

Project update / February 2026

**Nº 48744-B: Seeking the equilibrium between livestock farming and the conservation of threatened large herbivores in the high-altitude desert of the Central Andes Ecoregion.**

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The project was approved on 19 September 2025, and since then the following activities and outputs have been completed:

SEPTEMBER 2025

- A ten-day field campaign was carried out in the project area by two team members and a journalist. The main activities were:
  - Visiting pupils at the rural school “Escuela Los Álamos” (Murmuntani village, Putre county) in order to: i) talk with students about the large mammals that inhabit the surrounding area; ii) train students in animal tracking and the use of camera traps; and iii) install a camera trap in the vicinity of the school.
  - Installing 11 of the 33 camera traps that are part of the program to monitor large mammals in the surroundings of the villages of Chapiquiña and Murmuntani (Putre County).
  - Visiting the area with a Chilean journalist who was preparing an informative article for a well-known and widely read Chilean newsletter (LA CUARTA newsletter). The article was published online in January 2026; it can be accessed here:  
<https://www.lacuarta.com/chile/noticia/las-tarucas-perdidas-en-las-alturas-de-arica-asi-es-la-vida-y-busqueda-de-este-huemul-desconocido-y-amenazado/>
  - Photographs of this field campaign can be downloaded here:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uK-TNNqh23mMh02167CcHXSHgKWsfYWi/vi?usp=sharing>

OCTOBER 2025

- Radio collars, along with all equipment and materials required for fieldwork and the capture campaign, were purchased. Flights and accommodation for the field campaign were booked, and the schedule of field activities was defined.
- The forms required to request capture permits for taruka deer were completed and circulated among scientific collaborators.
- The design and structure of the website to promote the project and Fundación Sudamérica Diversa were discussed and defined in collaboration with the graphic designer. The website is currently under construction, and we expect to launch it at the end of March 2026 (<https://www.sudamericadiversa.org>).

NOVEMBER 2025

- Radio collars and field equipment were received. Photographs can be downloaded here:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18z4dzOBebD6tn\\_L2Sm4eeHSAIgj5RVx6?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18z4dzOBebD6tn_L2Sm4eeHSAIgj5RVx6?usp=sharing)
- Applications for capture permits for taruka deer were submitted to the relevant environmental authorities.

- An illustration featuring tarukas and other threatened species from the project area was created by an illustrator. Stickers were printed to be given to children at environmental events, along with a 1.8 × 1 m<sup>2</sup> face-in-hole illustration for photographs. A photograph of the illustration can be downloaded here [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18z4dzOBebD6tn\\_L2Sm4eeHSAIgj5RVx6?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18z4dzOBebD6tn_L2Sm4eeHSAIgj5RVx6?usp=sharing)
- We participated in the environmental education fair “Día de la Fauna Chile”, organised by the Jane Goodall Institute Chile. This event took place on 8 and 9 November in Santiago, Chile. The event took place on 8 and 9 November in Santiago, Chile. During the fair, we had the opportunity to discuss this conservation project with people from across the country. <https://www.janegoodall.cl/2025/05/29/dia-de-la-fauna-2025-mim-fecha/> During February 2026, a team member will produce a video portraying this activity. A photograph of the illustration can be downloaded here <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MIMSIDZGzHmUcmmJdXRd7ZjaUpvztRza/view?usp=sharing>
- Students from the rural school Escuela Los Álamos (Murmuntani village, Putre county) checked the camera trap that we deployed together and sent us several videos. A video showing the children reviewing camera-trap footage can be viewed here: [https://www.instagram.com/p/DRC0M11kfQB/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DRC0M11kfQB/?img_index=1)  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DRckn3-AU1i/>
- We held our first coordination meeting with authorities from the National Forestry Corporation (CONAF) in the Arica and Tarapacá regions. During the meeting, we defined joint activities to be carried out during the December field campaign and the first semester of 2026, and they committed to supporting some accommodation and transportation costs associated with our field activities.

### DECEMBER 2025

- A fifteen-day field campaign was carried out in the project area by three team members. Photographs of this activity are attached to the email. The main activities were:
  - Visiting pupils at the rural school “Escuela Los Álamos” (Murmuntani village, Putre county) in order to: i) talk with students about the large mammals that inhabit the surrounding area; ii) train students in animal tracking and the use of camera traps; and iii) deploy the school’s camera trap at a new location.
  - Installing 22 of the 33 camera traps that are part of the programme to monitor large mammals in the surroundings of the villages of Chapiquiña and Murmuntani (Putre County), and replacing batteries and SD cards in the 11 cameras that were deployed during the October campaign.
  - Carrying out the activities of our long-term monitoring programme, during which we covered an area of 200 × 30 km<sup>2</sup>, where wild and domestic animals were counted and fresh faecal samples were collected for dietary and pathogen analyses.
  - Visiting the area together with environmental authorities and providing training in our field and tracking methods. We also visited local farmers alongside environmental authorities to discuss the challenges they are experiencing with wildlife (photographs of this activity cannot be shared at the farmers’ request).

- Reporting, for the first time, a male taruka deer with peruke antlers. This represents the first recorded case of this condition in a South American deer. This finding raises questions about the underlying causes of this condition, such as genetic, hormonal, or pathological factors. We are currently preparing a scientific manuscript to share this finding with the global scientific community.
- Photographs of this field campaign can be downloaded here: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1td\\_WVY1qZXvREJAaBVyZum4LdeQKnofj?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1td_WVY1qZXvREJAaBVyZum4LdeQKnofj?usp=sharing)
- Faecal samples were shipped to the laboratory for pathogen and parasite analyses at the Austral University of Chile and the University of Concepción.

### JANUARY 2026

- Environmental authorities from CONAF prepared several articles for dissemination websites and social media platforms. Some of these can be found at the following links:
  - [https://web.facebook.com/somos\\_tarapaca/posts/registros-obtenidos-en-la-principal-cordillera-de-tarapac%C3%A1-han-permitido-avanzar-en-el-923390073586672/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr](https://web.facebook.com/somos_tarapaca/posts/registros-obtenidos-en-la-principal-cordillera-de-tarapac%C3%A1-han-permitido-avanzar-en-el-923390073586672/?_rdc=1&_rdr)
  - [https://web.facebook.com/100046788768714/photos/una-joya-de-fotograf%C3%ADa-de-vida-silvestre-chilena-primera-imagen-una-hermosa-foto/1580546873514923/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr](https://web.facebook.com/100046788768714/photos/una-joya-de-fotograf%C3%ADa-de-vida-silvestre-chilena-primera-imagen-una-hermosa-foto/1580546873514923/?_rdc=1&_rdr)
  - <https://www.instagram.com/p/DTOcJjDEhvU/>
  - <https://tarapacainsitu.cl/contenido/2569/monitoreos-cientificos-detectan-tarukas-en-chiapa-y-refuerzan-urgencia-de-su-con>
  - <https://www.conaf.cl/monitoreos-cientificos-detectan-tarukas-en-chiapa-y-refuerzan-urgencia-de-su-conservacion/>
  - [https://web.facebook.com/100046788768714/posts/una-joya-de-fotograf%C3%ADa-de-vida-silvestre-chilena-primera-imagen-una-hermosa-foto/1580546896848254/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr](https://web.facebook.com/100046788768714/posts/una-joya-de-fotograf%C3%ADa-de-vida-silvestre-chilena-primera-imagen-una-hermosa-foto/1580546896848254/?_rdc=1&_rdr)
- We have shared a video on our social media that will also be featured on our website (currently under construction). You can view it here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DTITJoGgUp9/>
- We have shared some of the camera trap videos from our monitoring programme for dissemination purposes here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DUPi3ADgTa5/>
- We have had two coordination meetings with environmental authorities from CONAF, where we arranged a training course on the Distance Sampling method to collect, systematise, and analyse their large mammal data. This course will be held in April 2026 and will include two days of lectures and exercises, followed by three days in the field to install 20 camera traps following the Camera Trap Distance Sampling protocol <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/2041-210X.12790>

### **PROBLEMS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

- Unfortunately, one of the 11 cameras deployed in October 2025 was stolen. We are therefore seeking additional funds to purchase a replacement and maintain the monitoring programme with 33 cameras.
- The capture campaign had to be postponed from December 2025 to July 2026. Unfortunately, the environmental authorities requested additional information before authorising the capture of tarukas. We are currently responding to all their comments and including their suggested modifications. The campaign was rescheduled for July because, during this period, tarukas begin to visit crops again, making sightings easier. During this campaign, we will also check the camera traps and replace batteries and SD cards.
- The March 2026 campaign will not be carried out, as the budget allocated for that campaign will be used to carry out the July 2026 campaign. Capturing animals is our main priority. In terms of data, this will not pose a problem, as we already have wet-season data from previous years to make comparisons between seasons.