



The Networker Vol 1, December 2007

ABOUT THE NETWORKER

We hope you enjoy our first newsletter! We invite your photos, short articles, and comments related to Life Net's goals in conservation. Having advanced grassroots biodiversity conservation for many years, we appreciate our dependence on support from individuals like you who share our concerns and interests: helping people protect nature while learning more about it; people like you who are willing to volunteer at challenging field sites, to monitor birds and do all types of nature conservation.

Happy Holidays!

- Dusti Becker & Tony Povilitis, Eds.

CASITA GETS FACELIFT

Life Net supporter, Tom Davis, said he was surprised the old research cabin near Loma Alta, Ecuador was still standing at all, given cloud forest dampness on Cerro la Torre. Built in 1994, *La Casita*, weathered the El Niño of 1997/98, and provided reliable shelter to over 20 volunteer teams, reserve guards, and visitors until a fateful moment in March 2007 when a tree toppled on it.

We put out an alert in August, and Life Netters rallied. By November, several dozen supporters had donated \$3800. *La Casita* was rebuilt by local villagers. Photographic evidence awaits the next newsletter, but according to Pascual Torres, Life Net naturalist, the project employed 20 people and took 6 weeks as building materials had to be hauled by mule up muddy slopes to the site.

Bird Monitoring at Las Tangaras

July 2007 - Life Net hosted its first expedition to monitor birds in tropical cloud forest at the Las Tangaras Reserve in western Ecuador. Frank Warwick from England, Larry Vereen from South Carolina, Bob and Linda Scarth from Iowa, Doug Moore from Arizona, and Tyler Davis from Nevada flew to Ecuador to mist-net and make observations of birds at the reserve as Life Net volunteers.



Tyler Davis with Rufous Motmot

Located near Mindo, a village famed as a destination for bird watching, the 48 hectare protected area lies between increasingly deforested and populated areas and vast intact forest of the Mindo-Nambillo Protected area. Similar to fieldwork at Bellavista Reserve, Dr. Becker wants to know which bird species use dynamic landscape edges and how stable their populations are in comparison to more interior forest settings.

Life Net hopes to raise \$6000 in 2008 to hire a naturalist-manager at Las Tangaras. Pascual Torres is currently serving as the naturalist and has conducted several mist-netting workshops for Ecuadorian students.



Glistening-green Tanager

Loma Alta Christmas Counts

Thanks to generous support from the Washington Crossing Audubon Society, *Neuvo Jersey*, and in collaboration with *AvesEcuador* and the community of Loma Alta, Life Net has promoted and helped facilitate annual Christmas bird counts at Loma Alta since 2003. In 2004, the Loma Alta area was designated as a globally Important Bird Area or IBA, and this has boosted bird tourism.



Esmeraldas Woodstar

Loma Alta provides serious birders a fairly sure opportunity to see endangered **Esmeraldas Woodstars**, and over 50 endemic bird species of the Tumbesian and Choco regions. Our count total in 2006 was 165 species, including 25 Chilean Flamingos, Gray-backed Hawk, 25 Tumbesian endemic species, and Little Woodstar.

The 2007 Christmas bird count will take place on December 15th with teams meeting at Valdivia Ecolodge at 4 pm on the 14th to organize.

Bird Conservation & Ecology Publications

2008 Checklist for the Birds of Loma Alta published by Life Net. A PDF version can be downloaded at www.lifenetnature.org.

Becker, C. D., Loughlin T. & T. Santander. 2007. Identification of forest-obligate birds by mist netting and strip counts in Andean Ecuador. *Journal of Field Ornithology* (in press).

Becker, C. D., E. A. Richardson, and S. J. Brown. 2007. MtDNA haplotypes, sequence divergence, and morphological variation in Gray-breasted Woodwrens (*Henichorina leucophrys*) from the Andes and coastal hills of Ecuador. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 78: 117-123.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NEWS

Students and teachers at Loma Alta and El Suspiro learned more about local hummingbirds, especially their important role as pollinators of local food crops like bananas.

Students in 5-7th grade participated in an after school program where they received an interactive booklet about hummingbirds. The booklet was sponsored by *AvesEcuador*, Life Net, the Hummingbird Monitoring Network, and Washington Crossing Audubon Society.



Students at El Suspiro show-off their hummingbird activity booklets.

TWO NEW FILMS TELL LOMA ALTA'S CONSERVATION STORY

Desert Speaks just released two film documentaries about Loma Alta. Host, David Yetman climbs to the mountain top preserve and tells the story of Life Net's hummingbird research in the film called *Hummingbirds: From Desert to Jungle* (Episode 1708).

In a second film (Episode 1707), *Ecuador's Fog Forest: Mists over the Desert*, he tells the story of fog capture and the community's preservation of their communally-owned forest for water and biodiversity conservation.

Both films are available for purchase. Call 1-800-841-5923 or visit www.thedesertspeaks.org to order copies.

Science & Policy: Imperiled Wildlife in the Western U.S.

In addition to its efforts in South America, we would like to alert you to Life Net's illustrious history of working on behalf of threatened and endangered species in the US Rocky Mountains and Southwest. Our focus is on science and policy. Here in a nutshell is an overview:

Gray Wolf (Northern Rockies) - In the mid-1990s, the gray wolf was reintroduced into Yellowstone and central Idaho. While there are now some 1,400 wolves in the region, that number falls short of what is needed to ensure the animal's long-term survival (given vagaries of disease, harsh weather events, fluctuations in prey, etc., and a host of human impacts) and natural function as top carnivore in wild land ecosystems. In 2007, Life Net defended wolf recovery by opposing ill-advised proposals by the US Fish and Wildlife to strip the animals of their protection as a threatened species. Life Net opinion columns recently appeared in the *Boston Globe*, the *Billings Gazette*, and other newspapers. We promote scientifically based recommendations for wolf conservation, and participate on the newly formed Rocky Mountain Wolf Coalition of private conservation organizations.

Mexican Wolf (Arizona and New Mexico) - In the Southwest, some 60 endangered Mexican wolves struggle to survive as authorities continually remove individuals in deference to livestock grazing on public lands. Life Net speaks out in favor of Mexican wolf recovery. In 2006, for example, we spearheaded publication of a major policy paper entitled "The bureaucratically imperiled Mexican wolf," in the prestigious journal *Conservation Biology*.

Jaguar (Arizona and New Mexico) - In 1994, Life Net founder Tony Povilitis petitioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service to place the jaguar on the US list of endangered species, a number of years after one of the magnificent cats was shot not far from Life Net's 160-acre conservation property in Arizona. Life Net has since doggedly advocated that the Service and state wildlife agencies adopt a recovery plan for jaguar and protect its critical habitat, as described in our publication "The jaguar in the Southwest: borderland or borderline conservation? *Endangered Species Update* (2002). The urgency of habitat protection for the jaguar is especially self-evident now that Arizona has become the fastest growing state in the US.

Imperiled wildlife (Southern Rockies) -- In 2000, Life Net published a 300 plus-page guide to imperiled wildlife of the San Juan Mountains and surrounding areas of Colorado and New Mexico. The book profiles 110 animal and plant species and provides conservation recommendations. The book resulted from Life Net's wildlife partnership in the region during the 1990s and is available for \$10 plus shipping.

A full list of Life Net articles along with pdf's of selected items will be posted on our website in 2008.



Tony & Dusti in AZ



PLEASE HELP US IN 2008 BY MAKING A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION, BY VOLUNTEERING, or BOTH!

Visit www.lifenetnature.org for more information or call us at 406-600-4802.

Our next Cloud Forest Birds Monitoring Expedition in need of volunteers takes place July 20 - August 2, 2008 at Las Tangaras Reserve. E-mail Dusti at dbecker@lifenetnature.org for more information.

FAVORITE PHOTOS - 2007 Programs



Scaled Fruit-eater by Dusti Becker



Flame-faced Tanager by Larry Vereen



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Andean Cock-of-the-Rock
by Linda & Robert Scarth



Doug takes a plunge into the Nambillo River
by Larry Vereen