

Project Update: August 2014

From 5th to 18th August 2014 I conducted the first expedition to my study area to carry out the first samplings for my project. The area corresponds to the floodplain of a tributary of the Apure River, known as caño La Piedra, which connects the former with the Arauca River, and it is localised within the limits of the cattle ranch Hato Santa Luisa. During the activities we had the support of the owner and the personnel of the ranch, who have manifested great interest in the project since they want to perform a sustainable fisheries management of the resources within their land. Samplings were taken from La Piedra as well as from two floodplain lakes, La Arenosa and El totumo.



The activities also counted with the participation of Yamilys Carreño, a researcher of the National Institute of Research on Agriculture, who will use part of the samplings of my project for a research about the genetic diversity of the catfishes within the Apure River Basin, and of Galo Buitrón Jurado, a student of the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research, who was in charge of documenting the activities with photographs.



So far, 41 species of fishes have been identified, of which 15 are catfishes. The samplings will be used to gather information about the species feeding ecology. With the camera

donated by Idea Wild, we were able to register 29 fish species, these photos will be used, together with those to take in the next field trips, to prepare an illustrated guide of the fishes of La Piedra. Measurements of physical and chemical parameters of the water were also taken during the fishing activities, which will be used to identify the environmental variables that intervene in the structure of the catfishes assemblages. Dr Carreño took tissue samples of the catfishes as well as other fishes of commercial interest. We noticed a significant presence of juvenile fishes of different species in La Piedra as well as in the floodplain lakes and other flooded areas, which indicates that the area is important for the fishes growth and the replenishing of their populations.

During September and part of October 2014, I am going to work in the laboratory of fishes of the Institute of Tropical Zoology and Ecology of the Universidad Central de Venezuela, to identify the fish samples and conduct morphometric measures and gut content analyses, under the assessment of Dr. Antonio Machado – Allison, who is an authority in Venezuelan fishes. The next field trip will take place at the end of October 2014.