



Biodiversity Brief 2017

Madre de Dios Amazon REDD Project

THE "COLPAS": ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR SHOWS IN NATURE

MAY 2017

The wonder of the macaw and parakeet "colpas"

A fantastic show

A "colpa" is a clay ravine in the riverside. Every morning at dawn, hundreds of macaws, parakeets and other species of birds, carry out their fluttering ceremony before initiating the "colpeo", which is the ingestion of clay from the ravine.

After approximately half an hour, the birds start to leave, only to return the next day. Groups of macaws have also been observed at other times but this is not so sure and generally, these groups are smaller.

The reason of this spectacular behavior and one of the most amazing shows in nature is still being debated and investigated. Several theories suggest that clay contains vital mineral salts and these are part of the bird's diet. It is also believed that the small clay particles are useful to detoxify the bird's fruit diet.

Macaws in danger of extinction

The macaws are one of the 35 species in high risk of extinction that are being protected by the Madre de Dios Amazon REDD Project.

These magnificent birds are endangered mainly because of the destruction of their habitat caused by deforestation and because of the illegal trade of pets.

Moreover, some aspects of their own ecology such as their high selectivity for a nesting place as well as their low reproductive rate, is also contributing to put them in great risk of extinction.

Madre de Dios Amazon REDD Project, as part of its biodiversity actions has identified all "colpas" within its area and in the nearby areas.

These are constantly preserved through delimitation and regular patrolling. Personnel has been trained to monitor these areas and conservation measures are periodically revised based on the monitoring results.



Macaws during the "colpeo"



Parakeets & macaws sharing a colpa

Celebrating a new generation of Taricaya turtles in the Amazon

Peru is home to thousands of species that are unique, and as the country is extremely diverse, the flora and fauna of Peru reflect this diversity. Unfortunately, many of these species are endangered due to human activities, global warming, and sheer evolutionary effects. The yellow-spotted Amazon River turtles (*Podocnemis unifilis*) are one of those species that are considered to be endangered. They are also quite vulnerable to changes that we are experiencing as a planet.

These turtles feed on fish, fruits, water plants, weeds and also small insects. They are known for their beauty and unique patterned shell, which some believe brings them good luck. In Puerto Maldonado, the eggs are sold in the local markets and the excessive poaching plus other activities that destroy their habitat has drastically diminished this species population in the area.



The Taricaya turtle project

The Taricaya Turtle Project in the Yine tribe rainforest is an important part of our commitment to supporting wildlife preservation in the Peruvian Amazon.

The tribe people collect the eggs during the laying season (July - August) and transfer them to artificial beaches where they await the occlusion of the eggs in October - November. The turtles take around 70 days to hatch and once this happens we have the unique opportunity to release the little creatures into the lagoon.

Pauline, one of our volunteers had the joy of safely releasing the baby turtles into the lagoon during her last visit.

She was also lucky enough to see two slightly older Taricaya turtles happily thriving in their natural habitat.