

Cape Cod Bird Club
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Bird of prey conservation through rescue biocultural memory in communities of the Andes of Venezuela

Project manager: Luis A. Saavedra. Coordinator Cinco Águilas Blancas (Five White Eagles) Raptor observatory and counting station Coordinator.

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Biologist Bachelor Student in Los Andes University ULA. He has a great interest and active involvement in the study and conservation of amphibians and birds. Collaborates with several projects and organizations, such as the university's Rangers Club (in which he became a technical assistant in the "Sebastián de Los Reyes" Serpenterium) the Bararida Zoological and Botanical Park (Lara state), and volunteer for activities of monitoring and management of birds in the Portachuelo pass (Aragua state) with the Audubon Society of Venezuela and the Phelps Ornithological Collection.

In 2015, he began to participate as a volunteer assistant at the Venezuelan Andean Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Center at the Chorros de Milla Zoo (Mérida state), and in 2018, he became a technical assistant at the Center of Conservation REVA (Rescue Endangered Venezuelan Amphibian), later he is Technical Director since July 2020. These experiences allowed him to master the planning and execution of ex situ, in situ conservation programs, and related environmental education projects. At the same time, he began to carry out ecological studies of urban birds, and in 2020, he starts to monitor migratory raptors in the city of Mérida, founded the Five White Eagles Raptor observatory and accounting Station.

Implementing institution or organization: Cinco Águilas Blancas (Five White Eagles) raptor observation and counting station, Mérida State, Venezuela. luisaavedra.95@gmail.com. +58 4126911899

Purpose

Venezuela is among the countries with the greatest number of species of birds of prey in the world, with a total of 68 different raptors and vultures. This makes this country important for conservation studies of this unique group of birds, even more, when we consider that some of these species are threatened.

This diversity can also be reflected in Venezuelan culture through stories, beliefs, and traditions where they refer to birds of prey. These popular knowledge take on an important role for the study of diversity, interactions between human societies and nature and as an instrument of linkage that allows the conservation of species. Biocultural memory is part of traditional wisdom, it represents the ability to remember to understand the present and gives elements for the planning of the future

and to trace similar events that occurred before. The transmission of this knowledge is done through language, therefore, memory is the most important intellectual resource among indigenous or traditional cultures. For these cultures, nature has a sacred quality that is almost absent from Western thought and at the heart of this deep bond is the perception that all living and non-living things, and the social and natural worlds are intrinsically linked. For this reason, one of the most effective ways to conserve natural elements such as landscapes, ecosystems and species is when the communities that live with these elements have a strong sense of community due to their cultural or religious link that drives them to preserve these natural aspects for the intangible value for their societies. However, it is recognized that biocultural memory is a dynamic and highly intercultural entity; which is reconfigured and strengthened, or in its case deteriorates in interaction with other worldviews and cultures, such as educational processes from an integrationist model. In the Andean state of Mérida there are various aspects of cultural and religious stories, beliefs, and traditions that link the communities with birds of prey, as is the Indian tale of the five white eagles who narrates the origin of the Sierra Nevada, Mérida, and the passage of the migratory raptors as the incarnation and return of dead family members the day of the “animas” (month of November). For this reason, and thanks to the work that has been carried out from the Cinco Águilas Blancas raptor observation and counting station, we wish to rescue the biocultural memory and use it as a tool for linking and generating a sense of identity that promotes the conservation of all birds of prey in the Andes of Venezuela. To do this, we want to collect the stories, beliefs and traditions that are part of the biocultural memory of the communities living in the Chama River Valley, Andes de Mérida, to then use and disseminate this memory as an educational and cultural strategy that promotes bonding and allows safeguarding the biocultural memory for the next generations and therefore the conservation of birds of prey in the Andes of Venezuela.

Description and Methods

The activities will be carried out in rural communities established in the Chama River Valley, Andes of Mérida state, western Venezuela. The Chama River has an extension of 200 km in length, its source is located at approximately 4000 meters above sea level, in the Sierra de la Culata and runs in a southwesterly direction, flowing into Lake Maracaibo. On its way it forms an extensive valley that has the same name where a significant number of Andean settlers settle. The Chama River Valley represents one of the most important routes for the autumn migration of Nearctic raptors that seek to cross the Cordillera de Mérida, a natural barrier, to reach their wintering sites. In addition, these environments are home to species of birds of prey in danger of extinction such as the black and chestnut eagle *Spizaetus isidori* and the Andean condor *Vultur gryphus*.

The methodology will consist of the following elements:

- 1) **Compilation of stories, beliefs and traditions of the Chama River Valley communities.** Five rural communities will be visited in which at least 20 semi-structured interviews will be carried out per community, which will be aimed at people over 50 years old. The audios of the interviews will be recorded with the cell phones of the researchers to later systematize and analyze the information. Each community is visited twice to complete the desired interviews.
- 2) **Audiovisual for the rescue of biocultural memory.** As an instrument of rescue, connection and generation of a sense of belonging, a school will be chosen from the visited communities where an audiovisual project of interviews of the students with their teachers, their families and community will be developed. A group of young students will be chosen to research and collect stories, beliefs and traditions related to birds of prey. The audiovisual edition will be carried out with the participation of the students to create a sense of belonging

to the information, for which 3 visits will be made to the chosen community. At the end of the audiovisual, a premiere event will be held where educational activities (storytelling, games, didactic/artistic activities, bird watching) will be carried out for the conservation of birds. Subsequently, the audiovisual will be freely accessible and shared on web pages and social networks such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

3) **Publications.** Two publications are proposed, one of an informative nature in specialized journals (Neotropical raptor network newsletter Spizaetus) and one of a scientific and refereed nature (Revista Venezolana de Ornitología) based on the information collected in the semi-structured interviews to highlight the importance of rescuing memory biocultural as an instrument for the conservation of birds of prey in the Neotropics.

Budget Summary

Budget	Item/amount	Requested from CCBC*	Other sources
Equipment	Camara Smartphone Laptop Electric extensión Video projector	\$390 \$10 \$150	\$532 FWEHW** \$180 FWEHW
Field Work and audiovisual production	Transportation: \$10 daily x 13 days Food: \$15 daily x 13 days	\$130 \$195	
Education activity	World Migratory Bird Day materials Crayons Snacks for 50 people 5 binoculars	\$30 \$90	\$(N/A) EFTA*** \$(N/A) PFTT****
Total		\$995	\$712
Percentage		% 58	% 42

* Cape Cod Bird Club

**Five White Eagles Hawk Watch

*** Environment for the Americas

****Optic for the Tropic

List of other funding sources

- Five White Eagles Hawk Watch \$ 712 **APPROVED** luisaavedra.95@gmail.com
- Environment for the Americas/ Optic for the Tropic \$(N/A) **REQUESTED** info@environmentamericas.org

Timeline of work

Plan			Time (in months)					
#	Activity	Prerequisite	1-2	3-4	6-7	8-9	10-11	12
1	Community selection and data collection	Beginning	X	X				
2	Analysis of data	1 completed			X			
3	Audiovisual production	1 completed			X			
4	Audiovisual premiere and educational activity	3 completed			X			
5	Scientific reports and preparation of publications	2 and 4 completed			X	X	X	X

Continuity

This proposal is part of the Project to establish the Cinco Águilas Blancas raptor observation and counting station. The Cinco Águilas Blancas station has been carrying out observation and counting activities for Nearctic migratory raptors and resident species since 2020, this year 2022 we have decided to start the socio-educational component that is in line with the objectives of the station such as advancing in the knowledge of birds of prey in Venezuela and involve the general public in activities that promote environmental education in the community, particularly those that promote awareness of the development of conservation efforts and study of raptors. As the Cinco Águilas Blancas station is a raptor population monitoring project, it has been proposed for its execution and long-term maintenance. The equipment obtained and leftover materials will be used only for the future educational and research activities of the Cinco Águilas Blancas station.