

FRIENDS of the Giant Otter

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Editorial

It was a pleasure to edit and translate the unexpectedly large number of contributions for this issue. Many thanks to those of you who sent in an article! On the other hand, producing the bulletin in two languages, Spanish and English, takes up quite a lot of time, which unfortunately I can no longer afford. Does anyone have strong objections to articles of either language being published in the same issue? For instance, this would have meant that 7 of the 11 articles in this issue would have been in Spanish and the remainder in English. For your information, about 280 people receive the Spanish version and just over 60 receive the English version. Another option would be for contributors to send in their articles in both languages whenever possible to help reduce my work load. I would appreciate readers' comments!!

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PROJECT UPDATES & NEW INITIATIVES

PERU Tres Chimbadas : formalizing management of human activities on an oxbow lake

Tres Chimbadas is one of the largest oxbow lakes of the Tambopata river, in the department of Madre de Dios and is situated in the buffer area of the Tambopata National Reserve. It is also the core area for a resident group of giant otters. Since 1999, the tourism companies operating in the area, in collaboration with the Giant otter Project of the Frankfurt Zoological Society, have been implementing a voluntary management plan that tries to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. Amongst other factors, management consists of capacitating guides in wildlife observation guidelines, implementation and regulation of a moving observation platform on the lake, establishment of a Wildlife Refuge Area and a monitoring programme of the tourist visits and group dynamics of the resident otters. However, this management is being threatened in 2004 by the arrival of new companies that do not adhere to the management guidelines and the encroachment of agriculture to the north shore of the lake.

Faced with this situation, we believe that formalizing management of the lake in 2005 through a Site Plan is a possible solution. Site Plans are the state planning instruments for the zoning and physical distribution of infrastructure required for the development of tourism and recreation activities. In this process all actors with acquired rights or activities in the area must be involved. In the case of Tres Chimbadas this involves three tourism companies, a native community, a native organization, the Land Titling Programme (PETT), the Ministry of Agriculture, the Regional Directorate for Tourism, the local Government and the Frankfurt Zoological Society.

A necessary preliminary step is to clarify and consolidate the ownership of land in the site, encouraging land titling that favours low human density in the area (no micro-titling for agricultural purposes) and that serves as a legal basis to protect natural capital, that is the basis of non-extractive activities like nature tourism. This process is being led by the PETT. The Site Plan is being led by Jans Huayca (jans_pa@yahoo.com.mx), Nature Tourism Management Coordinator of FZS Peru. This will be the first site plan outside Protected Areas in Peru and we hope to be able to set a constructive precedent for other areas of the country.

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BRAZIL Observations of Neotropical and giant otters in the Pantanal of Mato Grosso State

Neotropical otters (*Lontra longicaudis*) and giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) are the only representatives of the subfamily Lutrinae in Brazil. *Lontra* is widely distributed in Brazil and Latin America. It is present from the north-east of Mexico to the south of Uruguay, Paraguay and the northern part of the Buenos Aires Province in Argentina. In Brazil, *L. longicaudis* studies (mainly on diet) have been carried out in the States of Espírito Santo, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and São Paulo. *Pteronura* inhabits tropical forests in South America, from Venezuela, the Guianas and Suriname, down to the north of Argentina. The area with the largest presence of giant otters in Brazil extends from the Amazon Basin to the southern Pantanal in the state of Mato Grosso.

In October 2002, a pair of *Lontra* and a group of four *Pteronura* were observed using the same feeding area, with a length of 13km and a width of 100-200m, in the RPPN SESC Pantanal (Pantanal de Barão de Melgaço, Mato Grosso) in the state of Corixo Espírito (16°33'S y 56°19'W). The observations were made between 07:55 and 16:10, and it was possible to film with a video camera for approximately 10 minutes.

In November 2002, a group of four *Lontra* and a group of eight *Pteronura* were observed for 114 minutes between 05:45 and 16:25, feeding and living in the same location in the lake Baía das Pedras (16°24'S y 56°21'W) (Pantanal de Poconé, Mato Grosso) with a surface area of 20,800m². In December 2002, the Neotropical and giant otters were observed in the same location for 57 minutes

between 04:55 and 17:35. Fourteen faecal samples of *Lontra* and 5 of *Pteronura* were collected. The otters were filmed for approximately 50 minutes.

In October 2003, solitary individuals and a pair of *Lontra*, as well as a group of 9 giant otters, were seen in the lake Baía das Pedras for 66 minutes between 05:25 and 16:35. This lake is inhabited by the same giant otter group during the Pantanal's dry season between August and December. The four *Lontra* individuals could not be distinguished (young from adult, male from female) according to size. The *Pteronura* individuals comprised four adults, one subadult and four cubs. In all encounters between *Lontra* and *Pteronura* there was no indication of aggressive behaviour. This is evidence that direct competition is minimized through the utilisation of niches that are well defined principally by the size and species of prey.

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COLOMBIA Presence, habitat use and diet of the giant otter and the Neotropical otter

From the moment that the project was presented in the Friends of the Giant Otter bulletin (No. 9 January 2004) various modifications have proved necessary as a consequence of logistical problems and the need to address certain priority questions of the study area. It is for this reason that, instead of visiting only one aquatic system as was first proposed, various locations in the so-called Colombian Amazon trapezium have been investigated.

The Natural National Park (NNP) of Amacayacu lies within this zone, bordering the Purité River to the north-east. This river was visited during April and May 2004 and the presence of a group of four giant otters as well as two solitary individuals (Fig. 1) and two Neotropical sightings were recorded. The group was observed only twice in a period of one and a half months while the solitaries and the Neotropical otter were seen once. In the past, this was a hunting area for the pelt trade and despite its isolation (reaching the nearest community requires two days of travel by boat), the possibility of observing several groups was minimal keeping in mind that approximately 70km of river was explored, compared with other studies that have been carried out in the Colombian Amazon. At this moment, the faeces found in the campsites (Fig. 2) are being analysed, and a map is being developed where the locations of these campsites and of dens (Fig. 3) will be indicated.



Figure 1. *Pteronura brasiliensis*.



Figure 2. Campsite.



Figure 3. Den.

Two tributaries situated on the south-eastern border of the Amacayacu Park are now being visited periodically. In one of these streams, local hunters encountered a *L. longicaudis* cub (Fig. 4) which was separated from its mother during an attack by the hunters' dog. According to the inhabitants, this type of situation happens occasionally: "it's common to see them – the otters – and to see their signs on the banks of creeks near their dens, the opposite is true for the giant otter which, since the pelt days until now, are only seen sporadically".



Other aquatic systems close to Leticia, the capital of the Department of Amazonas to the south-east of the Amazon trapezium, are also being visited; indirect signs have been observed and there is little pressure from local inhabitants on the species or its habitat. However, two *L. longicaudis* skins were found in a house close to the study area. According to the person who killed them, it seems the otters occasionally visited artificial ponds, to feed on the fish and ducks which are reared there.

Moreover, we are thinking of including in this study some ancestral tales about what the two otter species represent for the local indigenous communities who share their habitat, as well as the relationship between fishermen and otters (Figs. 5 and 6).



Figure 5. Drawing of a *Lontra longicaudis* by an indigenous child.



Figure 6. Drawing of a *Pteronura brasiliensis* by an indigenous child.

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COLOMBIA Biological and cultural assessment of the giant otter

In the Colombian Orinoco, there are reports of local inhabitants hunting giant otters because they are seen as competitors for fish resources. These reports indicate the importance and urgency of working with communities towards the conservation of the species. On this basis, the study “Biological and cultural assessment of the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) in the zone of influence of Puerto Carreño, Vichada” was initiated. The field work took place between 15 February and 10 June, 2004. We sought to gain an understanding of the status of the species by means of semi-structured interviews and activities with children in order to assess local knowledge and perception of the giant otter. A biological assessment was carried out in parallel, based on expeditions and surveys to identify the distribution of the species in the area as well as its diet, and to compare this with the information from interviews. Photo-identification of individuals and groups was also carried out, defining their movements and permanence in the different rivers and tributaries of the study area, giving an idea of the population size in the area. This investigation was made possible thanks to Fundación Omacha, the grant programme of the Jorge Ignacio Camacho-Initiative of endangered species, and Idea Wild.

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COLOMBIA Research and education as tools for giant otter conservation

Because of its biological and ecological characteristics, the giant otter has been considered a flagship species whose protection has become an important conservation strategy for its habitat. This model has been applied to various conservation programmes in countries such as Perú, Ecuador and Brazil, which have explored and taken advantage of activities such as ecotourism as a means of protecting the species while preserving the Amazon aquatic system. The socio-political and economic conditions in

Colombia make application of conservation strategies like those used in neighbouring countries difficult, creating the necessity to look for alternatives suited to the local situation.

This year, a project was initiated in Colombia with a multidisciplinary focus which attempts to contribute to the knowledge and conservation of the giant otter, integrating research on biological and population aspects with the design and strengthening of a national education programme. Currently, the Cali Zoological Foundation has a group of 10 giant otters of which eight were born in captivity. These furry and playful ambassadors have become the focal point in the developing education process. The project also includes a small bioacoustics study which seeks to complement previous studies on this aspect, and an evaluation of the population in three localities situated on the extreme borders between Colombia and Venezuela (Orinoco River), Ecuador (Putumayo River) and Brazil (Caquetá River), actively involving the local indigenous and colonist population in each region through its participation in the censuses, the design of education materials, mutual education and discussion about the problems within aquatic ecosystems.

Entities such as the Whitley Foundation, Conservation International, and the National Institute for Amazon Research (SINCHI) have supported the proposal, but this initiative needs further strengthening, which is why we invite friends of the giant otter who would like to help, or who know someone who can, to write to us with your comments. Many thanks, your support will be very important.

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BOLIVIA Giant otter diet and considerations for its conservation in the Paraguá river

Abstract of a poster presented at the VI International Conference on Wildlife Management in Amazonia and Latin America

Pteronura brasiliensis is one of the most charismatic species of the Neotropics, because of its size and its social behaviour. In Bolivia, this species is commonly known as 'londra'. Between the 50's and 70's, its population was severely reduced due to the high value of its pelt for international trade. As a result, many populations were wiped out in several zones of Bolivia and currently the only viable populations seem to be located in the watershed of the river Iténez-Guaporé, to the east of the country. However, the gradual destruction of giant otter habitat and its vulnerability to the presence of man appear to be obstacles for the recovery and conservation of its populations. One of the current conflicts in which the species is involved is the possible competition for fish resources with various communities on the shores of the tributaries of the Iténez- Guaporé river. According to the local people, the reduction in fish resources is due to the presence of giant otters in fishing areas. However, in this study we suggest that only partial competition exists for abundant, small fish. The most sought-after species by local communities and fishermen are those belonging to the genera *Cichla*, *Pseudoplatystoma*, *Brycon*, *Serrasalmus* and *Hoplias*. According to our results, the giant otter in this area feeds principally on *Satanoperca*, *Chaetobranchus*, *Acaronia*, *Hoplias*, *Pygocentrus*, *Serrasalmus*, *Platydoras* and *Pimelodus*. The majority of these fish are of small size, which means that they are not the most preferred by fishermen. Meetings during which these results were divulged are documented. These meetings are important strategies for a correct planning of giant otter conservation.

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GUYANA Conserving giant otters and bridging cultural divides: children are the key

In 2002, an exciting educational partnership programme was initiated as a result of the work of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Philadelphia Zoo, Iwokrama, and Proprietary Media Inc. The initial programme involved electronically linking students from Gateway School in New York to

wildlife clubs in the Rupununi Wetlands to talk about conserving giant otters. This initial contact has expanded into an extraordinary linkage where pen-pal relationships have been established through a new satellite-based Internet connection in central Guyana. The connection allows kids from both cultures to understand each other's perspectives and learn about the complex realities of conservation. The Gateway School children have also participated in fundraising efforts with the Philadelphia Zoo for the conservation of giant otters in Guyana. Here, the Iwokrama Centre and the North Rupununi District Development Board are working together to develop conservation and monitoring programmes for the species.

To date, the Philadelphia and Jacksonville Zoos have funded this work, which is now being integrated into a wetlands monitoring programme supported by the Darwin Initiative from the UK. There is now a third generation of pen pal connections in place and the children of Gateway School recently developed and published a web site on giant otters (<http://www.tqnyc.org/NYC040957/>). The site won first prize against 96 other entries in a New York City-wide competition operated by the non-profit group ThinkQuest New York City. Meanwhile the kids from the North Rupununi recently completed a very successful annual wildlife festival that this year attracted the attendance of the Minister of Tourism. Stay tuned as these children working together will continue to dazzle you with their excitement, brilliance and problem-solving skills.

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FRENCH GUIANA Gold miners invade the largest French nature reserve

As part of an otter conservation programme in French Guiana, several rivers have been investigated over the last 2 years in order to assess distribution and habitat use of resident otter groups. During these surveys, an effort has also been recently developed regarding the lowland tapir, which has not yet been surveyed in French Guiana. The river Arataye, in the Nouragues Nature reserve (1,000 km², the largest French Nature reserve) was considered as a pristine area for these studies.

Nevertheless, in February 2002, November 2003, January and March 2004, observations of muddy waters revealed presence of gold mining activities in the Arataye watershed. A new survey was undertaken in the reserve in September 2004. The pollution of the river has increased dramatically; in a 10 km stretch, all rocks and aquatic plants were covered by a layer of mud. Gold miners could be observed directly on the river, human tracks are widespread all along the river shores, shelters and a gasoline storage depot were recorded. According to the two guards of the reserve, gun shots can be heard every night. Within a few months, impacts on wildlife are extensive. Giant otters have completely deserted the area. On a 15-km portion of the river, 12 indirect signs were noticed in August 2002, 11 in February 2003, 9 in January 2004, 7 in March, and only 3 in September. Indirect signs of tapir were nearly absent: 29 and 43 fresh tracks and faeces were recorded on a 15 km stretch of river, in January and March, respectively, and only 3 in September. Also, diversity and abundance of birds decreased dramatically. Fishing birds (kingfishers, anhingas) disappeared. According to the two guards, spider monkeys and howler monkeys have not been heard for more than one month. It is not yet possible to know if these local disappearances of several indicator species will last and how long the recovery of this part of the river will take. Surveys will continue, but a river ecosystem is probably lost. For how long?

Gold mining pressure has increased in French Guiana over the last 2 years, combined with an increase in the price of gold. Possibly, the creation of the Tumucumaque National Park in Brazil has also played a role: it is likely that hundreds of miners that used to work in this Brazilian area moved towards the French territory. Today, over 1,000 gold mining sites are presumed to exist in French Guiana, and protected areas are no longer safe. The National Park is under construction, but what will be the means allowed by France to efficiently preserve this area? Will we have a French 'paper park'? How to consider both extreme poverty of miners, slavery on mining sites, and the prime necessity to protect the very pristine forest area of the Guyana region? Where is the "sustainable development"

claimed by local authorities of the region? What are the respective responsibilities of both French and Brazilian governments? What should be the roles of scientists, local and international NGOs? Any comments and reactions are welcome!

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SPECIALS

Giant Otter Conservation in South-Eastern Peru – a personal impression of changes over the last 14 years.

In September, a team from the headquarters of the Frankfurt Zoological Society in Germany joined the Peruvian FZS staff and National Natural Resources Institute on a recognition and evaluation expedition along the Madre de Dios watershed, south-eastern Peru. The basic aim of the two-week trip, during which around a thousand river kilometres were travelled, was to obtain an overview of existing conservation activities, achievements and challenges, and to decide whether the area is suited for an increase in investment in biodiversity protection in large wilderness areas. For me it was a unique opportunity to re-visit locations where I have worked as project leader together with Elke Staib for the FZS giant otter research and conservation project. We started this project in July 1990, and for the past six years it is headed by Jessica Groenendijk and Frank Hajek. Two years ago the project was complemented by a larger protected area support programme. During the trip, we passed areas I have visited or in which I have worked over the past four, six, eight, ten and twelve years. The perspective given by the time frame of up to a decade or more is unique and can offer some insight into the development of the area. Although a decade is nothing but a glimpse in biological terms, today such a time-span makes a huge difference in terms of conservation development and destruction of tropical rainforest. To give the basic result at the beginning: I was very surprised by the positive conservation development in the whole Peruvian Madre de Dios stretch. I would like to provide some examples, concentrating on giant otter conservation to underline this statement.

Lake Sandoval

The area: A 125-hectare oxbow lake of the Madre de Dios River, only half an hour by boat and an hour's walk from the department's capital Puerto Maldonado. Home of a giant otter group, large tracts of primary forest, selectively logged, additional secondary growth. Huge areas of *Mauritia flexuosa* palm forest.

The situation in 1990: No protection status. The area was under strong tourism pressure. It was the most important destination for short jungle trips and adventurous back-packers around Puerto Maldonado, and also the main zone of uncontrolled, un-trained freelance guides. Hundreds of school children at the weekends. Parties at the shore, lots of noise and garbage. No environmental education. A single, very basic lodge. Also, illegal fishing for paiche (*Arapaimas gigas*), palm tree cutting for leaves and palm hearts, some clearing for agriculture along the shore. Large otter group (5-10 animals), very shy, hard to find, tending to escape at first sight of tourists, absent for weeks from the lake instead frequenting the flooded palm forest or small creeks.

The situation in September 2004: Under strong national protection. Part of a large protected area system including the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park and the Tambopata National Reserve. Well controlled and well managed tourism. One of the first areas having an approved and established tourism management plan. Restricted no-go areas on the lake and the shoreline. Special opportunity for tourists to visit an 18m observation tower. Park controlled post at the entrance with a unique interpretation centre and environmental education path. Guided tours and well established school children visiting programme including education material for kids and teachers. Tourists now pay an entrance fee. Two lodges (low and high price). No more clearings or logging. We found the otter group (5 individuals) after half an hour. All animals relaxed. No flight, no alarm sound.

Lake Tres Chimbadas

The area: An oxbow lake of the Tambopata River, 41 hectares of open water, a three hour boat trip up-river from Puerto Maldonado. Primary forest, selectively logged. Home of an otter group.

The situation in 1990: Huge clearings for cattle ranching. Additional logging for hard wood. Hunting and fishing. Giant otters had been killed in the area. Indigenous people from the native Ese-eja community claimed the otters were competitors for fish. No tourism. Otters very shy. Only found in a small creek.

The situation in September 2004: One of the most important tourism destinations around Puerto Maldonado. One lodge close to the lake, another one (Posada Amazonas) down-river on the opposite bank. Very well managed tourism. Main clients from Posadas, a successful project of a private-community partnership. Ese-ejas involved in lodge management, indigenous people working as well-trained tour guides. Community keeps 60% of the profits. No more clearings, no cattle ranching visible from the lake. We found the otter group after half an hour. All animals relaxed. No flight, no alarm sound. 70% otter observation success for tourists, one of the highest in the whole of south-eastern Peru. Giant otters are a flagship species for tourism.

Los Amigos River

The area: A 220 kilometre river, 50-80 m wide, bordering the famous Manu National Park to the east. Large areas of primary tropical forest. High levels of biodiversity. Selective logging in a small stretch of about three kilometres on both banks along the lower part of the river. Uncontacted tribes in the headwaters.

The situation in 1992: No protection status. Hunters and loggers in the lower part of the river. Otters on some of the oxbow lakes. Small clay licks with macaws. Spider monkeys seen on several occasions. The overall impression: a unique and very important part of tropical rainforest under increasing level of human pressure. In the following years up to 3,000 loggers worked along the Los Amigos River.

The situation in September 2004: Whole area under strong protection as a private concession for tropical research. Control post at the mouth. Operation area for a large biological field station located close to the mouth. No loggers or hunters active. The last giant otter survey in August 2004 resulted in 18 animals.

Cocha Salvador

The area: With 108 hectares, one of the largest oxbow lakes of the Manu river. Primary forest. High monkey and bird diversity. Large otter group (>5).

The situation in 1990: Part of Manu World Heritage Site, close to Manu National Park core area, but with less protection as part of the then-existing 'Zona Reservada'. Main dedication for tourism and research. Main tourism destination in Manu National Park. Sometimes over 50 tourists and guides camping on the beach of the river close to the lake. Several canoes and wooden 'catamarans' on the lake. Large otter group with no successful reproduction for at least four continuous years. Strong disturbance from tourism. Otters shy, frequently expressing alarm.

The situation in September 2004: Conservation status changed and area is included in the National Park. Strongest protection. Information plates on otters at jetties. One lodge run by the Matsigenka natives a few kilometres from the lake. Well organised individual camp sites for tourist groups. Observation facilities at the shore. Restricted no-go areas on the lake and shore. Walking paths changed to reduce influence along the shore. Lake strictly limited to a single catamaran which is booked and used by all tour-groups in a well organised schedule. Well trained tour guides. Otter group seemed to be fully habituated. We found the group of 9 animals after less than half an hour, full range of behaviour was visible, no alarm sounds. Perfect otter observation from about 50 meters. Continuous

reproduction in the last years. One of the worst places in terms of giant otter conservation has changed into one of the best ones. Tourism management plan is ready, awaiting for approval.

I'm sure that, globally and in this day and age, there are very few places in tropical rainforest areas which can be re-visited after a decade and where a positive development in the sense of conservation will be seen. I had the possibility to find several examples in South-Eastern Peru. I would like to thank everybody involved: the staff of FZS-Peru, INRENA representatives (from the ranger to the heads in Lima), some of the conservation-oriented tour companies, other conservation organisations such as CI, ACCA, Grupo Inca, and all the others who made this happen. I would like to spread this message to encourage others and to let them know what can be achieved in only ten years time.

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REGULARS

Observations from the Field

Tomorrow we expect Nicole Duplaix to visit us for a while to help me find out about the giant otters on my sixty kilometre stretch of the Rio Negro in the Brazilian Pantanal. I already can tell you that the number of individuals certainly decreased very, very much: I guess we have less than half as many giant otters as 15 years ago. I shall count the number of dens along at least 40 kms (not more, since the waters do not allow navigation, not even by very small boats, the river being almost dry like in 1947). I speculate that the great decrease in population size is due to the following situation: in the late seventies and early eighties great floods increased the otter habitat and offer of prey fish, while at the same time giant otter shooting became insignificant, whereas the poaching of caiman reached record heights. There were almost no tourists around. The recovering giant otter population expanded impressively, monitored intensely during nine years through our SODEPAN project. From solitary sightings in 1978 to daily observations in 1982 to frequent family fights in the late 80s, the population increase could be documented till we had at least one otter per kilometre of river and a count of more than 200 dens on our 60 km of river shore (in those days we counted each entrance as ONE den). Fights among family groups ending in fatalities could be observed. Then successive dry years followed and the area covered by water decreased dramatically. Fish breeding areas in the form of swamps and lakes disappeared and the river itself, once a marvellous giant otter communication highway, has almost dried out, giant otters being unable to swim on many stretches of hundreds of meters. The last oxbow lakes are now drying out or are carrying only brackish waters. Neotropical otters (*Lontra longicaudis*) augmented significantly and are a daily occurrence whereas giant otters vanished on large sections of the river. Caiman, no longer hunted or poached, first increased tremendously, now are just common and eagerly looking for fish. With these population changes, today's human occurrence seems not to have an important role; most probably the main reason for the giant otter's decline lies in the climate-related habitat changes and prey offer.

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The Latest Publications

The following interview was published in the Bolivian newspaper "El Nuevo Dia" on the 19th of October:

Pancho, the giant otter, tells us about his life and dreams

Today we were able to interview Pancho, a very friendly and likeable giant otter. Read all he told us and you will learn a lot about this species.

Hello Pancho, where do you live?

Hello, dear friends, I live in the jungle of Beni, with my family and other animals. I live in an underground den located on the shore of a wide river. It's great to live amongst tree roots!

I've heard that you like the water. What do you do there?

I really enjoy going for dips in the cool water. From there, I see how beautiful my home is. It would hurt me very much to see it disappear because of the greed of some humans.

Do you have a family?

Yes, we help each other out. While my mummy and I go fishing, my big sister looks after my baby brothers and sisters.

What do you eat?

My favourite meal, like all my fellow otters, is fish. I don't have preferences, they all drive me crazy. They're so delicious... Of course, on the shores of the river there are always some jealous ones (like the crocodiles who want everything for themselves).

I don't want to offend you, but is it true that you are lazy?

Giant otters aren't lazy, it's just that, after eating, we all get together to rest a little and.... uuuaaaa! sometimes we end up having a little siesta.

Who else lives in your home?

I see capuchin monkeys daily in the area where I live. They don't let a day go by without bothering us during our resting time! And we also often see lots of jaguars... but we're not afraid of them. We're brave.

Are you afraid of anything?

Yes, I'm very scared of the hunters that kill us indiscriminately.

Why do they do that?

Mainly because they want our pelts. It's very sad, but it's the reality.

Do you have a dream?

Yes, almost every night when I sleep, I dream that people don't kill us any more, not for our skins nor for any other reason. I hope to achieve my dream one day and that you, the children, help me make my dream come true. That day I will be happy.

We were introduced to Pancho, the wonderful giant otter, by two organisations, one of them is the Frankfurt Zoological Society and the other is the FaunaAgua Association of Bolivia. They are very worried about this species, that's why they sent us this interview. Many thanks!

Pepe's Paragraph

Editors' note: Pepe was not seen during this year's giant otter population census in Manu National Park and I'm very sorry to have to tell you that we fear that he might have gone to otter heaven. His close friend, Dedo, has kindly volunteered to take over Pepe's paragraph during his absence.



Dear friends,

Let me introduce myself. I can't remember when I was born but I do know I'm at least 9 years old. That's pretty ancient for a giant otter!! Part of my throat marking has the shape of a finger, hence my Spanish name 'Dedo'. I live in the famous Cocha Salvador which lies in the heart of Manu National Park and is one of the hottest tourist destinations in south-eastern Peru. I wonder why??!! We (my partner, Encarna, and I) have a large family; I look forward to telling you all about the little horrors in the coming issues of FoGO. So, until then!!!

Dedo

Written contributions are gratefully received. Please send them to: fzsgop@terra.com.pe. If you wish your name to be removed from the mailing list, or if your address changes, please notify Jessica Groenendijk. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily shared by the Frankfurt Zoological Society Giant Otter Project (www.giantotters.com).

