

Report at a Glance

A RAPID BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE LELY AND NASSAU PLATEAUS, SURINAME

Dates of RAP Survey

October 25 – November 6, 2005

Description of RAP Survey Sites

The Lely and Nassau Plateaus are two plateaus in eastern Suriname characterized by a solid and thick crust in the upper soil composed mainly of consolidated ferrite (Fe) and bauxite (Al). Lely contains a series of plateaus with maximum altitude of approximately 700 meters and Nassau is comprised of four plateaus ranging from 500 - 570 meters. The RAP survey focused on habitats above 500 m, including at Lely: mountain savannah forest, high dryland rainforest, palm swamp and secondary growth, and at Nassau: high dryland rainforest, some mountain savannah forest, limited patches of palm swamp, secondary forest and vegetation in areas cleared for infrastructure such as roads and an overgrown airstrip. These plateaus provide many watershed services for local and coastal communities, as well as important sources of employment (principally small-scale gold mining), food, medicine and building materials for local communities.

Reasons for the RAP Survey

The RAP biodiversity surveys of Lely and Nassau Plateaus were conducted in order to fill in gaps in biodiversity data for eastern Suriname. The 2002 Guayana Shield Priority-Setting Workshop determined that we lack essential biodiversity data for these plateaus needed for conservation planning. The RAP data collected for birds, mammals, fishes, amphibians and reptiles, ants, and dung beetles will contribute to a greater understanding of the fauna and flora of these two plateaus and enable comparisons of biodiversity value with the Brownsberg Plateau (see Executive Summary for comparisons) and other areas of the Guayana Shield. In addition, the data will be used by BHP-Billiton Maatschappij Suriname and the Suriname Aluminium Company LLC (Suralco) as part of their Mining Joint Venture (MJV) to incorporate biodiversity considerations in the earliest stages of decision-making for any mining operations that they may undertake in these areas. It is our aim to provide information so that any mining companies that work in this area can incorporate biodiversity conservation into their project planning.

MAJOR RESULTS

Lely and Nassau Plateaus

- High faunal diversity (see table below),
- At least 27 species endemic to the Guayana Shield region,
- At least 24 species new to science, illustrating how little we know of these areas and the Guayana Shield region overall,
- Many species and individuals of large mammals and large birds (e.g. parrots, guans), indicating that these areas may serve as refuges for larger species,