

## NEWS FROM CAPTIVITY

### Publication Announcement for the Revised AZA Husbandry Guidelines for Tapirs

After much work, the AZA Tapir TAG has completed its task of compiling husbandry standards for keeping tapirs in captivity. This assignment was given over three years ago by the AZA Animal Welfare Committee and directed all the TAGs to oversee the compilation of rigorous documents that could be used by AZA inspectors visiting zoos during accreditation inspections. These standards are much more in-depth than the early husbandry guidelines that were written 5-6 years ago, and are at the request of USDA and to be used by federal inspectors, animal welfare agencies etc.

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### Status, Origin, and Diet of Captive Tapirs (*Tapirus terrestris*) in the State of Santa Catarina, Southern Brazil

By Alexey Bevilacqua Tormin Borges  
& Marcos Adriano Tortato

In the State of Santa Catarina in the southern region of Brazil, there are a relatively small number of zoos, few of which exhibit tapirs. These facilities are poorly structured, with little investment in infra-structure or research on the animals. A brief survey indicated four establishments with a total of 15 lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) individuals. The survey also collected information on the origin, gender, diet, exhibit, reproduction and handling of the animals.

#### Surveys

In all, four facilities with captive tapirs were identified (see below). Three of these facilities were zoos, and the fourth was a Visitor Centre in the Serra do Tabuleiro State Park. All of these facilities were open to the public. They were:

- Fundação Ecológica Zoobotânica de Brusque (FEZB), Brusque.
- Parque Cyro Gevaerd (PCG), Balneário Camboriú.
- Zoológico Pomerode (ZP), Pomerode.
- Visitor Centre at the Serra do Tabuleiro State Park (STSP), Palhoça.

#### Status, Origin, Enclosure, Diet and Handling

Most tapirs located in these facilities were bred from founder specimens at the Visitor Centre at the Serra do Tabuleiro State Park (STSP). None of these specimens are native to the State of Santa Catarina.

#### Visitor Centre at Serra do Tabuleiro State Park:

- **STATUS** – seven tapirs comprising 4 adults (2.2) and 3 young (0.2.1). Reproduction takes place without any genetic management due to the extensive enclosure inhabited by the animals. In two decades of captivity, only one pair has bred.
- **ORIGIN** – both founders are originally from the state of Rondônia, northern Brazil, and all others were born in captivity. These founders were brought here through the implementation of an Extinct Fauna Restoration Project of the 1980's located in a coastal region of the STSP (Baixada do Massiambu). This project was eventually abandoned due to lack of technical/scientific criteria.
- **ENCLOSURE** – An enclosure of 150 ha composed of a mosaic of Restinga vegetation, flooded areas, and temporary lagoons, typical of Coastal Atlantic Forest ecosystems. The animals are managed so that they are available for exhibition to the public and for the Park's Environmental Education Programme.
- **DIET** – composed of natural vegetation found in the exhibit and supplemented with pumpkin, manioc, cabbage, lettuce, banana, papaya and equine feed.
- **HANDLING** – over the course of two decades in captivity, some offspring have been transferred to other facilities as follows:
  - 1.0 to the Fundação Ecológica Zoobotânica de Brusque (FEZB)
  - 2.0 to the Parque Cyro Gevaerd (PCG), Balneário Camboriú

This facility currently has a need for decisions about managing the population and for training in handling the animals. The enclosure has proven to be inadequate for containing tapirs, and the potential for contact with resident populations of wild tapir along the foothills of the Serra do Tabuleiro is high.

### **Fundação Ecológica Zoobotânica de Brusque:**

- **STATUS** – 4 tapirs, 3 adults (2.1) and 0.0.1 young. Reproduction is managed.
- **ORIGIN** – both founders are originally from the State of Mato Grosso in the Central-Western region of Brazil, and were brought into captivity in the 1990's. One male was born in captivity from these two founders, and the other juvenile was transferred from the Visitor Centre at the STSP.
- **ENCLOSURE** – 1,800 m<sup>2</sup> (0.18 ha) containing a lake and forested areas.
- **DIET** – Composed of equine feed, cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, hay and tomatoes.
- **HANDLING** – There are no records concerning births, acquisitions or transfers of specimens to or from other zoos.

### **Parque Cyro Gevaerd:**

- **STATUS** – 2 adults.
- **ORIGIN** – Visitor Centre at the STSP, Santa Catarina, southern Brazil;
- **ENCLOSURE** – 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> (0.15 ha), includes a lake. Shaded areas are currently being provided.
- **DIET** – Composed of equine feed, banana, apple, melon, papaya, cabbage, sweet potato, manioc, tomato, green beans, corn, hay, sugar cane (during winter) and mineral salts.
- **HANDLING** – There are no records concerning births or transfers from the STSP.

### **Zoológico Pomerode:**

- **STATUS** – 1 male.
- **ORIGIN** – Fontana Farm, State of Paraná in southern Brazil, arrived in the 1970's.
- **ENCLOSURE** – 700 m<sup>2</sup> (0.07 ha), includes a lake. Shaded areas are currently being provided;
- **DIET** – Composed of equine feed, pumpkin, apple, banana, sweet potato, carrots, hay, and mineral salts.
- **HANDLING** – There are no records concerning age or date of acquisition.

### **Final Considerations**

The captive conditions of tapirs in the State of Santa Catarina, southern Brazil, are very precarious, given that the facilities lack technical and scientific guidance in their maintenance and welfare. At the Visitor Centre at Serra do Tabuleiro State Park, the situation is both interesting and critical at the same time, with animals coming into close contact with natural environments and making regular use of the natural resources available. The area of over 150 ha, while being the largest encountered in this survey, is insufficient for maintaining seven individuals and the impact caused by foraging and trampling is visible. This condition is worsened by the fact that the fencing does not adequately contain the animals, potentially allowing disease transmission and inter-breeding with tapir populations that are native to the Park. On the other hand, the tapirs have a strong appeal as a flagship

species for the Environmental Education Programme of the park. There is great potential for future work directed at the conservation of the species in the STSP and improvements in living conditions and research in captivity. Although critical, the captive situation in Santa Catarina offers great potential for the development of several research initiatives involving genetic diversity, inbreeding, diet, epidemiological studies, and the use of naturalistic habitats.

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## Recent Births of Mountain Tapirs

Two births of mountain tapirs (*Tapirus pinchaque*) have been reported from zoos in the United States this year.



Five days old mountain tapir at the Los Angeles Zoo. Photo by Roxane Losey.

The Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the Los Angeles Zoo, California, each achieved a recent success in breeding this highly endangered species. The offspring, both males, were born on May 29<sup>th</sup> and October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Altogether, eight individuals are currently represented in three North American facilities.