

Dear Supporters of the Pantanal Giant Armadillo Project,

The whole team wishes you all a Happy New Year!

2013 has been a fantastic year for the Giant Armadillo project and we could not have done it without your long term support! **We are extremely grateful and cannot thank you enough.** I hope more of you will come visit us in 2014 and gain a firsthand experience of our work.

Since my last update we have run two expeditions almost back to back, with just one week between the November and the December expedition. The November expedition included myself, our project veterinarian Danilo Kluyber our biologist Gabriel Massocatto as well as a National Trainee Alan Bolzan (biologist) and an International volunteer from one of our supporters, Mary Peterson a keeper from the Minnesota Zoo. In December the team was reduced its core with just Danilo, Gabriel and myself, but Dorothee Ordonneau from Cerza Zoological and Wally Van Sickle were there helping both projects.

The highlight of these expeditions was of course the **capture of two new male giant armadillos**. You have heard me mention that giant armadillos are solitary creatures with very little overlap in home range, males seem to visit female ranges but have their own core area.... So you can imagine our surprise in capturing two males from burrows less than 100m from each other!!!

Due to recent rain we had been following giant armadillo tracks for three days. Despite our best efforts we could not locate the burrow. However on the fourth day Danilo finally found the fresh burrow and we were able to place our trap. Everything went according to plan and 30 minutes after the sun went down the animal came out into our trap and within minutes was placed in a holding crate to be manipulated the following morning. After placing a GPS tag on the animal we released him in the same burrow. The next day we went to check if he had left the burrow... less than a 100 meters from the burrow we were surprised to find a fresh burrow! We automatically assumed this would be Liana a female we had monitored last year in this area. We were in for many surprises!!!

It took us three nights to capture this male armadillo we named Houdini! On the first night he managed to open the trap door twice and then remained in his burrow. On the second night he once again escaped and dug out another exit. We remained close by ready to catch him manually, but he got scared by the trap at the entrance, and remained another night... We place our second Jequi trap and finally caught him on the third night! What an escape artist and smart armadillo! We have been monitoring the two males since their capture and they use very distinct areas. I really hope we can monitor them long term and understand a little more about male home ranges and how they seek out females... at the moment it is a real mystery to us.

Of course **baby Alex continues to be the pride and joy of our team**. He is growing so fast and has now started to explore the sand mound at the entrance of the burrow. On a few nights he was photographed playing with his mother at the entrance of the burrow. Today, January 2nd is actually his half- birthday and he is now six months! Up until two weeks ago he was still nursing. Happy half birthday Alex! He has ventured only once a little further than the sand mound. Since his birth camera traps have been in front of all the burrows his

mother takes him to. He usually stays about two weeks in each burrow and his mother usually spends one night leaves him for three days and then returns. The team is taking a break until the 15th of January and I hope we will still be able to find them again.

As for the Southern naked tails these last two expeditions have finally broke the dry spell of captures... Since April we have been unable to catch any new individuals. Since they only come out a few minutes a day we rely on finding fresh burrows. This is very hard to do when the soil is dry and the rains in November and December really helped us. **We were able to catch 3 new Southern naked tail armadillos**, two males and a female. One of the males seemed to be a young sub adult, and he does not seem to have a territory and has already moved about 4 km from his capture location.... He is moving further and further away... I hope we will not lose him and be able to locate him when we return to the field... The other two were large adults and I am pretty sure they have established territories.

The giant anteaters continue to do very well. This year was a pilot study for us to learn the logistics, optimal study design and evaluate the safety of the harness. I am really pleased to report that we got all this information and the harness does work very well. In December we captured one of the males we had caught just to make sure there were no lesions or sores that we could not see. We were happy to see that he was fine and the harness does not seem to cause any problems. Next year we will expand this study and capture more giant anteaters in the area where we have most of our giant armadillos. Very excited to be monitoring and studying the overlap between these giants! Thank you so much to those of you who have sent us funds for the equipment for this pilot study.

The project continued getting a lot of media attention from the ecosystem engineer paper. Please contact me if you want to use this story with your local media. In **February I will send out another press release with pictures of baby armadillos** and will send it to you. I have some new colour pictures which I will send you! They are amazing. We are getting ready to make 2014 the year of the armadillo and we have been working hard preparing materials for all of you to use in your education and marketing departments. I cannot thank enough the Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders group which is producing really exciting materials for all of you. The Brazilian Society for Zoos and Aquariums is also working very hard to prepare materials and even put together a specific website. We also have several artists which have prepared outstanding materials. With your help we hope to celebrate armadillos and get these animals the attention they deserve.

I will be sending you all an annual report towards the end of January. You can **check this video from RZSS that gives an overview of 2013** <http://youtu.be/h25utJtIEBY> Feel free to share this video on your social media and websites. Remember if you need us to make a video, please let us know what you want us to say or do and we would be more than happy to do it. Those of you who have sent us T-shirts and caps with your logos all have a designated drop box where you can retrieve pictures of the team wearing your logos. The pictures sent in this update are in small resolution but I am more than happy to send you whichever one you need in high resolution.

We are more than **happy to help you promote the conservation work** that you do. Let us know how we can help. It is important that the public knows the great things you do for the conservation of biodiversity around the world.

Towards the end of January, once we get the dates for the kids vacations and days off, **we will be setting the dates for all the expeditions in 2014**. Due to the world cup, it might be best to avoid certain months, but I really look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible. It is always such a pleasure for the team to welcome projects supporters and share our work with you.

On behalf of the Giant Armadillo project team, we wish you all the very best for 2014. Lets make 2014 the year of the armadillo!!!

All the best from Brazil,

Arnaud and team