his graduate degree at the University of Wisconsin—Madison.*

I have volunteered in Peru for Community Conservation several times in the last four years. This past winter, I went to Peru to work with farmers to improve habitat for the critically-endangered San Martín Titi Monkey (*Callicebus oenanthe*). This canopy dweller's lowland forest habitat is being rapidly converted to agriculture, and its entire range is only about the size of Connecticut. I got to know both the Titi Monkey and the Peruvian organization I partnered with (called *Amazónicos por la Amazonía*, or AMPA) on a previous volunteer trip to Peru, when another Community Conservation intern and I began a study of the monkeys in Pucuncho, a forest reserve managed by AMPA.

This time around, I went beyond the borders of the reserve to work with farmers in a key corridor between this reserve and a large area of contiguous forest. My team included Raydith, Pucuncho's coordinator, and Tito, a farmer who has been active in local conservation efforts. We walked through the hills visiting farms to introduce ourselves and to invite people to a launch meeting where we would plan activities that would help their farms thrive and benefit the monkeys. One family offered to host the meeting, and a few days later we had 30 people sitting in a circle under some trees



A happy helper preparing to plant native tree seedlings on his family's farm.

At the meeting, we started by introducing ourselves and sharing our favorite fruit. You would not believe how many different types of fruit there are in Peru; almost everyone had a different favorite fruit! Then I explained that I come from an organization that supports communities around the world to conserve their land and biodiversity. I told them I was there to support them in learning how to farm in a way that could both provide them a steady financial return and provide the endangered Titi monkey with the habitat needed for the species to survive. To learn how to do this, the farmers and their families selected the following topics for a series of workshops: Titi Monkey monitoring, reforestation and cacao agroforestry, composting and organic soil management, constructing and managing tree seedling nurseries, and training to become Extension agents who share this knowledge with other farmers in the region. They also decided to form a new organization called *Comité de Conservación de la Cuenca de Cunchuillo* – in other words, the Cunchuillo Creek Watershed Conservation Committee. They elected a farmer named Lenin Acuña to be their first president.

After this big moment of forming the new organization, we all had a lunch together; I've learned that food is important if you want people to come to meetings! After lunch, I trained members of this new organization to monitor the monkeys on and around their farms. A few days later we met to practice the study protocol. We planned to meet in the morning, because that's when each Titi Monkey family calls with their distinctive territorial song, but I've also learned that Peruvian farmers are not known for their ability to show up for early morning meetings. Eventually about half of the people from the first meeting did arrive, along with some new faces. Because the monkeys had finished calling for the day, we had to enlist a few volunteers to sing like the monkeys. We practiced recording the number of families calling, along with the direction the song is coming from. These data will allow us to estimate the number of monkey families in this area and the kind of habitat they are using. I also trained the farmers to record how the monkeys use different kinds of habitats, such as old forests, younger regenerated forests, trees on the edges of farm fields, and cacao orchards. While these data are important because there have been very few scientific studies of this



Keefe shows a member of the newly formed Conservation Committee how to record data from monitoring the endangered San Martín Titi monkeys living in the forests on and around his farm.

species, the most important outcome of doing this sort of "citizen science" may be the pride the participants take in being part of protecting an endangered animal that is unique to their landscape.

Shortly before I left, Raydith, Tito, and I had a good-bye dinner. I felt sad to be leaving such a beautiful place and the community that welcomed me, but I felt confident that these conservation efforts were in good hands. Reports back from Raydith have confirmed this: she has assisted the Conservation Committee in planning and hosting the workshop series and, recently, selecting their Extension agents, known as Extensionistas. The Extensionistas each had to attend all the workshops and pass an exam that showed core competency in the workshop topics. Along with sharing their knowledge with other farmers, each Extensionista will manage a tree seedling nursery with native trees that are valuable for timber and fruit. This fall will mark the beginning of the rainy season there, when the Extensionistas will help interested farmers in their respective neighborhoods plant and care for trees from their nursery. The hope is that the Extensionistas will become trusted sources of information about farming in economically and ecologically sustainable ways, while also educating this community about the importance of maintaining Titi Monkey habitat on and around their farms. Thank you for supporting Community Conservation and being a part of a worldwide movement to learn how to live alongside all of our wild companions. ♦

## Update: Chitwan-Manas Tiger Corridor

CC Director Horwich with CC Associate Dr. Teri Allendorf made a second reconnaissance trip to Nepal to further research the possibility of a corridor for tigers and other large mammals in eastern Nepal. For tigers and other large predators, creating expansion areas is very important. For example, in Chitwan National Park in Nepal which has a healthy tiger population, censusing the tiger population can be interpreted in more than one way. Any relatively small area inhabited by tigers has a number of tiger types found in the area: resident/territorial females, one dominant territorial male whose territory includes usually 3-4 females, cubs from those breeding females, and transitory tigers, mostly males looking for a territory. The breeding population of females and their dominant male will remain relatively stable for 3-4 years depending on the age and health of those breeders which, at Chitwan, may be close to the carrying capacity of that area, depending on the level of prey in the area. However, the great breeding potential of tigers needs some area for expansion if the young tigers are to survive and breed. A corridor serves a second important function, to maintain a healthy genetic exchange to prevent inbreeding. A corridor in eastern Nepal extending to West Bengal and Assam would provide those functions and would connect the Nepal tiger genetic pool to tiger populations in Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, India and Burma.

The reconnaissance team that also included Birindra Mahato of Green Society Nepal focused on going to regional Forest offices to investigate the occurrence of



DFO Jha (left) and CC's Teri Allendorf (right) conferring with members of a Community Forest Committee in Mahotthari District

community forests in Districts where there may be forested gaps. From the initial reconnaissance trip, good sal forest was noted extending from Chitwan National Park and the contiguous Parsa Wildlife Sanctuary through four districts to the Bagmati River. So on this trip, the team focused on gathering information from the next four forest districts that extend to an important wildlife reserve, Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve.

What the trip information showed was that most of the eastern terai, the fertile lowlands, had been turned into agricultural land. However, there is still a thin stretch of community forests in the terai left below the foothills, called churia, with some gaps. However, there is still continuous churia forest that stretches across southern Nepal to the forests of West Bengal, India on the eastern Nepal border. One active conservationist the team met was the District Forest Officer of Mahotthari District, Mr. Jha, who was very concerned about the disappearing

churia forests. He introduced the team to members of an NGO, Community Development & Advocacy Forum Nepal (C DAFN) who were working to restore the rivers that are important for agriculture producing rice and other crops in the terai area. With their work and that of DFO Jha, there was an important resurgence of interest in the degrading churia forests in the districts visited. The churia forests are an important source of water for the rivers feeding the terai agriculture that needs to be saved. Mr. Jha also gave the team a tour of his forest camps and nurseries and introduced them to a community forest committee in Mahotthari District. Similar to what they had found in the previous trip, forest committees had already been restoring community

forests for the past 8-10 years and the government was coming up with additional ideas to work with communities to protect the forests. Tiger researchers have generally considered churia forests not good habitat perhaps because of the higher altitude. However, recent findings of tigers at an altitude of 10,000 feet in Bhutan negates the claim that tigers cannot inhabit higher altitudes.

This current interest in the churia and all of the community forests visited or researched could be the basis for communities, NGOs and government coming together to successfully restore a forested corridor. The team returned to Kathmandu more sure than ever that a corridor was possible. With help from Green Society Nepal CC received a letter of support from the Nepal Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation to forward to a potential donor. CC hopes to begin the full project soon. ♦



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## NPC Forms a Peruvian Sister Organization to Manage Local Projects



NPC co-founder and director, Sam Shanee (right), works with members of the newly formed NPC-Peru

CC's partners in Peru, Neotropical Primate Conservation (NPC), a British based NGO coordinated by Sam and Noga Shanee established a sister NGO "Asociación Neotropical Primate Conservation Peru" which was registered in Peru in February 2013. CC Director Horwich met many of the founding Board members in May 2013. This Peruvian NGO is composed of a group of Peruvian biologists and environmental engineers who volunteered at the yellow tailed woolly monkey conservation project for the last 5 years. NPC-Peru will eventually take over the project with the objective of protecting Peruvian primates and their habitat in northern Peru and will develop new primate conservation projects in other parts of Peru. This will eventually allow NPC and Noga and Sam Shanee to develop new primate conservation projects in other South American countries similar to how Community Conservation has worked internationally. Sam is currently investigating possibilities in Ecuador where he has done research in the past. CC will continue to help NPC in future South American projects.