

# Rare wildlife thrives in Neblina

by Sonja Dillman, Administrator Neblina Reserve, DECOIN



Rainforest Concern

Morning clouds forming in the Neblina Reserve.

I am happy to send you once again news from the Neblina Reserve and its people, in the valley of Intag. There is always a lot to tell and we would like to take the opportunity of communicating with you and the world through Rainforest Review.

A dream is becoming a reality: more than 10 years ago, Rainforest Concern took the decision to take direct action in the conservation of the forests of Intag, located in the foothills of Imbabura province in the northern

Ecuadorian Andes. These are among the last subtropical cloud forests in this area of Ecuador and they are the home of many threatened species of fauna and flora. Our dream began with the purchase of the first hectares of cloud forest, and since then the Neblina Reserve has become a protected area, declared by the Ministry of Environment as a state-protected forest.

Thanks to this joint effort between Intag and Rainforest Concern, we are protecting animals such as the Cock

of the Rock (*Rupicola peruviana*), the spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) and the puma (*Puma concolor*). Of the puma's presence we are certain, as on a journey through the Reserve with Carlos Zorrilla and Fiona Perez we were lucky enough to see one of these impressive creatures with our own eyes. An unforgettable experience! As well as these well-known animals, the confirmation that the 'olinguito' (*Bassaricyon neblina*), a new species of carnivorous mammal recently discovered in the Chocó forests of

southern Colombia and northern Ecuador, also walks in Intag's forests. However, this is not the only discovery that has taken place in Intag in recent years. A new species of stream tree frog of the group *Hyloscirtus larinopygion*, named in honour of the Prince of Wales's efforts to protect tropical forests, was discovered in the forests of Intag.

Our efforts continue to expand the Reserve, with our final goal of completing the Choco-Andean corridor. Currently the Reserve covers an area of 1761 hectares. As we purchase new parcels of land for the Neblina Reserve, we ensure that they are given the same protection as the rest, and are legally recognised as part of the protected area.

In December 2013, Peter Bennett and Yalda Davis from Rainforest Concern visited Intag and the Neblina Reserve. It was a good opportunity to take an extended tour of the Reserve. Neblina, meaning 'cloud' in Spanish, did justice to its name on this occasion as we were in the middle of the rainy season and the mist enveloped us with its



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The newly described Olinguito.

dense, humid cloak nearly all the time we were there. It was also a good opportunity to visit the areas which are currently the most likely properties with which to continue the expansion of the Reserve.

A big concern for the whole Intag

valley continues to be the obsession of the Government of Ecuador with exploiting the copper deposits of Junín, known now as the Llorimahua Project. In recent years, the state company ENAMI, in cooperation with the Chilean copper mining company Codelco, has intensified its work in this area, causing great concern amongst the inhabitants of the communities of the concession area.

The mining companies and their employees are talking up the economic advantages of mining to local communities, without acknowledging the downsides. It is important not to underestimate the support all of us can give to the people affected by the mining project and their efforts to protect the community forest of Junín.

The challenges and obstacles to tackle for the future of the forests of Intag are great, but we are sure that with our joint efforts to protect the forests, we will succeed. Thank you to all our supporters.

Greetings from Intag, the most beautiful corner of Ecuador.



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Armando Almeida, Sonja Dillman and Yalda Davis at Neblina Reserve.