



ENCOSH

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Initiative : CatCrafts, cat handicrafts supporting Andean cat conservation

Shared by : MAURO LUCHERINI - Last update : 5 June 2020





INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION



Leader name

Andean Cat Alliance
(AGA)



Entity type

Non-governmental
organization



Launching Date

8 January 2017



Assesment initiative

Assessment in progress.
Several communities
have already joined this
initiative in Argentina,
Chile, and Peru. A set of
novel handcrafted
products have been
designed and are under
production. Sales are
showing a great
acceptance by public,
both in the Andean cat
range countries and in
the US.



Initiative Type

Additional income
Capacity-building
Communication,
information and
awareness
Development inputs
Other Non financial
benefits
Transformation social
conflicts



Wildlife species

Puma



Issues

Human well-being
Livestock



Intervention area

Argentina
Bolivia
Chile
Peru

BACKGROUND

The Andean cat (*Leopardus jacobita*) is the most threatened felid in the Americas. With an estimated population of less than 1,500 adult individuals, it has been listed as Endangered by the IUCN. This very small number of cats is scattered in fragmented populations living along the Andes, from central Argentina, through Bolivia and Chile to central Peru, mostly in regions at over 4,000 m of altitudes. Hunting and habitat modification by local people are among the major threats to the survival of Andean cats. Although the Andean cat is typically not considered a major source of livestock depredation, local people suffer from predation by pumas (*Puma concolor*) and culpeos (*Lycalopex culpaeus*). Because local communities mostly rely on livestock (lamas, alpacas, and sheep) as source of food and economic incomes, their perceptions of carnivores in general are largely negative and they persecute and kill any carnivore in retaliation. To mitigate this conflict, we decided to increase local people participation in conservation and change their perception of the Andean cat through the implementation of fair-trade commerce of handicrafts inspired on the Andean cat.

DESCRIPTION

We aim to adopt craftsmanship as a creative tool and a livelihood initiative, enabling the Andean Cat Alliance (Alianza Gato Andino – AGA) to support wildlife conservation – particularly of the Andean cat – through increased engagement of local people while simultaneously reinforcing the cultural identity of the High Andes communities, improving their livelihoods and empowering women.

PRINCIPLE

We provide training to local artisans to improve the quality of their handicrafts and develop new products, based on traditional practices, using natural raw materials from their own livestock and incorporating the image of the Andean cat. Then we train and support them in the commercialization of those new products, provide promotional material and work collaboratively to create a network of sale points, including online sites and shops in nearby cities and country capitals. Simultaneously, artisans will be exposed to wildlife conservation awareness activities aiming to change per attitudes towards carnivores and transform them into ambassadors of the Andean cat conservation within their communities and with the buyers of their products.

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

The local communities must be ready to change their customs and embrace more sustainable

development models.

Funding is required until the incomes generated by the sales of handicrafts make the project self-sustainable.

The training provided should increase local people's skills as artisans but also build their capacity of managing small businesses.

Advantages

- By incorporating the Andean cat image into the local communities' handicrafts, we are creating a direct connection between this wildcat and an economic benefit.
- The products are made mainly from natural wool from their own livestock and also using wool that is usually discarded, promoting circular economy
- Because women are the traditional keepers of craftsmanship knowledge, our project is also empowering women.
- Women are the base of the Andean family, and by encouraging them to conserve we are encouraging also the whole family group.
- We are creating objects that also spread the image of the Andean cat and its conservation needs globally.

Disadvantages

- In some cases, artisans may not be willing to share the economic benefits generated by our initiative with the rest of their community.
- We are not measuring the direct effect of our project on Andean cat populations.
- Isolation of some communities makes difficult to keep a constant and fluent communication.
- Despite having a good initial participation among women, only half of the total participants continues actively engaged into the program because of the time and conservation commitment it requires.
- It takes time to be able to make the project grow and include a large number of communities.

IMPLEMENTATION



Workforce

6



Workload

5-7 days is the minimum duration of training required to start producing new handicrafts for artisans with previous training



Training

Expert > 3months



Training duration

-



Financial cost

-



Currency financial cost

-

IMPLEMENTATION KEY STEPS

Find interested communities within the distribution range of the Andean cat.

Establish a cooperation agreement with local artisans and, if possible, the whole community.

Carry out training workshops.

Design and produce handcrafted products that are attractive to a large public.

Sell products.

Monitor project conservation success.

EQUIPMENTS

- Local material (mainly wool)
- Technical materials (needles, carding machine)

TO GO FURTHER



Contact

lucherinima@yahoo.com



Internet links

<https://gatoandino.org/en/catcrafts-2/>



Funding opportunities

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Documentations

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Driven by:



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Realized by: Thomas Billaud