

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Royal Cinclodes *Cinclodes aricomae*



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Royal Cinclodes (© V. Claverie /
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Background

Royal Cinclodes occurs in the Andes of south-east Peru (Cuzco, Apurímac, Puno and Junín) and adjacent Bolivia (La Paz). Historically, it was probably common, at least locally, and distributed along the entire Cordillera Real. Its scarce and patchy habitat now occupies c.10% of the estimated potential cover in Bolivia, and possibly less than 3% in large parts of Cuzco. Most Peruvian records are from near Cuzco city, with numbers estimated at 100-150 individuals in 1990. A record in 1997 in the Cordillera Apolobamba, La Paz, was the first in Bolivia since 1876, but subsequent surveys have found it in a total of 13 localities in the Cordilleras of La Paz and Apolobamba, with the Bolivian population estimated at 50-70 individuals.

It is confined to tiny, humid patches of *Polylepis* woodland and montane scrub, mainly at 3,500-4,800 m. The main threats are the uncontrolled use of fire and heavy grazing, which combine to degrade and destroy understorey moss and prevent *Polylepis* regeneration. Cutting for timber, firewood and charcoal is locally destructive. Local conservation successes include action at the Runtacocha highland, near Cuzco, where local people are reacting positively towards better environmental control. Since 2004, a *Polylepis* conservation programme has been working with local communities at the known sites for the Royal Cinclodes, aimed at protecting and restoring *Polylepis* forests.

Actions being implemented

1. Work in Bolivia has involved **mapping the *Polylepis* forests** that provide suitable habitat for the species, using satellite imaging and GIS.
2. Ecological research and the habitat maps allowed scientists to produce a **population estimate** of 42 individuals for Bolivia. Studies have also been carried out on the reproductive biology and nesting behaviour of the species.
3. The project has developed a **Conservation Plan and a Population Management Plan** for the species. A meeting at Cuzco, Peru was held with Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos, in order to coordinate monitoring efforts and establish a set protocol for carrying out surveys.

4. Local **environmental education** in the communities at Keara, Puina and Pongo has formed a major part of the project. Activities have included a planning and training workshop, held with local teachers, and the dissemination of a booklet entitled *To Know and Care for the Queñua Forests*.
5. The project has involved a **socioeconomic evaluation** of the local area. The results of this will inform attempts to reconcile the needs of residents with those of Royal Cinclodes.



Left: environmental education in Cordillera Apolobamba; right: *Polylepis sericea* forest in Cordillera la Paz (both © Isabel Gómez).

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