

# Protecting the night monkeys of the Colombian-Peruvian Amazon

by Angela Maldonado, Fundación Entropika

2013/14 were excellent years for Fundación Entropika as we accomplished one of our main conservation goals: **“to eradicate the illegal trade in night monkeys for the malaria research market”**.

A pilot project in 2008 identified the ecological, economic and legal scope of the illegal trade in wild-caught night monkeys in the Colombia-Brazil-Peru border area, and determined that during that year more than 4,000 animals were traded to supply a biomedical facility located in the Colombian Amazon. This trade represented around US\$100,000, with less than 10% of the profits going to indigenous collectors. During our fieldwork we also understood that one of the main issues faced by indigenous communities is the lack of access to potable water, which is increasing cases of water-borne diseases, with children and elders most affected. In addition, the lack of

basic sanitation remains a limitation for the communities to engage in any tourism project which would have the potential to improve local livelihoods in a sustainable way and, as such, reduce over-extraction of natural resources.

Since 2010 we have been implementing the Aotus Project, a community-based research project that aims at: i) determining the population status of night monkeys at 8 sampling sites on the Colombian-Peruvian border, ii) identifying ways to improve living standards, and iii) filing a public benefit law suit against the regional environmental authority ‘Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Sur de la Amazonía’ (responsible for the issuing of, and compliance with, legal permits for scientific trapping and trade of night monkeys), the Colombian Ministry of Environment (the CITE’s administrative authority) and Fundación Instituto de Inmunología de Colombia (the biomedical laboratory using the night monkeys for research).

Our investigation revealed that the research facility was flouting its limit of wild-caught night monkeys (*A. vociferans*) as well as importing and experimenting on a night monkey species from Peru and Brazil (*A. nancymaae*) for which they had no permit. In addition to having a detrimental impact on wild population levels, post-experimental releases of *A. nancymaae* in Colombian territory have created a new population whose status and impact on resident populations of *A. vociferans* remains unclear. Although Entropika’s members had previously documented the illegal trade, enforcement of legislation only

occurred when Fundación Entropika undertook direct legal action against organisations responsible for either instigating or overseeing the trade: the court ruling by the Colombian State Council in November 2013 revoked trapping permits, setting a milestone ruling in favour of the protection of wildlife in Colombia. Winning this public benefit law suit represents an historic precedent, not only for the improvement of Colombian legislation regarding the sustainable use of natural resources, but also shows that conservationists can achieve effective law enforcement.

In order to improve living standards in the communities, we recently started the installation of water filters in households in the indigenous community of Mocagua. Community systems are to be installed at another three communities. Once these communities have clean drinking water, we will fundraise to implement a community tourism project that will engage relevant stakeholders, such as Amacayacu National Park, the regional government, and national and international NGOs.

Entropika would like to thank Rainforest Concern and its donors. Without their support we would not have been able to implement and maintain our in-situ conservation efforts. The results of this ongoing support are reflected in recent victories in favour of the protection of the Amazonian ecosystem, its wildlife and ancient local inhabitants. Long-term follow-up is crucial in order to achieve effective conservation. We hope to be able to continue relying on this strategic alliance in order to keep this rainforest of unique biodiversity safe for generations to come.



Fundación Entropika

Peruvian red-necked owl monkey.