



PROYECTO
PUNTA SAN JUAN

PUNTA SAN JUAN GUANO HARVEST 2012

Update

September 18th, 2012



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Punta San Juan guano harvest – An update from the field

We are one week away from finishing the 2012 guano harvest campaign with volunteer observers at Punta San Juan, and it has been a very busy couple of months! The Punta San Juan Project is very grateful for all the help and hard work from all zoos and volunteers that have helped us make this endeavor possible. We have had 17 institutions collaborate with funds and 48 volunteers who made their way to Punta San Juan -27 foreign (25 from zoos) and 21 local volunteers- to help take care of local populations of Humboldt penguins, pinnpeds and guanay cormorants while the extraction of guano takes place. And, to the day, we consider this has been quite a success.

We are now on day 42 of the harvest and close to 4,000 tons of guano have been dug up. During this time, we can say that the guano harvest has not had any severe effects on nesting Humboldt penguins or other local wildlife at Punta San Juan. However, the less directly noticeable effects of the campaign we hope have been captured by the data collection set up by the Punta San Juan Project. This information will be analyzed at the end of the harvest in final report that will extend recommendations to the Peruvian government to improve the management of future guano harvests at Punta San Juan and at other islands and peninsulas along the coast of Peru.

In close coordination with the Peruvian company in charge of extracting guano, the Punta San Juan Project was able to take on site measures to mitigate the impact of the presence of guano workers and penguins, such as:

Delimitation of intangible areas for Humboldt penguin nesting and transit areas in coordination with the Peruvian guano extraction company.





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Set minimum distances between extraction sites and Humboldt penguin nesting sites.



Use of a blind to shield penguin colonies and transiting individuals from the sight of over 100 guano workers.





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However, the effects of our efforts could not be accounted for without the help of our volunteers. Here is a bit on what a volunteers did at Punta San Juan during their stay...

Guano extraction site surveillance

Two pairs of volunteers take turns at the guano extraction site where guano workers are actively digging and bagging guano in close proximity to penguin or cormorant colonies. Here volunteers will make sure that guano workers are respecting intangible areas, make sure that the penguin blind is not disturbing wildlife or workers, collect data on cormorant behavior and report the daily progress of guano extraction areas by measuring the area extracted with a handheld GPS.

Volunteers, guano workers, penguin blind and penguins.





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Volunteers recording daily guano extraction areas with handheld GPS.



Counts

Two pairs of volunteers collect data close to 6 am and 6pm on the number and distribution of Humboldt penguins, fur seals and sea lions along the north and south beaches at the Punta San Juan reserve to better understand possible shifts in abundance and distribution of resident predator populations while the harvest takes place.

Volunteers counting animals from cliff edge at Punta San Juan.





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Fur seal tag checks

Volunteers have also helped us follow up on some of our tagged resident fur seals by going to the main fur seal breeding rookery to search and record sightings of tags twice per day allowing us to understand foraging trip duration of South American fur seals at Punta San Juan.

Tagged fur seals nursing observed during tag checks.





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Extra-curricular activities

Besides these routine activities, all volunteer groups have also helped us with maintenance and repair of infrastructure at the Punta San Juan field station as well as observation blinds. The first group built the prototype of the penguin blind by hand -which is still being successfully used during the harvest along with a larger version manufactured based on this version- and as all groups cleaned many of the Punta San Juan reserve beach areas. Also, field staff of the Punta San Juan Project have been able to share a bit of the fieldwork that is done on site by taking groups to check penguin nests, count sea lion beaches, show volunteers how diet identification is done from samples collected in the field, and other groups have given environmental education talks to the guano workers to tell them about the work volunteers are doing during the harvest.

Adding finishing touches on the penguin blind prototype.



Volunteer helping restrain Humboldt penguin during a nest check.





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Volunteers cleaning a beach at Punta San Juan.



Volunteers giving a talk to guano harvesters on conservation of wild animals.





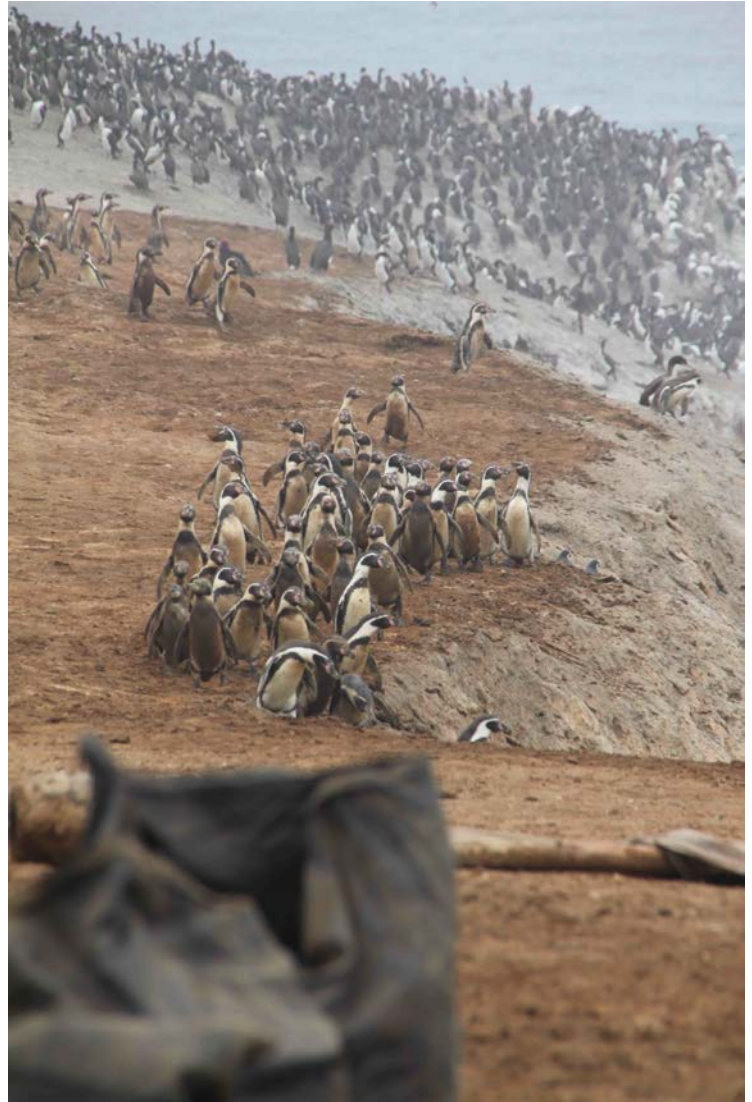
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We need more help!

Our latest news is that the company in charge of extracting guano is requesting an extension to the protected areas service to continue the harvest until guanay cormorants begin nesting, which we estimate will be occurring around the third week of October (15-20th). For us to understand the effects of this process as a whole, it is crucial to keep maintain the same effort on data collection and monitoring system. We have also learned that on site presence at the guano extraction site is key for us to be able to have a rapid response to quickly coordinate the best strategies to minimize potential impacts on local populations. To do this, we need to have at least 4 volunteers along with the two field staff to help us collect data and surveillance until the end of the extraction period.

To get us through the next 5 weeks we need some extra funds. We are requesting funding of \$3,500 US that will cover lodging and food for 4 Peruvian volunteers to stay at a time at the Punta San Juan station.

Funding Peruvians that have already been trained during to collect data during the guano harvest to help us at Punta San Juan will be most convenient since timing is tight to organize travels for volunteers from abroad and this will also ease training new volunteers.



The budget to make this possible:

Item	Cost	Weeks	Volunteers	Total cost
Food & lodging	\$175.00	5	4	\$3,500.00

Thanks again for all your help and we hope you can give us a hand to finish this task.

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