

PRESS RELEASE

THE GHOST CARNIVORE OF THE ANDES

Through joint efforts of Colombian and British conservationists to protect and ensure the survival of the only Mountain coati (*Nasuella olivacea*), ever kept in captivity, the general public will begin to understand about this enigmatic mammal and its conservation.



10th September 2010, Bogotá D.C.

The first ever live Mountain Coati (*Nasuella olivacea*) in captivity, is being kept in a strict quarantine and welfare procedures by researchers at Bioparque la Reserva in Cota, Cundinamarca (Colombia), with the support of experts from Mammal Department at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (UK). This small carnivore was confiscated by the Police and local Environmental Authorities. The Bioparque's visitors will be able to learn about it through cameras installed in its enclosure until quarantine is completed. In a complementary project, the species' natural habitat will be protected: a private protected area of 600 hectares in Sisga (Colombia) has been set aside for páramo conservation in order to study its ecology and behaviour.

The Mountain coati is perhaps the least studied carnivore in the world and due to its elusive behaviour there is very limited information. It is arguably, a ghost species. Published data has been obtained from skins, tissue samples and skulls belonging to collections in natural history museums, faecal samples, tracks and a single individual which was captured and then released immediately.

There are few reliable documents of this species which belongs to the same family of raccoons and kinkajous. It is presume to live in páramos and High Andean forest of Colombia and Ecuador between 1300 to 4000 meters above sea level. In Colombia, the species are thought to be found thoroughly The Andes and only travels short distances in search of food.



The Mountain coati mostly feeds on beetles and their larvae, ants, crickets, millipedes and fruits but they are also opportunistic feeders of small animals such as frogs and also will eat carrion. They are thought to be gregarious, forming social groups that could consist of 6 to 8 adult females and juveniles from both sexes. Adult males are solitary and are tolerated only during the mating season.

With regard to conservation status, this species is classified as "Data Deficient" and it is not protected in Colombia or Ecuador. Its natural habitat has been traditionally destroyed and fragmented by agriculture. They are also hunted as local people believe they are harmful to potato crops and poultry and people use them as a source of food and skin.

Through DNA analysis of blood samples of this specimen, Bioparque La Reserva hopes to add relevant information to the limited data on the Mountain coati. The individual which was confiscated by the National Police of Colombia and Corporación Autónoma Regional de Cundinamarca -CAR Zipaquirá will be shown to the press only by invitation to a press conference and only after it has adapted to its new environment in the Bioparque. The general public may observe it for now, from cameras to be installed in its quarantine enclosure at Bioparque La Reserva or web-cam on the Web site: www.bioparquelareserva.com (coming soon).

The first permanent exhibition of this species will be on the second stage of development of the Bioparque La Reserva and the final designs are being designed. It will share a large area with other species from its natural environment such as the spectacled bear, Andean fox and white-tailed deer. This exhibition of mixed species will be the most modern of its kind, and visitors can immerse themselves in the natural environment of the Colombian Andes while they walk.



Mountain coati (*Nasuella olivacea*)
Source: Bioparque La Reserva, Colombia





Instituto de Conservación,
Uso Sostenible y Bienestar Animal



About Bioparque La Reserva:

Bioparque La Reserva has been running for two years in Cota, Colombia and is an organisation dedicated to promoting awareness of the conservation of Colombian natural resources within a context of sustainable use and respect for the environment. One of its main goals is to change the attitude and behaviour of people towards the conservation of Colombia's biodiversity through the concept of immersion, a new approach where visitors share the same environment with plants and animals which replicates endangered Colombian ecosystems. It is the first wildlife park featuring exhibitions where the mix of species in their natural habitat promotes animal welfare. Bioparque La Reserva is built using the principles of green building. The Neotropical Birds of Prey Conservation Centre and the Institute of Education in Conservation, Sustainable Use and Animal Welfare (INCUBA) have their facilities there as well.

Contact:

Iván Lozano Ortega

Director

Bioparque La Reserva

Phone number: +57 3102546744

Fax: +57 (1) 8621799

ilozano@bioparquelareserva.com

www.bioparquelareserva.com

About Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust- DWCT:

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust-DWCT is an international charity working globally to save species from extinction. Headquartered in Jersey, Channel Islands, Durrell works in some of the most threatened environments on the planet and has over 50 active field projects in 14 countries around the world, focusing on critically endangered species and highly threatened Island ecosystems. Durrell has a unique structure, based around three core pillars of specialization: A wildlife park in Jersey, field programmes around the world and an International Training Centre. Durrell's aim is to address conservation challenges where each of the three areas of the Trust can act in synergy. Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust supports the conservation project of páramos and Mountain coati being carried out by Bioparque La Reserva.

Contact:

Dominic Wormell

Mammal Department

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

Phone number: +44 (0) 1534 860016

Mobile number: +44 (0) 7797728478

Fax: +44 (0) 1534 860001

www.durrell.org