Project Update: March 2010

At the end of September 2009, we concluded with the capture of information our project. Sampling was conducted in western Formosa Province and was focused primarily on Wichí communality lands. Also, we included few samples in areas outside communal lands, in order to cover different conservation situations and vegetation types present in the area. At the suggestion of our scientific advisors, we modified the proposed sampling protocol to get information about species frequency in addition to only presence data. Each sample corresponds for a pixel of 980 by 980 m that will be used to species distribution models and to identify High Conservation Value Areas (HCVA) in a GIS analysis. Into each pixel we define nine points separated by 300 m. In each point, we recorded presence of birds (point counts of ten minutes), large mammals (footprints, dung and another signs over a transects of 100 m) and trees (presence of species within a radius of 15 m). The data of the nine points will be used to estimate the frequency of each species into the pixel. Among the species recorded are the tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) and the giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), both with high conservation value because they are included in the IUCN Red List as Vulnerable. In addition, for the giant anteater, we added some localities to the known distribution for the species. It is also important to note that four of our samples were placed in Ramón Lista department (border with Paraguay), which is an area with very scare formal information about biodiversity.

We acquired information for 20 samples (pixel) were we recorded 150 bird species, 13 mammal species and 23 tree species. The communal lands included in the sampling showed different degrees of conservation and we can say that most of them are in very good condition with relation of the environment. Today we are starting data processing and analysis.

Besides the above mentioned, the project organized a workshop between 7 and 12 September 2009 in Tucumán. The objective of this workshop was to find a common criteria and methodologies to make a detailed vegetation map. This map is a fundamental input for the next steps of the project (e.g. species model distribution and the fragmentation analysis). The workshop was attended by representatives of an NGO working in our study area with extensive local field knowledge and students and technical staff related with the project.