

Project Update: July 2014

During the recent months I have been dedicated to buying the equipment and materials necessary to conduct the fish sampling. I have faced some difficulties to get some materials such as formalin and alcohol as well as other ones, due to the general scarcity of products in Venezuela as a result of the government's restrictions to give dollars to private companies to import goods. However, so far I have managed to buy most of the equipment and materials needed.

I was informed by a researcher of the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research who recently visited the Apure River that the sector that I had chosen as my study area has suffered recent events of overfishing, with one of the floodplain lakes I had chosen as one of my stations being poisoned with pesticides, which has rendered its fish community very impaired. Besides, the area has been affected by the pervasive insecurity that reigns in my country. Because of these issues, I decided to explore other potential study areas, preferably in private lands. I have contacted the chief of the social area of the newly created socialist cattle ranch Bravos de Apure, former Hato El Cedral which was expropriated by the state several years ago, to ask for permission to conduct my samplings in the ranch, and I am expecting his answer.

I was recently introduced to Alberto Blanco, the editor of Río Verde, a Venezuelan magazine dedicated to publish articles about conservation issues, who offered to help using his contacts to get access to other potential study areas. He also manifested his interest in publishing a piece on catfishes so there is a new possibility to divulge the information that will be obtained through this project to a broader public.

Last month I presented a seminar titled "Fish communities in tropical floodplains: factors that intervene in their structure" in the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research. This seminar was based in the review of 50 publications on the mentioned subject, and I am including the contents of it in my website about catfishes in order to divulge information about the biotic and environmental variables that influence these fish's distribution and abundances.

I contacted the curator of the fish collection of Fundación La Salle de Ciencias Naturales to request the foundation's authorisation to visit the collection. The purpose of the visit is to take data of the catfishes collected in the Apure River floodplain consisting on several body measures that I will use as a reference to compare with the data I will obtain through my own samplings. The data will also be useful to calculate the functional diversity of the catfishes in the floodplain. I will also take pictures of their specimens that will upload in my website. I am planning to carry out this activity through July.

