Report at a Glance

A RAPID BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE KONASHEN COMMUNITY OWNED CONSERVATION AREA, SOUTHERN GUYANA

Dates of RAP Survey
October 6–28, 2006

Description of RAP Survey Sites
The Konashen Community Owned Conservation Area (COCA) is comprised of 625,000 hectares of undisturbed forest located in a tropical wilderness area in the "deep" southern region of Guyana. The site is relatively unexplored and considered to be one of the last large and intact pristine areas of forest remaining in Guyana. It encompasses the watershed of the Essequibo River and the tributaries of the Kassikaityu, Kamoa, Sipu and Chodikar rivers. The area's main mountains include the Wassarai, Yashore, Kamoa and Kaiawakua with elevations reaching 1200 meters above mean sea level. Within the Konashen COCA, the RAP team surveyed two primary sites and the aquatic teams surveyed focal areas encompassing the main waterways.

Reasons for the RAP Survey
Within the Konashen COCA there is one community (Masakenari) made up mainly of members of the Wai-Wai Indigenous group who utilize the area for their sustenance. The residents of this village have minimal external contacts and thus utilize the natural resources of the COCA for all their needs. Their major form of economic activity is the international wildlife trade, but they may also harvest other raw materials from the forest to support a craft industry in the community. The Wai-Wai of the COCA recognize that their demands on their natural resources are increasing and must be managed sustainably. Therefore, they expressed interest in collaborating with Conservation International (CI) and the RAP program to conduct an inventory of the natural resources of the COCA. The data collected will be used by the community to establish user-thresholds and to develop a management plan for sustainable use and conservation of their traditional resources.

MAJOR RESULTS

The data collected during the RAP survey indicate that the forests of the Konashen COCA are in very good condition and support rich biodiversity. Water quality was high, with no evidence of pollution. Typical of the forests of the Guayana Shield, the RAP team recorded high species diversity but low abundance levels of species of most groups and low species endemicity. The potential for finding new taxa is high due to the lack of scientific exploration.