

Bahuaja-Sonene National Park under threat

Just 7 years after much of the Tambopata river basin and most of its tributaries were declared a National Park, the Peruvian government took the radical and unprecedented step of proposing to reduce its size by a third. The proposal was approved by the Council of Ministers.

It appears that the redesignation was proposed to facilitate future oil and gas exploration in the area given that Peruvian law prevents such activities within a National Park. The proposal was strongly opposed by the Head of INRENA - the National Park office - but it seems that oil company interests had a greater influence over the current Peruvian government.

The proposal (See Maps below) reduced the size of the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park (BSNP) by 209,783 hectares to 881,634 hectares. The reduction was considered to be of huge significance by conservationists for several reasons -

- the Candamo valley lay within the area concerned. A Conservation International RAP team report 10 years ago, showed the Candamo valley to possess incredible biodiversity: over 1,000 species of fauna, including 18 endemic species and 35 vulnerable species, of which 3 are classified as 'in danger'. The National Geographic Society, in 2002, declared the Candamo valley as one of the '7 most important natural sanctuaries for biodiversity on the planet'. It featured in a hugely popular Peruvian television series and several books have been published about it. Conservationists are now asking whether the Machu Picchu Historical Sanctuary, or any other protected area, might also be under threat given the likelihood of oil reserves lying beneath them.

- the area remaining as the BSNP would not be a viable entity as a protected area. Two major tributaries of the Tambopata river would be excluded from the BSNP and the western bank of the Tambopata river would partly lie outside the BSNP.

- the globally renowned Macaw *colpa*, on the river Tambopata, one of the largest in the world would have been threatened, potentially, by activities upriver.

In addition, the area is part of the traditional territory of the Ese'ejá: a source of resources and important ancestral lands. (A recent TReeS funded project facilitated

Ese'ejá from the community of Bahuaja on the lower Tambopata to visit and reacquaint themselves with the area).

The Peruvian governments action was in direct contrast to that of the Ecuadorian government. It has specifically stated that it will not exploit oil/gas deposits beneath the highly biodiverse, Amazon lowland, Yasuni National Park.

The decision by the Peruvian government to take this step may have been prompted by the forthcoming signing of a 'free trade agreement' (FTA) with the USA. Once signed the FTA provides some additional environmental protection by discouraging the over-exploitation of commercial resources from environmentally sensitive areas. However, many conservation organisations are worried that it will still allow foreign investors to challenge national environmental laws in foreign tribunals.

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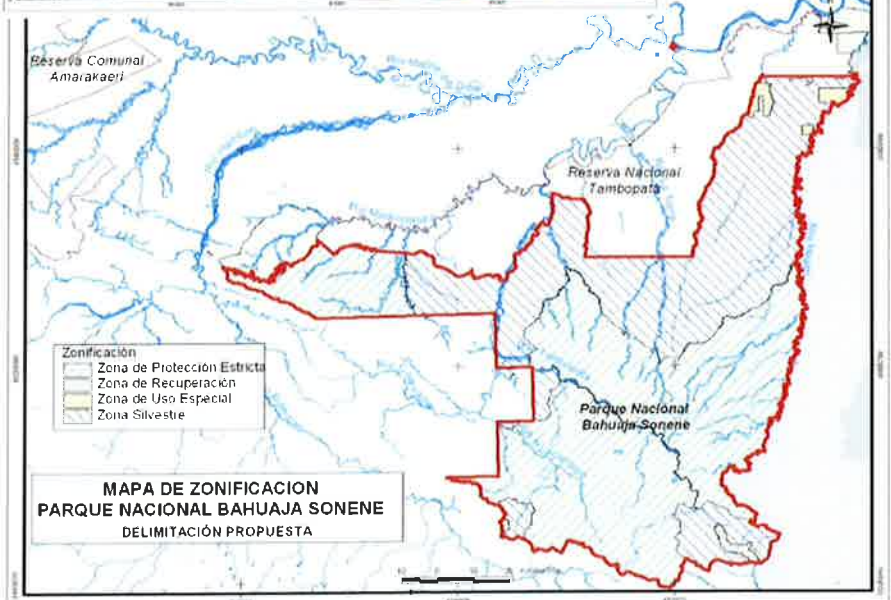
Current and Proposed Bahuaja-Sonene National Parks



MAP KEY

Delimitación Actual
= current actual boundary of the National Park.

Delimitación Propuesta
= proposed new boundary of the National Park.



* **Programa de Becas (Small grants program) 2008:** following the success of the '2007 Small grants program', TReeS will follow the same model and offer another round of small-scale grants to Peruvian students/researchers for field research through an internet announcement in 2008. Grants will be offered for biological, resource management or ecology research projects in Madre de Dios. We hope to provide details about the projects supported this year in the next Newsletter.

Appeal: £100 contributions to the cost of the 2008 grants program to allow larger grants or more grants to be offered.

* **TReeS** is continuing to offer support to local organisations in in Puerto Maldonado including FENAMAD and local academic institutions with respect to a range of current issues including -

- the future of the BSNP (see page 1);
- oil/gas exploration in Madre de Dios;
- developments associated with the Transoceanic highway.

* **Macaw Project:** to determine if the number of macaws visiting the claylick, on the upper Tambopata river, changes because of seasonal migrations year-round censuses are being conducted by a team from Texas A & M University.

If you are interested in participating in these censuses or other aspects of future research as a volunteer to the long-term Tambopata Macaw Project, please contact Alan Lee at: alan.tk.lee@gmail.com, or to find out more about project research results go to:

<http://www.tamu.edu/> or the TReeS website.

Further details about the project can also be found at the website of 'Rainforest Expeditions' at:

<http://www.perunature.com/pages/blog.php?monthID=7&yearID=2007>

* There will be a more detailed Projects update in the next Newsletter *

MASHCO-PIRO CONTACT RECEIVES PRESS COVERAGE

In early October 'The Guardian' newspaper ran two stories highlighting increasing western contact with indigenous peoples choosing to live in voluntary isolation in various 'wilderness' regions around the world. Though under greater threat than ever before, the number of groups of indigenous peoples living in isolation has risen as the number of incursions in to these regions has grown.

The articles focused on the sighting of a group of 21 Mashco-Piro on the upper Las Piedras river in northern Madre de Dios. The semi-nomadic Mashco-Piro tend to locate near rivers to fish in the dry season and then withdraw deeper in to the forest in the wet season. They are believed to number about 600 in total, many of them having contact with other more settled indigenous groups in the surrounding forest.

The sightings provide the perfect repost to the President of Peru-petro, the state oil company, who recently described the notion of isolated peoples as 'absurd' and likened the possibility of their existence to that of the Loch Ness Monster !

(Photo courtesy of Survival International)



Bahuaaja-Sonene National Park under threat - continued

It should be noted that, traditionally, senior members of the Peruvian government rarely visit the Amazon regions and should they do so it is rarely to spend time in the rainforest.

The decision was also proposed despite Article 68 of the Peruvian constitution which states that the government must 'promote the conservation of protected areas'. Furthermore, the government is also a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity which requires signatories to 'strengthen their system of protected areas'.

This is not the first time that the upper Tambopata has been considered a potential source of exploitable oil/gas resources. The BSNP was only fully designated in the year 2000 once Mobil Oil Inc. had decide to renounce its interest in ex-Lote 78. (TReeS supported FENAMAD - Federation of Native Peoples of Madre de Dios - and other aspects of the campaign to try to persuade Mobil to adopt an environmentally and socially responsible approach to their investigations. Of the 27 seismic test sites drilled by Mobil, 13 lie outside the current BSNP while 8 are within the area now proposed for exclusion. The Mobil data indicates potentially exploitable deposits of condensates (liquid gas) in the Candamo deposit and the 7 other sites.

It should also be noted that the BSNP lies at the heart of the Vilcabamba-Amboro conservation corridor linking a range of different protected areas in the Amazon lowlands from central Bolivia to central Peru. Any alteration to it would, potentially, have placed other areas within the corridor - such as Manu National Park - at risk too. And, this is not the first such 'anti-conservation' action by the current Peruvian government. The area recently declared as the Cordillera del Condor National Park, on the Ecuadorian border, was reduced by 60,000 hectares from that recommended by the technical report.

To keep in touch with latest developments go to - www.salvemoscandamo.com

STOP PRESS

Just as this Newsletter was going to press it was announced that the proposal would not be put before the Peruvian Congress for approval. This followed an extensive global campaign from many major conservation organisations in which an international petition gathered over 4,000 signatures and a very strongly worded letter from the US Congress to the Peruvian government via the Peruvian Ambassador in the USA. Despite this many local organisations feel that on-going vigilance will be required to ensure that other steps aren't taken to permit oil/gas exploration within this important region.

TReeS is expecting to provide some financial support to this process over the coming months.

On 12.9.2007 the UN General Assembly approved the 'declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples'. It had taken 22 years of intensive debate and negotiation to reach this point. In the final vote 143 nations voted in favour, 11 abstained while the USA, Canada, NZ and Australia voted against. It is hoped that the declaration will lead to greater global recognition of collective indigenous rights.

The declaration recognises the rights of indigenous peoples to ownership of their land and to choose their preferred lifestyle. It also states that indigenous peoples should not be moved from their lands without their free and informed consent. Indigenous peoples from across the world including Peruvian groups have welcomed the declaration.

Coca production boom ?

The US-funded 'war on drugs' in Colombia has reduced the area under coca cultivation and, consequently, cocaine production. As a result coca cultivation in Peru has risen with cocaine production up nearly 10% in 2006 on 2005. This is the highest figure since 1988 but only half of the peak reached in 1992. 10% of coca cultivation is legal to meet indigenous needs. One hectare can produce a profit of up to \$5,000 per annum.

In the Tambopata region this has led to a substantial increase in forest clearance on the slopes of the upper Iñambari valley, west of the current BSNP. Further details about coca growing in central Peru available at: www.bbc.co.uk,10.9.07

Interoceanic Highway update

A campaign has been launched to try to persuade the Peruvian government to reconsider the proposal for the Inter-oceanic Highway. In particular, it proposes that the Highway takes in to account the huge biodiversity of the region through which it will pass and improves the infra-structure for research and tourism. It proposes that this is achieved by elevating long sections of the Highway above the forest.

Those wishing to sign and e-mail a letter to this effect to the Peruvian President Alan Garcia should go to:

www.thepetitionsite.com/1/carreterra-arriba

or contact those behind the proposal at: highway_up@yahoo.com

Friends of Tambopata Remembered

It is with sadness that we note the passing of three people with important connections to Tambopata / Madre de Dios:

- **Vanessa Sequiera**, a researcher with many years' experience in Madre de Dios, including time as director of the Brazil-nut project of ACCA (The Amazon Conservation Association) based in Puerto Maldonado.

- **Carlos Ponce del Prado**, founder member of Conservation International and the major Peruvian conservation organisation: Pronaturaleza. He was, until his death, President of the Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA) and the Peruvian representative on the IUCN.

- **Anita Roddick**, founder of the Body Shop, and for four decades the promoter of more ethical beauty /health products. The Body Shop Foundation provided significant support for Centro Nape in the early 1990s and TReeS arranged a visit to south-east Peru, Centro Nape and Machu Picchu for Anita and Gordon Roddick at the time.

Peru News

On the 15th of August a huge earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale struck the coast of Peru. The epicentre was located on the seabed approximately 100kms from Pisco, 237kms south of Lima. The town of Pisco and the resort of Paracas were the most seriously damaged - whole streets collapsed in Pisco and the famous Hotel Paracas was badly damaged by a mini-tsunami. There was also significant damage in the nearby towns of Ica, to the south, and Chincha, to the north and to the Panamerican highway. As in Pisco, the collapse of a church in Ica accounted for many of the deaths. The death toll, at approaching 600 people, made it the worst quake to hit Peru since 1970 when a quake of an equivalent strength hit the Andean town of Yungay, however, in that case a landslide triggered from the face of the highest mountain in Peru (Huascarán) led to 66,000 deaths.

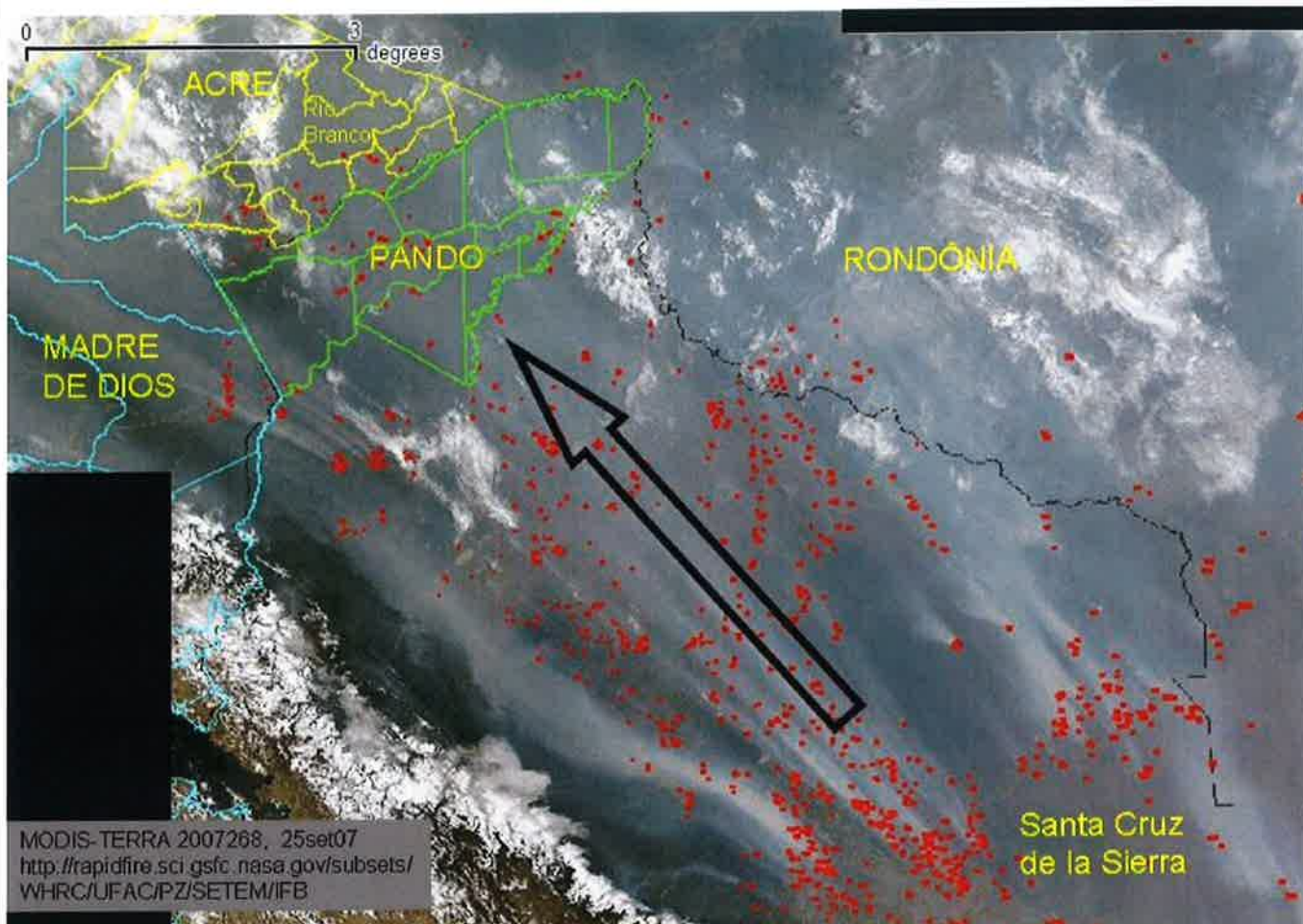
In late September the Chilean Supreme Court announced that it would allow the extradition of ex-President Fujimori, who has been under house arrest in Santiago for the last 2 years. Fujimori is now being held in a Lima jail and his trial is due to begin in late November. He faces corruption and human rights abuse charges and could receive a sentence of up to 25 years in prison. It is the first time that a court anywhere in the world has allowed the extradition of a former leader back to the country he governed. Fujimori had come to Chile in an attempt to return to Peru to contest the 2006 Presidential elections. Several members of Congress, including his daughter - Keko, still sit as '*fujimoristas*' and he retains a degree of popular support.

Also in late September, Peru hit the international headlines when a 'meteorite' crashed in to the altiplano, near the town of Carancas, 170kms south of Puno. A crater 30 metres in diameter and 6 metres deep appeared emitting 'toxic' fumes that were reported to have made 200 local people ill. It was suggested that it may have been caused by a satellite returning to earth but investigations confirmed the likelihood that it was caused by a 'meteorite'.

On Sunday 21st October all Peruvians were requested to stay at home for the day to enable a national census to be undertaken. Despite much business opposition it was felt that such a radical step was required to ensure greater accuracy. In the main people followed the request and Lima was described as being 'extremely quiet'.



Deforestation smog obscures southern Amazonia and Madre de Dios



Map Key

Fires and smoke plumes across northern Bolivia

RED dots = individual fires



= prevailing winds from the south-east

WHITE = clouds

BROWN = mountains

Extensive forest burning in southern Brazil, northern Paraguay and the Bolivian Amazon has brought smog laden skies to south-western Amazonia, including Madre de Dios in recent weeks. Plumes of smoke extending for many tens of kilometres are clearly visible on satellite images of the region. 10,000 individual fires spread across 2 million km² of forest have produced lengthy plumes and thick smoke. Flights out of Santa Cruz, in Bolivia, have been grounded; shipping on the river Madeira at Porto Velho, close to the Brazilian/Bolivian border, has been stopped as poor visibility has made the river un-navigable and people across the region have been experiencing respiratory problems.

Most fires originate on ranches where old pasture is being burnt off at the end of the dry season prior to the arrival of the wet season to encourage new growth but substantial new areas of forest are also being burnt to create new pasture. Brazilian banks, with World Bank funding, have encouraged many new ranches over the last 3 years and an additional 4 million head of cattle have been added to herds. The traditional method of pasture burning is now complicated by climatic changes and the vast areas of already deforested land make such approaches more uncertain and less controllable.

In Peru recent research has also provided worrying data about deforestation rates. The latest figures for 2004-05 indicate 1,174km² of rainforest has been deforested and 1,070km² disturbed, significantly up on the average for the five year period including 2004-05, of 647km² and 634km² respectively. This translates as an additional 127,000 hectares of rainforest deforested per year or disturbed, over the last 5 years. However, deforestation and disturbance within protected areas remains very low at 1-2% and within indigenous territories at 5% of deforestation and 6% of disturbance in 2004-05, down on the 5 year average of 9% and 11% respectively.

Tropical forests remain excluded from the carbon trading schemes established by the Kyoto Protocol but the inclusion of 'avoided deforestation' is now being discussed. The challenge remains to find economically practical ways of valuing the rainforest and, thereby, ensuring its conservation. If deforestation is included in with pollution emissions, Brazil is now one of the top four global carbon emitters.

Further details from 'The Independent' at: <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/americas/article3028701ece>

(Thanks to NASA and 'Foster Brown' for the copy of the satellite image)

Recent reports relating to Madre de Dios - the following papers will be placed in the TReeS Libraries. They are also available from TReeS (£1 each, plus an A4 sae):

- * 'Land use allocation protects the Peruvian Amazon', various authors, Science Express, August 2007.
- * BSNP redesignation: various documents relating to the current discussions.
- * UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

TReeS London Library - the TReeS London Library has found a new home at: The Rainforest Foundation, 2nd Floor, Imperial Works, Perren St., London NW5 3ED (0207. 485 0193) (open 10am-5pm, Mon-Fri; please phone first) (nearest Tube station – Kentish Town, Northern Line).

NEW - *El Ojo Que Cuenta: Mitos y costumbres de la Amazonia indigena ilustrados por su gente* (Eyes that tell: Myths and customs from indigenous Amazonia illustrated by its people) (in Spanish/English) 160 pages, with many beautiful full colour illustrations painted by indigenous artists.

28 stories from 7 ethnic groupings (Shipibo, Uitoto, Shawi, Tikuna, Ashaninka, Awajun/Wampis and Matses) plus profiles of the storytellers, including photos. Stories include: 'The jaguar, the woman, the toad and the scorpion' (Matses), 'The black jaguar and the loggers' (Shipibo) and 'The mysterious toad' (Shawi).

TReeS Members price: £17.50, including p & p.

'DIVERSITY IN THE RAINFOREST' on DVD and video

NEW: Dvd version - a unique record of rainforest diversity recorded in one of the most biodiverse rainforest areas on the planet. The 50 minute film features 150 of the 1234 butterfly species (a world record) to be found in Tambopata and, potentially, a number that can be seen in the course of a day exploring the forest. The footage is accompanied by a memorable soundtrack.

TReeS Members price: £13.50, including p & p.

Video - Now only £5.00: last remaining copies (PAL & NTSC versions available).



International Conference of Ethnobiology

The 11th International Conference of Ethnobiology will be held in Cusco, 25-30th June 2008. The principal theme of the Conference is: 'Livelihoods and Collective Biocultural Heritage'. The sub-themes include -

- Traditional agricultural landscapes and community conserved areas;
- Climate change and adaptation;
- Ethnobiology and traditional resource rights: Darrell Posey's legacy.

TReeS is planning to attend the Conference with respect to the projects of the indigenous peoples of Madre de Dios that we have supported over the last two decades. For more details go to - www.icecusco.net



TReeS membership: £10 per annum.

**TReeS contact address:
TReeS, P.O.Box 33153,
London NW3 4DR**

www.tambopata.org

TReeS 2007 AGM

The AGM will be held on 8th December 2007, 2.30-4pm, at William Ellis School, Highgate Road, London NW5 (nearest tube station: Kentish Town; Northern Line; Buses 214, & C2).

Members will be updated about recent developments in the Tambopata area and TReeS supported projects.

Anyone wishing to join the TReeS committee should write to TReeS by 30.11.2007.

We would also like to hear from anyone able to assist in maintaining and updating the TReeS website on a regular basis.

Explorer's Inn - 'Friends of EI on Facebook'

Ex-Resident Naturalists and visitors to the Explorer's Inn may like to keep in touch with others who have spent time there via 'Facebook'. Facebook is a fun and popular way to keep in contact with friends and people with shared interests. Go to -

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=3413339363>





HELM FIELD GUIDES

Birds of Peru



Thomas S. Schulenberg, Douglas F. Stotz, Daniel F. Lane,
John P. O'Neill and Theodore A. Parker III

We are most grateful to: HELM FIELD GUIDES, published by A & C Black, for sponsoring this edition of the TReeS Newsletter.

Helm Field guides are internationally renowned for their comprehensive global coverage, their authoritative texts and excellent illustrations. The recently published 'Birds of Peru' is the first comprehensive and fully illustrated field guide to the birds of Peru.

Please see the enclosed leaflet for further details.

Compliment the Field Guide with the TReeS publication - '*Birds of Tambopata: A Checklist*' (£6.00) - available now from TReeS.