

Report TCD Field Research Grants 2015

Title: Considering wildlife protection in REDD+ programs in Colombia

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Abstract

Private areas intended for protection of biodiversity and ecosystems services is increasing in Colombia. Although the number has increased everywhere, not landscape-level issues that are critical for biodiversity maintenance are considering in the planning so the real conservation value of those areas is unknown. With this research I'll expect to collect information on: mammals species distribution and abundance, landscape variables and patch variables, potential carbon storage in the areas in order to understand the real conservation value of those areas and where is necessary to increase the protection. With this pre-field work I was able to determine the gaps that I have and the information that I will need to get in order to formulate my final research questions. Finally, I was able to formally establish collaboration with Universidad del Valle in Cali and Serraniagua, a local NGO in the area that I hope to develop my work. Both entities will guarantee partnership, important issues when applying for grants to get the funding for the research.

Field Research Activities

In Colombia I had the opportunity to visit the area that I am expecting to do my research in two occasions.

Field Research 1: For this first occasion I was helping the NGO (Serraniagua: <http://www.serraniagua.org/>); which is the NGO that I am expecting to work with when I start my fieldwork next year. I was helping in a project that they are developing about getting information about wildlife and getting some cartography data for their reserves. In this first stage I was helping to get data from mammals. After doing a 6 days work characterizing two areas, I was able to stay for few more days to apply surveys about wildlife, which was one of the main objectives of this pre-field season in Colombia.

Field Research 2: during a week I was visiting private reserves in Northern Valle del Cauca. There I had meetings with the reserve's owners and I interviewed also people that have been living in the area for long time due to they are "experts" in terms of fauna recognition. I did the surveys and in general I was able to talk to the people about their feelings in terms of species abundance and distribution. Additionally they were able to talk about the experience to work as a private protected reserve.

Methods: I interviewed people that were living in the area for more than 15 years or the owners of private protected areas. I did the surveys in their houses or in the field visiting

the reserves. First I asked for some personal data and the interview finalized with the recognition of the species through photographs (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Interviews with the private protected owners in different “veredas” or localities in Northern Valle del Cauca in Southwestern Colombia.

Additionally I was able to:

- Plan a meeting with Esteban Alvarez, a Botanist working for the Botanical Garden in Medellín Colombia. He is a researcher with a great experience in Carbon measurements in Colombia. I hope to establish a collaborative work between The Botanical Garden in Medellín and us.
- Develop a meeting with WCS Cali in order to see if it is possible to work together in this idea – the value of the private reserves network. Currently they are working with a recently network of private reserves in the Llanos Orientales in Colombia. I am studying the possibility to work with them, using two areas of study.
- Currently I am digitalizing the data of the interviews and building a data base of the people that I met there so I will be able to contact them for my future work.