

Colombia Identifies 10 Species Vital to Sensitive Ecosystems



Bogotá, November 7 (RHC-EFE) -- The well-being of 10 animal and plant species deemed critical for the preservation of the ecosystems in the Middle Magdalena and Eastern Plains regions will become a special focus of Colombia's Wildlife program, organizers said.

State-run oil company Ecopetrol and the Wildlife Conservation Society will provide 9.15 billion pesos (US\$4.4 million) in funding for the initiative.

The protected species list includes the charapa turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*), the Orinoco crocodile (*Crocodylus intermedius*), the Moriche palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*), the tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*), the congrio (Conger conger), and the Blue Beak paujil (*Crax alberti*).

Also on the list are bagre rayado (*Pseudoplatystoma tigrinum*), the Caribbean manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), the spider monkey and the carroto tree (*Sterculia apetala*).

The Omacha Foundation, the Yoluka Foundation and the La Pedregoza Environmental Corporation are among the organizations that will implement the program.

The 10 species were selected because of their key role in the preservation of ecosystems as determined through studies by experts of the Alexander von Humboldt Institute, the Environment Ministry and

Colombia's National Parks Agency.

These species, known as "umbrella" species because of their impact on their own habitat, face different degrees of vulnerability.

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