

Conservation news

WikiEVA: the Red List of Venezuelan Fauna goes public

The product of a team of 81 scientists, 11 photographers and 20 artists, who examined the status of nearly 4,000 species, the 2008 Red List of Venezuelan Fauna includes 748 taxa, 198 of which are threatened, two regionally extinct and two extinct. It is based on the 2008 third edition of the Red Book of Venezuelan Fauna, published for the first time in 1995, re-edited in 1999 and reprinted in 2003. To compile the information for the fourth edition, and with the support of Shell Venezuela, Provita has launched an experiment by opening the consultation to the public, and inviting anyone interested to comment on the 2008 text.

Taking advantage of the MediaWiki platform (<http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki>), WikiEVA (whose last three letters stand for *Especies Venezolanas Amenazadas*, Threatened Species of Venezuela) aims to increase the participation of the public in accessing and contributing information on the nation's biodiversity (<http://wikieva.org.ve>). Although WikiEVA will initially focus on animals, expansion to plants is already in development.

Because it is online and real-time, WikiEVA offers a mechanism for keeping the information on Venezuelan species current. Rather than having to coordinate large-scale updates of the database every 4–5 years, and then publish the next edition of the Red List, publication will now follow the simpler process of curating the data in the wiki and packaging them as the species accounts that characterize Red Lists. A team of three general editors and 18 editors by taxonomic group oversee the process, invite additional collaborators and verify the assessments.

The WikiEVA database currently holds templates for 2,828 species in 14 Classes. Information taken from the third edition of the Fauna Red Book (<http://wikieva.org.ve/documentos/LRFV.pdf>) was used to create draft species accounts for those 202 that are either threatened or extinct, and the templates for the other 2,626 are available for data entry. The team of editors has begun updating existing species accounts and compiling data for new ones but everyone is invited to become a contributor.

Editing WikiEVA species accounts is very simple: all that is required is to sign up. Creating a user and obtaining a password from the site are the only steps needed to change or update text. Contributors may report sightings, document threats, propose conservation actions, and upload photographs and images. All of the content of each species account is available for editing, comment or discussion.

Although WikiEVA is designed for a wide range of potential users interested in the conservation of Venezuelan

biodiversity, a primary goal is to promote it among school-children and their teachers, as well as among university students and their professors. Experience with the fauna red books has shown that these are key audiences and keen user groups who do not have ready access to updated information on the country's biodiversity. We now aim to encourage them to contribute their experience and knowledge as well as to use the information.

Previously, major efforts were made to distribute red books through, for example, the national network of public libraries, but electronic distribution will be more efficient and cost effective, taking advantage of increasing access to the Internet in educational and academic institutions. Additional benefits include reduction in the use of paper for printing, and saving the costs of transporting books.

Ultimately, the success of WikiEVA will be best expressed by its impact on the conservation of Venezuelan threatened species. National and local governments will be able to use WikiEVA to inform environmental policies but may also use it to report on any action they take on behalf of threatened species in their jurisdiction. The publication of the fourth edition of the Red Book of Venezuelan Fauna is planned for 2013, and the book will be freely available online and will not be printed on paper.

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India to establish a national database of camera-trapped tigers

Following the adoption of refined protocols for intensive annual monitoring of source populations of tiger (see *Oryx*, 46(4), 480), India's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is now following through by establishing a country-wide database of wild tigers captured in camera-trap surveys conducted by multiple research and governmental institutions at increasing intensity across the country. The objective of this project is to assign Unique Tiger Identification (UTID) numbers to a large sample of tigers.

A major objective of the project is avoiding multiple counting of individual tigers in multiple areas, a problem that dogged the now defunct pug-mark tiger census method, which was finally abandoned in 2006 in favour of camera-trapping. Another key objective is to ensure that the rigorous protocols for assigning unique IDs are followed and that the origin of each camera-trapped tiger image