

## **1. ARZAMENDIA, Yanina and Bibiana VILÁ**

Proyecto MACS, Universidad Nacional de Luján, ruta 5 y 7, (6700) Luján, Buenos Aires, Argentina (BL). Instituto de Biología de Altura, Av. Bolivia 1661, (4600), San Salvador de Jujuy, Argentina (YA).

### **WILD MANAGEMENT OF VICUÑA IN THE ALTIPLANO OF CIENEGUILLAS, JUJUY, ARGENTINA**

The vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*) is a wild South American camelid that lives on the Andean high-altitude steppe (*puna* or *altiplano*) in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Perú. The species is prized for its fine fibre, and indiscriminate hunting almost caused its extinction in the 1960s. After national and international conservation efforts the vicuña population has substantially recovered, and now there are plans in the different countries for controlled fibre harvesting. Until now, the management of vicuñas in Argentina has taken the form of farming in small enclosures. Cieneguillas is a small town in the puna with approximately 200 inhabitants. Vicuña have historically been conserved by the community with the result that there is a population of approximately 900 wild vicuña sharing grazing land with domestic sheep and llamas. The Cieneguillas community will now begin to harvest fibre from these animals in a project aiming to derive an income through sustainable use of local wildlife resources. A European Union funded project, Proyecto MACS, is providing scientific monitoring, technical support and training. During 2002, the vicuña population was monitored to establish baseline data on behaviour and habitat use before management. This will be used to identify long-term impacts of capture-shearing-release. Monitoring included: (1) Social groups; seasonal behaviour changes; circadian rhythms; behaviour of males, females and offspring. (2) Vegetation maps; seasonal vegetation changes; interactions between vicuña and patches. (3) Interactions with domestic llamas, sheep, humans and dogs. Data are presented on the unmanaged population with some preliminary results from captures carried out during 2003.