

DATES OF RAP SURVEY

August 18–September 8, 2010

DESCRIPTION OF RAP SURVEY SITES

The Kwamalasamutu region refers to the area of lowland tropical forest surrounding the Trio settlement of Kwamalasamutu. At a minimum, it encompasses the eastern portion of the upper Corantijn watershed, or an area extending from the village south to the Brazilian border, east to the Sipaliwini savanna, north to the Eilerts de Haan and Wilhelmina mountains, and west to the Upper Corantijn River. This vast area is sparsely populated, and its biota is poorly known relative to central and eastern Suriname. The elevation of the region is mostly between 200–400 meters (higher in the south along the Brazilian border), but scattered granitic formations to the north and east of Kwamalasamutu approach 800 m. The region is entirely forested. The RAP team worked around three study sites on the Kutari and Sipaliwini Rivers, each accessible within a day's travel by boat from Kwamalasamutu. The fish and water quality teams also sampled along waterways between our camps. At all sites, the predominant terrestrial habitat was tall forest on both well-drained and seasonally inundated soils.

REASONS FOR THE RAP SURVEY

In 2000, a cave with extensive petroglyphs (Werehpai) was discovered near the village of Kwamalasamutu. Shortly thereafter, the community established the Werehpai/Iwana Samu Sanctuary to serve as an ecotourism site and game reserve, both to generate income for the community and to protect populations of animals upon which the people of Kwamalasamutu depend for food. Conservation International–Suriname has since been working with the community and several donor agencies to establish infrastructure and maintain the sanctuary.

The purpose of this RAP survey was to establish baseline information on the region's biodiversity to inform ecotourism and future monitoring efforts, focusing on Werehpai and the surrounding region. We sought especially to gather information on plant and animal species important to the Trio people, and to provide recommendations that will support sustainable harvest and management practices. The overall goal was to bring together the knowledge and expertise of local people with scientific knowledge to study and plan for monitoring of biological and cultural resources of the Kwamalasamutu region.