



WHAT WAS YOUR BEST CEPA INTERVENTION IN THIS TRIENNIUM?

A typical view of the lake (2013)
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Felipe Velasco
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Your Position/Role and Country:

Director of the NGO Fundación Montecito and the CBO group Mocilato and Causa Tota, and creator of this 'Monster' communication initiative. Additionally, member of the Mocilato CBO group and a Causa Tota follower.

Title of your CEPA activity/product

The Lake Tota monster (in Spanish: Monstruo del Lago de Tota).

Other collaborators – please identify other organizations that assisted you or were your partners

Members of the Ramsar CEPA email list, WWN (World Wetland Network) and the global network of wetland centres WLI (Wetland Link International), Mocilato CBO group in Facebook and the Causa Tota followers (<http://causatotat.net>, and <http://defensalagodetota.info>).

Key stakeholder group(s) targeted by your product/activity (e.g. decision-makers, teachers, families, journalists etc.)

It is intended for anyone interested in Lake Tota, but it is mainly intended as a teaching tool to elicit some emotional responses from kids in education about water and wetlands from both sides, the good and the bad. The 'monster' from the lake can be a friendly figure for kids, to link to lectures and all kinds of other CEPA activities.

When did this event take place/when was your product launched?

October 2012

What was your key message?

There are 'bad monsters', real and imaginary, that threaten our wetlands and equally there are 'good monsters' that are the guardians of our wetlands. Better to be a good monster than a bad monster!



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Brief description of your product/ activity / material you used

A CEPA web-tool in Wikipedia related to 'Wetland Monsters' and the 'Lake Tota monster' was created. It was specially aimed at communicating with children but also with adults using wetland monsters as a metaphor for current threats (the bad side of the 'monster') - the real 'monster' being unmanaged human activity! Since it was created, the tool has received some modifications from others (not much in content, but more in form). It is also now on our website here: <http://www.fundacionmontecito.org/monstruo-del-lago-de-tota.html>. On this website some radio discussions have been uploaded from one of Colombia's main radio stations (La W Radio) where I was interviewed immediately after an interview with Adrian Shine talking about Scotland's famous Loch Ness monster.

What did you want to achieve with the activity? Did you succeed?

To give life to, and recover an old wetland monster story from the Lake Tota monster (with names like "Muyso", or "Diabloballena"), giving it its own page in history - details here: <http://bit.ly/monster-tota>. Also to create a new CEPA tool and source information related to Wetland Monsters, to be used literally, or as a metaphor (threats/guardians). Yes, I think it did succeed.

What kind of impact did this activity/product have on the target audience?

The Lake Tota monster web-page on Wikipedia receives an average of 50 visits daily:
http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monstruo_del_Lago_de_Tota. Impossible to know if this changes the behaviour of people but the visitation rates are encouraging.

Is there a follow-up activity planned? If yes briefly describe

I intend this tool to be used permanently in educational scenarios with children, and in CEPA scenarios with adults too.

Why do you identify this as your best CEPA intervention? What makes it stand out?

It is an innovative approach to raising wetland awareness that makes use of the natural emotions and fears of people so it can be effective in delivering wetland conservation messages which can be used by people all over the world. It was closely linked to the Ramsar CEPA list exchanges on this topic which generated a great deal of 'monster' sharing from all corners of the world. The CEPA list story is available here www.ramsar.org/CEPA_WetlandMonsters_2012/

What was the source of your funding?

The activity was funded by Fundación Montecito.



Drawing of the Lake Tota monster, 2013. Samuel Velasco, 9 years (© Fundación Montecito)



A view of the eastern side of the lake (© Fundación Montecito)



Onion cultivation at Lake Tota. ©Alejandro Jaramillo, para: VisitSugamuxi.com (© Fundación Montecito)