

GLOBAL RE-INTRODUCTION PERSPECTIVES

Re-introduction case-studies from around the globe



**Edited by
Pritpal S. Soorae**



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Cover photo: Clockwise starting from top-left:

- Formosan salmon stream, Taiwan
- Students in Madagascar with tree seedlings
- Virgin Islands boa

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Conservation Plan and re-introduction program of Orinoco crocodile in Venezuela

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Introduction

The Orinoco crocodile (*Crocodylus intermedius*) is the biggest crocodile in South America and it is present in the Orinoco river basins of Colombia and Venezuela. The area in Venezuela is around 240,000 Km². This species is listed by IUCN as “Critically Endangered” (CR – A1c, C2a). In CITES it is listed in App. I and in Venezuela in the Banned List (Ministerial Resolution No 95 dated 28/11/1979) and in the Red Book as endangered. The area where the conservation plan for this species is implemented is in the Venezuela plains (llanos), which is characterized by lots of rivers and lagoons. The vegetation of this region is mainly herbaceous with forests behind the rivers.

Goals

- Goal 1: The recovery of the Orinoco crocodile populations throughout its range.
- Goal 2: The creation of new populations through re-introduction programs.
- Goal 3: The development of captive-breeding and ranching programs. Also the operations of farms is encouraged.
- Goal 4: Involving ranch owners in crocodile conservation programs.
- Goal 5: Increasing the budget allocated by the government for conservation programs.
- Goal 6: Involving more institutions within the recovery program.
- Goal 7: Creating protected areas for the species.



Orinoco crocodile (*Crocodylus intermedius*)

© César Barrio

Success Indicators before implementation of the project

- Indicator 1: Population reduction.
- Indicator 2: Lack of knowledge amongst the local population on species conservation issues.

- Indicator 3: Absence of protected areas for the species.

Project Summary

The first stage was species status knowledge, information on the habitat and creating a conservation management plan. In the beginning, two institutions began to build the facilities for maintaining crocodiles in captivity and another one to collect hatchlings from the wild with the knowledge of the government. Also at the same surveys of the main populations were conducted and to try and identify possible areas for re-introduction in its historical habitat.



Two Orinoco crocodiles on a sandbank

After the first re-introduction, the Ministry of Environment began monitoring the areas where the species was re-introduced and created the Caño Guaritico Wildlife Refuge for this species. After this re-introduction attempt a new breeding population has been established. This program also involves other National Parks into the conservation program, where the species is re-introduced. A monitoring program has been established with some NGO's and universities which monitor these areas and evaluate program success. On farms a complete sanitary program has also been established to ensure proper waste disposal.

Major difficulties faced

- Financial support.
- Studies in wildlife of reproduction success.
- Continued monitoring programs with re-enforced population.
- Number of facilities involved in the program.

Major lessons learned

- It is possible recover the species.
- It is possible involve more institutions.
- The local population understands the project.

Success of project

Highly Successful	Successful	Partially Successful	Failure
	√		

Reasons for success/failure:

- The creation a new population in Caño Guaritico Wildlife Refuge in Apure State.

Reptiles



Orinoco crocodile hatchlings

© Rafael Antelo

- Created a functional protocol of breeding program in the farms.
- Increasing the numbers of institutions that are involved with the program.
- Increasing the budget by the government.
- Increasing the number of farms.
- Increasing the biologists that work with this species.
- Creation of the Crocodile Specialist Group of Venezuela.

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