

April 20, 2011

Ernesto Arbeláez Ortiz, Director Ejecutivo y de Conservación
Zoológico Amaru
Centro de Conservación de Anfibios - Bosque de Mazán
Calle Benigno Malo 4-74 y Calle Larga
Casilla Postal "R"
Cuenca – Ecuador

Dear Ernesto,

As you know, in January 2010, I visited your Amphibian Conservation Center in the Mazan Forest with Allan Pessier, DVM (San Diego Zoo) and Heidi Ross, Co-director El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center (EVACC). We observed a fantastic facility built within range of the four focal species of amphibians for which it was dedicated to hold for captive breeding research and rescue. We were amazed at the ingenuity of you, Fausto and Diego in developing economical enclosures, maintaining food colonies and attention to other details. At that time we discussed minor issues pertaining to biosecurity and such.

We revisited the CCA-MAZAN project in on April 2, 2011 to find improvements in many areas, greater attention to biosecurity and to animal health and well being. There were issues with one of the focal species, *Gastrotheca pseustes* in terms of larval care and unexplained mortality of metamorphs and we worked to diagnose and rectify the problem. Fausto and Diego asked us many questions and I hope our team was able to respond to in ways that will be helpful in the future. The *Atelopus nanay*, among the world most endangered amphibian species, as you know, looked to be in extremely healthy condition as evidenced also by the clutch of eggs deposited the day before!

We are impressed with your work there at the center but also with the tie in with in situ research in the Cajas National Park and surrounding areas. I hope you will be able to continue monitoring work there in the park and it seems that with the help of Jose Cacerres you should be able to do this freely. This is very important to know more about the natural history of these species and their status in the wild. In addition, your efforts to involve indigenous people of the Shuar community in monitoring the *Atelopus* species in their region are very commendable. The connection of *ex situ* work to animals living in the wild is so important as is support from local people. Speaking of local (or in this case regional) people, I hope you will continue to collaborate with the other stakeholders in Ecuador such as Luis Coloma at the Jambatu facility and Andres Merino at PUCE. I was glad that Andres could join us on this last trip and Luis will surely come with us next time! As you know, the AVOP team of myself, Allan, Brad and Sam are at your service and as I mentioned we for sure communicate with you early about the next visit to Ecuador.

From our standpoint at Amphibian Ark, we consider your program and efforts there in Cuenca as a model by which others can learn. Keep up the good work and let us know how we can help in the future.

Sincerely,



Ron Gagliardo
Training Officer

cc. K. Zippel

