

SUPPORTING THE SUSTAINABLE HARVEST OF
SPECTACLED CAIMAN BY THE TACANA PEOPLE



The caiman meat process is conducted by women representing 14 families from the Tacana Indigenous Territory. Gustavo Alvarez/WCS



Illegal hunting of the spectacled caiman (*Caiman yacare*) has been eliminated in the Tacana Indigenous Territory through the sustainable management of this species. Rob Wallace/WCS



The entrance to Laguna Moa – a huge conservation wetland protected by the Tacana people and where spectacled caiman harvests are concentrated. Omar Torrico/WCS



Gustu has developed a number of dishes using a high-quality product including hibiscus cured caiman with achojcha and cucumber. Patricio Crooker/Gustu

Conservation Importance: One of only two certified sustainable management plans for wild spectacled caiman in Bolivia, the Tacana have worked for 15 years to document the biology of caiman populations, establish demonstrably sustainable annual harvest quotas, and identify commercial opportunities for caiman hides and caiman tail and tenderloin meat that recognize their overall efforts to conserve Amazonian forests, grasslands and wetlands within the Tacana Indigenous Territory, as well as the sustainability of their caiman management program.

Cultural Relevance: The Tacana are a lowland indigenous group from northwestern Bolivia and especially the Amazonian foothills and plains of La Paz Department. Spectacled caiman tail and tenderloin is a traditional lowland indigenous foodstuff and has been a delicacy in the lowlands for over a century. Tacana men lead spectacled caiman harvest efforts, as well as initial treatment of hides, but the caiman tail meat production is led and managed by Tacana women.

Sabores Silvestres Contact: WCS provided technical support for 15 years and introduced the Tacana to Gustu whose commitment to caiman tail and tenderloin meat has allowed the management program to diversify from a focus on caiman hides to one that includes caiman meat management.

The Challenge: The Tacana women were faced with the challenge of organizing a clean, safe and portable butchering process which then needed formal approval by national sanitation authorities in a groundbreaking model regulation, but in order to do so they also needed a reliable purchaser to support through the experimental phase and provide contacts for further purchasers and potential expansion into the future.

Economic Impact: Since 2014, 14 Tacana families benefit from the sale of caiman tail and tenderloin meat sold at \$8.5 per kilo directly to restaurants, primarily Gustu, but also Jardin de Asia, Chifa Tai, Pollo Yungueño, Paititi, Pimienta y Canela increasing from 285 kgs in 2014 to 821 kgs in 2018, when with SENASAG national permits the Tacana were finally able to sell directly to Hipermaxi supermarket at \$10 per kg. In 2018 each participating family received \$354 from these activities which on average represented 10 mornings of work per woman. The average monthly rural income in Bolivia in 2017 was \$240. The potential harvest of caiman tail and tenderloin meat on an annual basis is around 4,000 kg.