

Rehabilitation and release of a juvenile Black-and-chestnut eagle (*Spizaetus isidori*) in Huila Colombia

Back in September of 2016 we received a juvenile Black-and-chestnut eagle from the town of Garzon, Huila in Colombia; the patient was shot after being caught trying to hunt chickens. It was kept for a few days by the community and later surrendered to the authorities.

After the x-rays were done, we checked the bird and realized it had some pellets in its body but no serious injuries associated with those pellets besides some feathers being cut cleaned by the shots. Seven feathers were impeded in the right wing where the primaries were shot allowing the bird to fly again.

As the parents were still looking for the juvenile, we knew it was safe to release it back into the same area. We got a transmitter donated from IAF and Ecotone and we installed it in order to follow the movements and eventual settlement of this individual into a new territory.



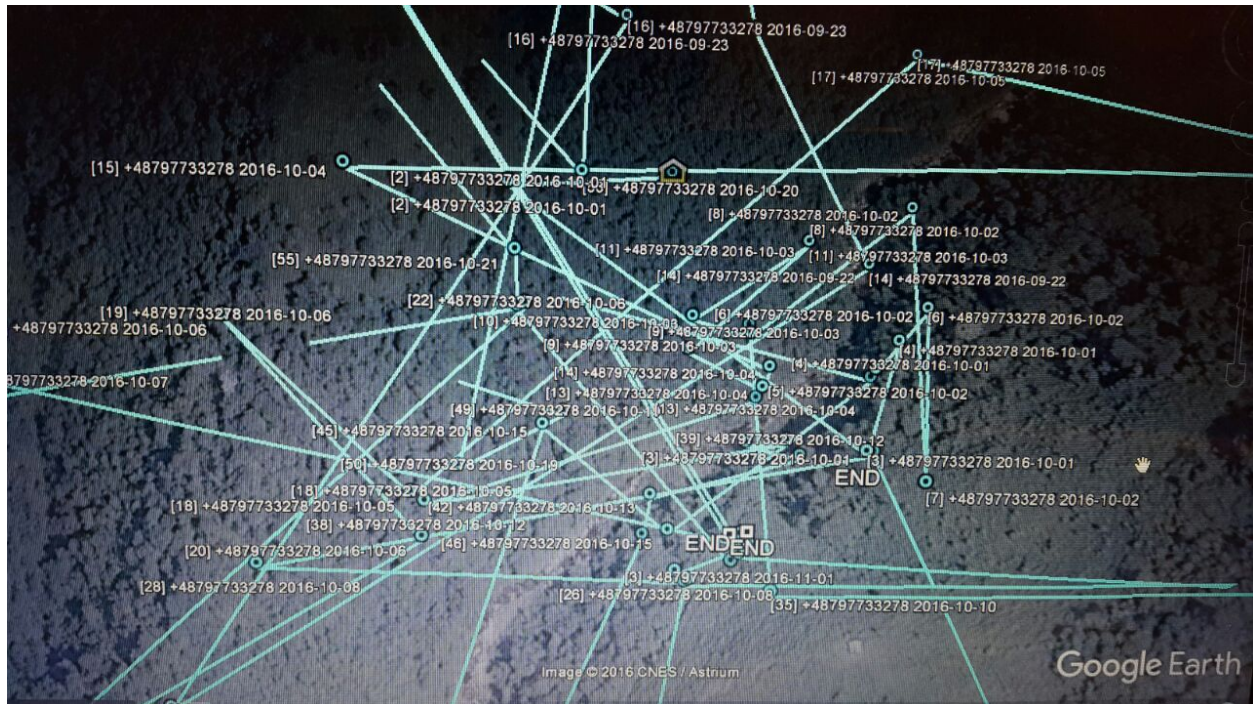
Left: x-rays showing the pellets
Down: Alex Ospina, our director, imping the primaries.





Feathers being prepared for the imping session

The transmitter gave us information for about 5 months (until February 2017) where it suddenly stopped transmitting data. We believe the individual was killed but we cannot confirm that because we could not try to retrieve the transmitter since the area was inaccessible and we were not even sure it was going to be there. The local authorities were supposed to be doing the environmental education in the release area but the community told us they never went, which means the conflict with the eagle was ongoing. One of the things we need the most is funding to visit these areas of conflict and start educating to mitigate that conflict, thus reducing the chances of another eagle getting shot and killed.



Data from November 2nd (two weeks after the release)

The black-and-chestnut eagle is an Andean eagle associated with montane forests. It is classified as endangered (we think it should be considered critically endangered) due to habitat loss with 60% of the historical montane forest cover lost to deforestation. The advance of the agricultural frontier and human settlements, increase the chances of the eagle encountering easy preys like fowl, making the eagle susceptible to being hunted in retaliation after predation on fowl. We have found this is specially true with juveniles that are learning to hunt and with nesting adults that find chickens easy to hunt and abundant. It is believed that Colombia does not have more than 100 reproductive pairs, but we are more gruesome and think that we do not have more than 100 individuals in all the Colombian territory.



The release