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**Research Opportunity – American Crocodile Conservation**

**Summary**

Nature and Culture International seeks a wildlife biologist with a strong background in population ecology to collect and analyze field data about the local population status of the American Crocodile (*Crocodilus acutus;* a globally-threatened species) along the Puyango River in NCI´s Cazaderos Reserve in southwestern Ecuador.

**Description of organization**

Nature and Culture International (<www.natureandculture.org>) is a conservation NGO that protects biologically diverse ecosystems in Latin America by working in concert with local people. We were founded in the southern Ecuadorian city of Loja in 1997 and have since expanded into six countries: Ecuador, Perú, México, Colombia, Bolivia, and Brazil. In our twenty-plus years of existence, we have helped protect 5.6 million hectares of some of the world´s most biodiverse and endangered ecosystems.

**Local Context**

NCI has worked locally in the Tumbesian dry forest region of southern Ecuador since 2003, and has helped to organize community associations and develop alternative livelihoods project based on sustainable natural resource use. NCI has purchased 20,000 hectares as private conservation reserves, which are co-managed by the aforementioned community associations.

**Research Questions**

*Note: We expect to narrow and refine these research questions and objectives in collaboration with the researcher(s).*

* What is the conservation status of crocodiles locally?
* What is the estimated population and population structure of crocodiles in this area? Is the population increasing, stable, or decreasing?
* What are the factors affecting the population?
* If the population is declining, what can be done about it?

 **Research objectives**

* Conduct a local census of American Crocodiles (*Crocodilus acutus)* in the Puyango River along the Peru – Ecuador border (in coordination with Peruvian researchers).
* Assess the status of the local population (Structure, basic demographics, stability)
* Assess reproduction and habitat usage
* Assess the potential human impact on population
* Develop management recommendations to address key threats to the long-term conservation of this species.

**Location**

Cazaderos Reserve along the Puyango River (bordering Perú) in Zapotillo Cantón, Loja Province, Ecuador in the Tumbesian dry forest ecosystem.

**Requirements**

* Strong background in wildlife census techniques and population ecology
* Self-motivated and resourceful
* Able to maintain good judgment and stay safe while researching a dangerous species
* Able to work with little supervision and in strenuous field conditions
* At least intermediate Spanish

**Contact**

Contact Matt Clark (mclark@naturalezaycultura.org) with questions.