

Liberando Esperanzas: a conservation program of *Caiman latirostris* populations in Santa Fe, Argentina

**Evelyn C. López González^{*1,2}, Mateo Bolcatto², Sergio Trachter²,
Alba Imhof² and Alejandro Larriera²**

¹Laboratorio de Ecología Molecular Aplicada, Instituto de Ciencias Veterinarias del Litoral, Universidad Nacional del Litoral – Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (LEMA/ICiVet-Litoral – CONICET/UNL). Av. Aristóbulo del Valle 8700 (3000), Santa Fe, Argentina (evelynclg@gmail.com.ar; evelyn.lopez@icivet.unl.edu.ar)

²Proyecto Yacaré – Laboratorio de Zoología Aplicada: Anexo Vertebrados (FHUC-UNL/MMAyCC) - Av. Aristóbulo del Valle 8700 (3000), Santa Fe, Argentina (matubolcatto@gmail.com; sergio.trachter@gmail.com; albaimhof@gmail.com; larriera56@gmail.com)

Abstract: Since Proyecto Yacaré creation (1990) *Caiman latirostris* populations from Argentina successfully has been recovered and in the following years, the species was transferred from Appendix I to II of CITES. From there the ranching program has notably improved the population situation of wildlife caimans. However, in early life stages, broad-snouted caiman exhibits greater sensitivity than adults, because of body size immaturity, and can increase the susceptibility of some neonates to natural factors added to overexploitation by anthropogenic activity (predators, high temperatures, extreme cold, droughts, floods, overcrowding, contaminants, lack of shelters or food, among others) that affect their survival. That's why we need to do more to protect and save our wildlife and their natural habitat for future generations by promoting conservation actions. In this context, through the *Liberando Esperanzas* program a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the broad-snouted caiman population in Argentina, which consists of symbolic adoption of caimans (or sponsorship) with the consequent monitoring of some individuals in the natural environments, which adds the possibility of controlling the activities of the captive breeding period first, and then the chance to monitor their return to nature and their performance there. This is offered as a strategic alternative to reinforce the possibilities of conservation of the species with the early harvest of eggs, artificial incubation, and controlled rearing during the first year of life. This prevents the high natural mortality, generating a large number of surviving animals to return to nature. Funds from this program through symbolic adoption go toward efforts to help protect the wild broad-snouted caiman populations from Argentina, their habitats and at the same time inspire and promote the conservation of wild species around the globe with community support.

Keywords: Broad-snouted caiman, Conservation program, Husbandry care, Symbolic adoption

Type of presentation: Oral

Thematic area: *In situ* Conservation and Sustainable Use (P15: Sustainable Use)