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**BRI Announces the Publication of a New Study Showing
High Levels of Mercury in the Peruvian Amazon**

*Portland, ME*—Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) announces the publication of the scientific paper *Amazon forests capture high levels of atmospheric mercury pollution from artisanal gold mining* in the January 28 issue of *Nature Communications*. In this new study, an international team of researchers show that illegal gold mining in the Peruvian Amazon is causing exceptionally high levels of atmospheric mercury pollution in the nearby Los Amigos Biological Station.

A team of researchers, led by Jacqueline Gerson, Ph.D., from Duke University, documented substantial mercury accumulation in soils, biomass, and resident songbirds in some of the Amazon’s most protected and biodiverse areas.

“This is incredibly important research that has broad implications for monitoring mercury in tropical forest ecosystems around the world,” says BRI’s executive director David Evers, Ph.D., and co-author on the paper. “It also highlights the importance of birds as sentinels of mercury exposure in tropical food webs. A major part of BRI’s work with the Minamata Convention on Mercury focuses on monitoring biota globally; birds are a key component of that.”

Luis E. Fernandez, executive director of the Center for Amazonian Scientific Innovation (CINCIA) and co-author on the paper emphasizes “the importance and significance of mercury contamination in the Amazon, which is a high research priority for CINCIA. We are pleased to collaborate on this ground-breaking work.”

Claudia Vega, program coordinator for CINCIA’s mercury program adds, “This study helps to explain why we are seeing elevated levels of mercury in forests that are not degraded, but are close to mining activity. The knowledge gained from this work fills a critical gap in our understanding of how mercury is impacting nature and people in tropical forested areas.”

The results of this mercury research in the Peruvian Amazon reinforce the necessity for additional mercury studies BRI is coordinating with CINCIA and The Nature Conservancy. “Our focus for this continuing collaboration is to understand the impact that mercury from ASGM activities has on indigenous communities in Ecuador and Columbia,” says Timothy Tear, Ph.D., who as director of BRI’s Tropical Program leads their ASGM studies. “Columbia has the second highest biodiversity in the world, second to Brazil. Many of these species are endemic to that region.”

For more information on this and related research, visit:

<https://briwildlife.org/asgm-impacts-on-terrestrial-ecosystems/>

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The mission of Biodiversity Research Institute is to assess emerging threats to wildlife and ecosystems through collaborative research, and to use scientific findings to advance environmental awareness and inform decision makers. Through its Center for Mercury Studies, BRI conducts research designed to understand the exposure and effects of mercury in wildlife and ecosystems on a global scale. For more information, visit: <https://briwildlife.org/hgcenter/>

BRI’s other programs and projects related to mercury include projects in our Tropical Program, artisanal small-scale gold mining (ASGM) projects, and building regional mercury monitoring networks.

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CINCIA focuses on developing solutions on how to reforest and restore degraded areas in one of the most biodiverse places on earth: the Peruvian Amazon. For more information, visit: <http://cincia.wfu.edu/en/>