

Project Update: May 2016

As part of its work to support the sustainable management of community forest resources, Fundación Runa has provided training and funding to forest rangers in Santa Rita a community located less than 10 km from our Archidona office. Santa Rita manages 1,500 ha of forest abutting the newly formed Colonso-Chalupas reserve (93,000 ha).

Runa's citizen-scientist programme helps these communities monitor and manage wildlife populations in the communal forest (*socio-bosque*) through the use of camera traps and transects. Currently, 60% of the Ecuadorian Amazon's remaining forests are managed under communal land titles by indigenous peoples. To date, Runa has trained six local park rangers in the communities of Mushullacta and Santa Rita to collect and manage camera trap data.

Camera traps set by park guards in October 2015 detected the presence of at least one melanistic (black) jaguar (*Panthera onca*), also known as a black panther, living in Santa Rita's forest. The fact that many of the jaguars in the Cordillera oriental area have this melanistic trait may indicate the potential presence of a isolated breeding population living in the foothills of the Andes. Other camera trap surveys conducted by WCS in nearby Llanganates National Park (about 25 miles away) have also found the presence of melanistic jaguars. More studies are needed to confirm whether there is in fact a breeding population and whether this population is genetically isolated from populations in the Amazon basin.

The camera traps also detected pumas, spectacled bear, white-lipped peccary and ocelots. Next steps will include assessing primate and bird populations living in the forest canopy through linear transects.



The Runa field team collecting data from the cameras traps set in the Santa Rita forest

Melanistic Black Jaguar Photo - The melanistic jaguar detected by the camera traps in Santa Rita's forest

