

REPORT

THE GIANT OTTER IN ECUADOR



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Organisation for the conservation of South American aquatic mammals

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Conservation of the Giant Otter in Ecuador, Report of the IUCN Otter Specialist Group

The report was prepared by the authors in collaboration with the IUCN Otter Specialist Group. The authors are grateful to the IUCN Otter Specialist Group for providing the opportunity to participate in the workshop on the conservation of the Giant Otter in Ecuador, which was held in Quito, Ecuador, in 1995.

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21 days will be spent for field work at the Parque Nacional Yasuni.

METHODS

1) DETERMINATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION

- Direct observations will be made from platforms in trees, situated at each of the oxbow lakes and at the river Tiputini. Two observers, connected via walkie-talkie, will start their daily observations early in the morning before the animals leave their dens.

- Indirect observations of the Giant Otter will be achieved by searching for their tracks, latrines and dens at the banks. This will be done by travelling along the river and the oxbow lakes by boat.

During the field work, the following information will be recorded:

- Date and time of observation
- Name of the observer
- Name of the boat
- Name of the lake or river
- Name of the den or latrine
- Name of the track
- Name of the platform
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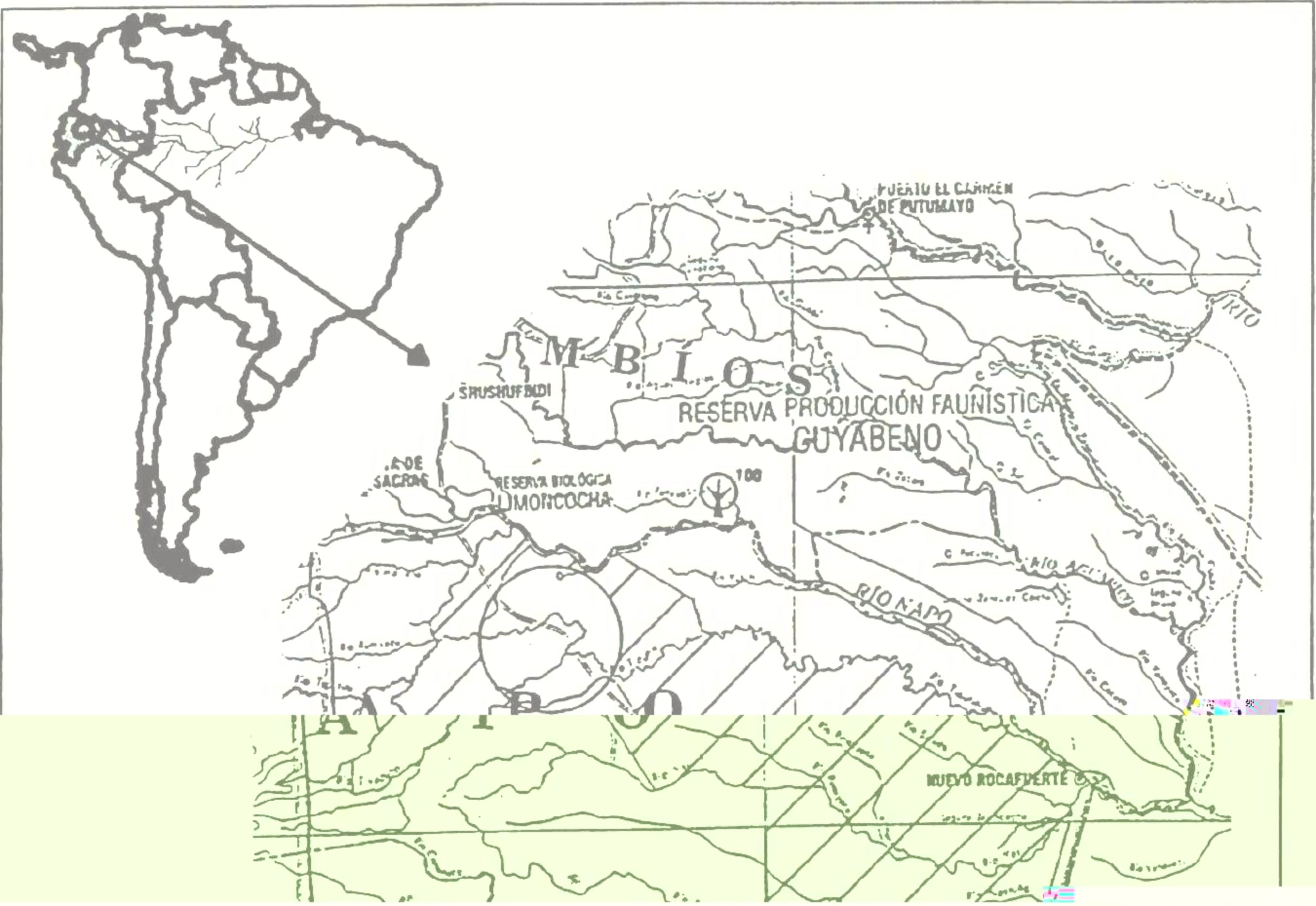
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4) DIET ANALYSIS

Scats will be collected from all the latrines and analyzed in detail at the laboratory in order to determine the diet composition and to detect toxic substances such as heavy metal pollution. Fish will be caught in the river for a later identification which will be done by specialists. The scales of the riverine fish will then be compared to the ones found in the scat to give an accurate account of the fish species in their diet.

At the first trip in April 1997, a group of 5 Giant Otters was sighted and observed. First results of the project may be published in the next issue. Many thanks to Elke Staib and Christof Schenck for their support.

SOUTH AMERICAN NETWORK FOR GIANT OTTERS

The start of the Giant Otter project in Ecuador was connected with the proposal to establish a network for the conservation and protection of Giant Otters for whole South America.

The aim of the network lies in the cooperation between organisations and scientists working on the protection of Giant Otters,

- to exchange and collect information, know-how and contacts
- to work together on protective measures for Giant Otters

to cooperate in advertising campaigns to increase the population of Giant Otters.

www.iucn.org

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