

Project Update: February 2007

During the first stage of our RSG project we started to carry out the activities proposed. We conducted land and marine field work in order to survey the coastal sector and nearby islands and determine the population size of this flightless endemic duck. A preliminary estimation indicates that the population size is approximately 3600 individuals (41% adults), with almost 66% concentrated in the northern San Jorge Gulf coastal sector. We collected information in order to study habitat requirements and selection on 150 nests that are spread along this area, allowing us to identify real and potential suitable habitats. We also collected information in order to produce a detailed breeding timing schedule. Many local University students and local wardens participated in the activities, as a training to increase their ability to conduct research and conservation activities. We visited the area during the National Salmon Fishing Festival that takes place in the town of Camarones, located within the area where the duck population occurs. In that opportunity we talked to local people that lives in town and in coastal ranches nearby, we contacted local authorities, and had personal conversations with fishermen that used the coastal sector where ducks breed. We contributed in the design of a brochure in coordination with Laura Reyes's RSG Project, aiming at highlighting this area's natural resources values, mainly marine mammals and birds, including the steamer duck.

The data we are producing is crucial to design conservation and management strategies for this strange and unknown duck, and also to identify sensitive areas for the spatial zoning scheme, particularly now that the area will be designated a National Park.

