



# ECUADOR

population: **13.8 million**  
capital: **Quito**

total land area: **27,684,000 ha**  
primary forest 2005: **4,794,000 ha**

## ECUADOR

# The Choco-Andean Corridor Project

by Fiona Pérez, Ecuador Projects Manager

### Southern Phase

As you will see from the following articles both the community projects at Santa Lucía and Paso Alto are progressing very well, with particularly big steps being taken at Paso Alto, where work is in its preliminary stages and there is still a lot of confidence to be gained from the local people. This last year has been focused on community development in both areas and not on specific land purchase. The reason for this is to find a balance between conserving the tremendous biodiversity of these forests and also providing the local people with a sustainable income. Previously local communities cut down forested areas either for selling timber or for cattle farming and we feel that working with them to find alternatives is the best long-term strategy to protect these particular forests.

In the Intag area you will see from Carlos Zorilla's article that we are continuing to fund the Watershed Project and with excellent results. A lot of energy has been spent on the mining issues in the area, but the Watershed project has been a major factor in getting people to understand the conservation issues and the risks of destruction associated with any mining. The number of community protected reserves that we have bought through this project continues to increase steadily each year.

Rainforest Concern has continued with land purchase for the corridor in the Intag area and we have made good progress. Thanks to all our supporters, the Neblina Reserve has more than trebled in size this year. The reserve now totals 637 hectares (1574 acres) and is a vital link between the Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve and the Paso Alto protected areas.

This year we need to train more local people how to be forest guards for this expanded area and there has already been great enthusiasm shown by potential participants. Reading the patrol reports of our existing guards confirms how many wonderful species of mammals, birds and plants are harboured in our reserve alone.

### Northern Phase

During 2006 progress was made through differing activities carried out with the communities surrounding the Awacachi Corridor. This helped to strengthen the community relations and this in turn helps protect the corridor. The main activities included the construction of a community butterfly farm, constructed to produce butterflies for exhibitions in Europe, the building of a new Centre for Environmental Interpretation which



photos: PETE OXFORD

The elusive spectacled bear

was started near the communities of Durango and San Francisco, training of buffer zone communities in sustainable production projects such as native bamboo and cacao plantations, and training of community rangers in charge of protecting the Corridor in issues related to biological monitoring and conflict management.

In addition, agreements with NGO's and the Municipality of San Lorenzo were signed to support the conservation activities in the area. As a result of this agreement the Environmental Campaign of San Lorenzo was initiated and proposals are currently being submitted to find funding for this.

However there are still very serious threats to this whole area such as the continuing expansion of palm oil plantations and more recently the onset of mining activities. Your support is vital for this project to continue and to succeed, so please continue to sponsor acres for the Choco-Andean Corridor!



We are extremely grateful to our Australian partners, Rainforest Rescue, whose supporters have been contributing to the southern phase of the Choco-Andean Corridor project through their Ecuador "Save a Hectare" campaign. In 2005/2006, they reached a milestone of \$30,000, to save 200 hectares of Cloud Forest, expanding the Neblina Reserve. We are delighted to report that the purchase of this land is due to be completed in August 2007!

We would like to thank Rainforest Rescue for their ongoing fundraising efforts on our behalf, and for their very generous support! For more information on the important work being carried out by Rainforest Rescue, see their website - [www.rainforestrescue.org.au](http://www.rainforestrescue.org.au)

# Ongoing Assistance for Santa Lucía

by Carolyn Halcrow, Conservation & Ecotourism Project Manager

Santa Lucía Cooperative continues to play its part in the conservation of the Choco-Andean corridor by protecting its 730 hectare cloud forest reserve, home to the endangered Andean Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) and over 380 species of tropical birds. Community-run ecotourism is the main way that we are able to provide a sustainable income for our members while allowing us to conserve the forest. In 2006 we received twice the number of tourists as in the year before and we already have substantial bookings for 2007. We are grateful to Rainforest Concern for their part in this success and their networking support.

Much of the valley below Santa Lucía is degraded due to deforestation. With funding from Rainforest Concern, we are about to run a training workshop, using the experience and expertise gained from Santa Lucía's reforestation project, to encourage local people, especially those that have larger areas of land, to plant trees. The charity has also secured funding from the British Embassy in Ecuador for Santa Lucía to provide environmental education for local children. We will be running workshops in the reserve so that the children can learn 'hands-on' about their local natural environment and why it's important to conserve it.

Volunteers, who come either individually or through Rainforest Concern's travel partners, continue to play a vital part in our conservation and ecotourism projects. Their work last year included the construction of an orchidarium (collecting fallen orchids and identifying them where possible) and trail maintenance, including the improvement of the trail to visit the Cock of the Rock birds, making it safer and easier to hike there in the early hours of the morning for the dawn 'lek' (bird mating ritual). They also planted trees of the endangered cedro species (*Cedrela* sp.), renovated and enlarged the organic garden so that visitors now enjoy freshly picked vegetables every day, and created a garden around the lodge with native red flowers to attract hummingbirds so that we can gradually remove the artificial hummingbird feeders.

We would like to thank both Rainforest Concern and all our volunteers and visitors for contributing to another year of conserving the Santa Lucía Cloud Forest Reserve.

For more details about Santa Lucía please email [info@santaluciaecuador.com](mailto:info@santaluciaecuador.com) or visit us at [www.santaluciaecuador.com](http://www.santaluciaecuador.com)