

The return of the Orinoco crocodile *Crocodylus intermedius* to the Venezuelan Llanos

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Abstract: On 2021, two AZA institutions successfully bred Orinoco crocodiles. In agreement with the Species Survival Plan, all these hatchlings or juveniles can be sent to Venezuela to reinforce the wild populations of the species. More than 10 US zoological institutions are participating head starting a couple of crocodiles in their facilities and using them as ambassadors to raise awareness for the conservation of the species with the zoo visitors. Two fundraisers have been set by CrocFest to raise economical resources to secure the costs of shipping, quarantine, feeding, medical attention, soft-release enclosures, and transportation to the release spot. All the juvenile crocodiles will be scute clipped and tag-numbered for identification, and also will be equipped with satellite and antenna tracking devices to know their movements, dispersion and survival among other parameters after their release. The Crocodile Specialist Group of Venezuela who are also partners of this project have released more than 10,000 juveniles in the wild in the past two decades. Some of the released crocodiles reached maturity and are breeding and producing hatchlings in the Venezuelan Llanos.

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