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The Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) is the only bear species in South America. The species ranges from western Venezuela through the Andes in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia and south towards northwestern Argentina. It is listed as an Endangered species in Ecuador, a categorization resulting mostly from habitat fragmentation caused by livestock farming and logging.

Wild Andean bear populations are extremely isolated. This isolation contributes to lower levels of genetic diversity than are reported for other Neotropical carnivores. The gene diversity level for Andean bears in Ecuador, for example, is approximately only half the level found in jaguars. It is also very low compared with that reported for other bear species. To minimize the damage caused by this isolation, and to reinforce Andean bear populations in northern Ecuador, the Andean Bear Project has rehabilitated and released 10 bears of different ages in three separate protected areas. The bears have been tracked by means of radio-telemetry in order to monitor their well being and re-adaptation to the wild.

Between September 2001 and October 2006, researchers have also radio collared 12 wild Andean bears (six females and six males) in an effort to determine habitat use, activity patterns, and home range size. The ultimate goal of the program is to gather sufficient information to help develop alternatives for the conservation and management of bear populations in the country's Intag region.

Preliminary calculations, using a 100% minimum convex polygon estimate, show average home ranges of 150 km² for males (n=3) and 34 km² for females (n=5). Females have well defined, stable, and overlapping home ranges. Males use some corridors, especially along ravines. The bears are most active during the day, with peaks 6:00am to 6:00pm. Habitat use results are not yet available, requiring a high resolution satellite image to complement preliminary data analysis. Male bears have proven extremely difficult to track due to the large distances they cover over rough terrain. At times they have disappeared from radio contact for more than two weeks. We recommend the use of GPS collars for future monitoring of male bears.

During the last three years, the Andean Bear Project has initiated a damage compensation program (focused primarily on the region's poorest farmers) to prevent human conflicts when the bears raid cornfields (typically between May and July). This effort should help build community support and involvement. In 2007 we hope to begin research on Andean bear and mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*) interactions.