

Lang



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

12 November 1976

Dr. James R. Dixon
Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Science
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843

*→ Prof of Mark Staddon
to do PHD*

Dear Dr. Dixon:

I understand that you are concerned by my projected participation in a study of Caiman in Venezuela. I really suspect that there is no conflict here, but perhaps it is best if we go beyond the rumor stage and establish a correspondence. Let me begin by outlining my involvement.

For the past five years, I have been studying various aspects of the behavior and physiology of crocodylians beginning with the American alligator and the American crocodile in south Florida. My studies have been extensive and detailed, and I have been planning for sometime to do comparative work to test some of my hypotheses with other species. For the past several years, I have been corresponding with Scott Maness, and we have been exchanging the details of and ideas about our independent studies. Recently, I was invited by Scott and Dale Marcellini of the Smithsonian Institution to collaborate with them in their on-going study of Caiman biology which is part of a comprehensive ecological survey of the llanos region. I just learned a week or so ago that funds will be available for me to participate. I am happy that they asked me to join them in this, and that they feel my background will contribute to the study. Obviously, my particular role will be to assure that the studies are harmonious with those I have conducted in Florida so that the work can be plugged into a common theoretical framework.

I have heard from Dale and from Scott that you are studying Caiman in a nearby part of Venezuela. Being a junior and invited member of the research team, I did not think it proper to initiate correspondence with you on how the Smithsonian study may overlap with yours. In any event, my studies in Florida have gone into several areas of crocodylian biology in great depth, and I have developed rather specific approaches and research objectives with regard to these animals. So it seemed remote, to say the least, that anyone else working on crocodylians (Caiman or others) without some direction would generate data that would answer the questions that have emerged from my studies. In this sense, the possibility of any substantial overlap never seemed like a reality: that is, we might both be interested in behavior and physiology without your ever generating data that I would need or perhaps without my generating data that would answer your specific questions.

Nevertheless, it might be to our mutual benefit to keep in touch and perhaps there are ways in which we (speaking only for myself, of course!) could divide our efforts so as to avoid duplication and enhance the value of comparisons between our studies where there is any overlap. Therefore, if you would like to initiate a correspondence, I would certainly be agreeable. There is the reality that studies do tend to expand once one is involved in them. It would be particularly helpful to me to know what investigations you and your students are conducting on Caiman in Venezuela and what your specific goals are for the near future. Then I could try to avoid expanding in these directions if my studies appear to go beyond the specific questions I am asking.

I am enclosing recent reprints and abstracts of my published work and will send you other papers as they become available. I have several now in press and in preparation. In turn, I would appreciate receiving your reprints, particularly on crocodylians. If you want to initiate a correspondence, I will look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Lang

/encl.

cc: Scott Maness
Dale Marcellini
Mark Staton