

MAAP #169: Mining on Top of Yapacana Tepui (Yapacana National Park, Venezuela)

July 20, 2022



(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-yapacana-tepui-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Map-Location-Tepuy1-200dpi-v4.jpg>)

Figure 1. Active mining on top of Yapacacan tepui in the Venezuelan Amazon. Data: Planet/NICFI (level 2), ACA/MAAP,

Tepuis are stunning table-top mountains found in northern South America. They are considered sacred by indigenous groups of the region; in fact, the word tepui means “house of the gods” in a local indigenous language. Tepuis also have high levels of endemism since they are not connected to other ranges.

However, we have documented active **mining operations on top of the Yapacana tepui**, located within Yapacana National Park in the Venezuelan Amazon.

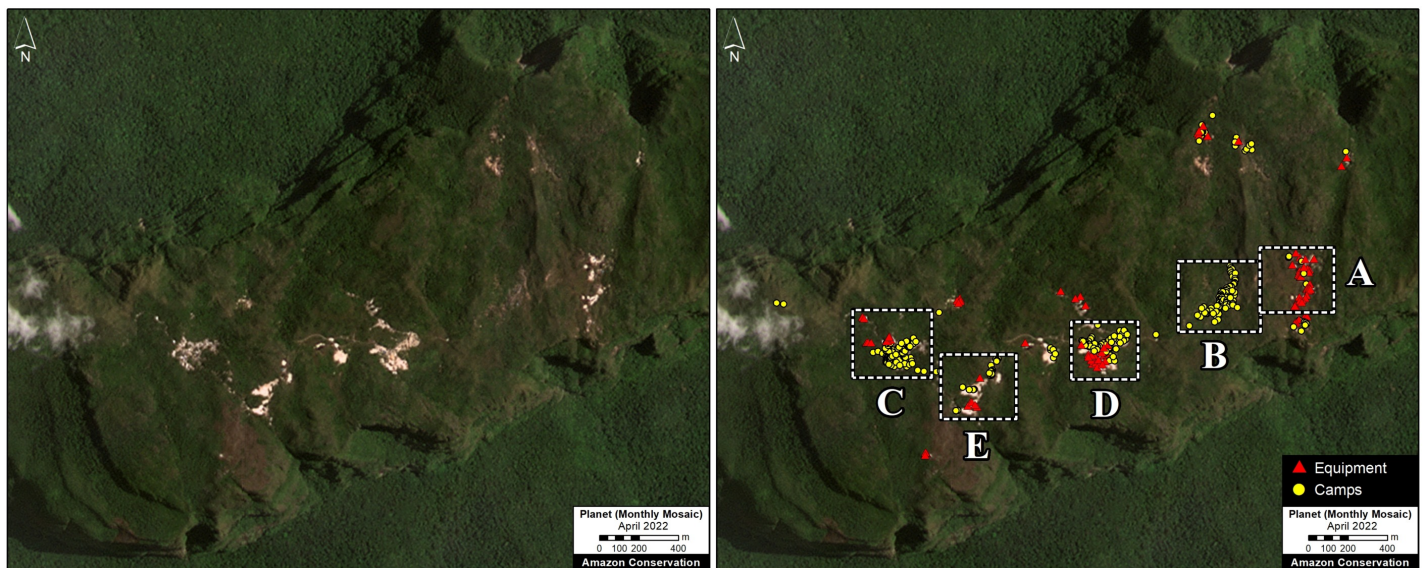
In **Figure 1** (to the right), observe the Yapacana tepui surrounded by active gold mining operations in Yapacana National Park. Also, note the mining activities on top of the tepui.

As detailed below, by analyzing very high-resolution satellite imagery (Skysat), we found **425 mining data points** (including mining camps and machinery) on top of the tepui, indicating rampant mining on this important, and supposedly protected, biogeographical site.

Note that this is in addition to the 8,000 mining data points documented in the surrounding lowlands of Yapacana National Park (see MAAP #156 (<https://www.maaprogram.org/2022/mining-yapacana/>)).

Mining on Top of Yapacana Tepui

Figure 2 serves as our base map, zooming in and showing the top of the tepui without and with the mining data (left and right panel, respectively). Note how the second image brings out previously “invisible” elements within the overall mining area: **425 mining data points** (322 camps and 103 pieces of equipment). Further below are additional Zooms A-C to better visualize the mining camps and equipment with the actual Skyat imagery. *Click twice to fully enlarge images below.*



(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-yapacana-tepui-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Mining-Location-Tepuy1-200dpi-v2.jpg>)

Figure 2. Yapacana tepui without (left panel) and with (right panel) the mining data. Data: Planet/NICFI (level 2), ACA/MAAP. Click twice to fully enlarge.

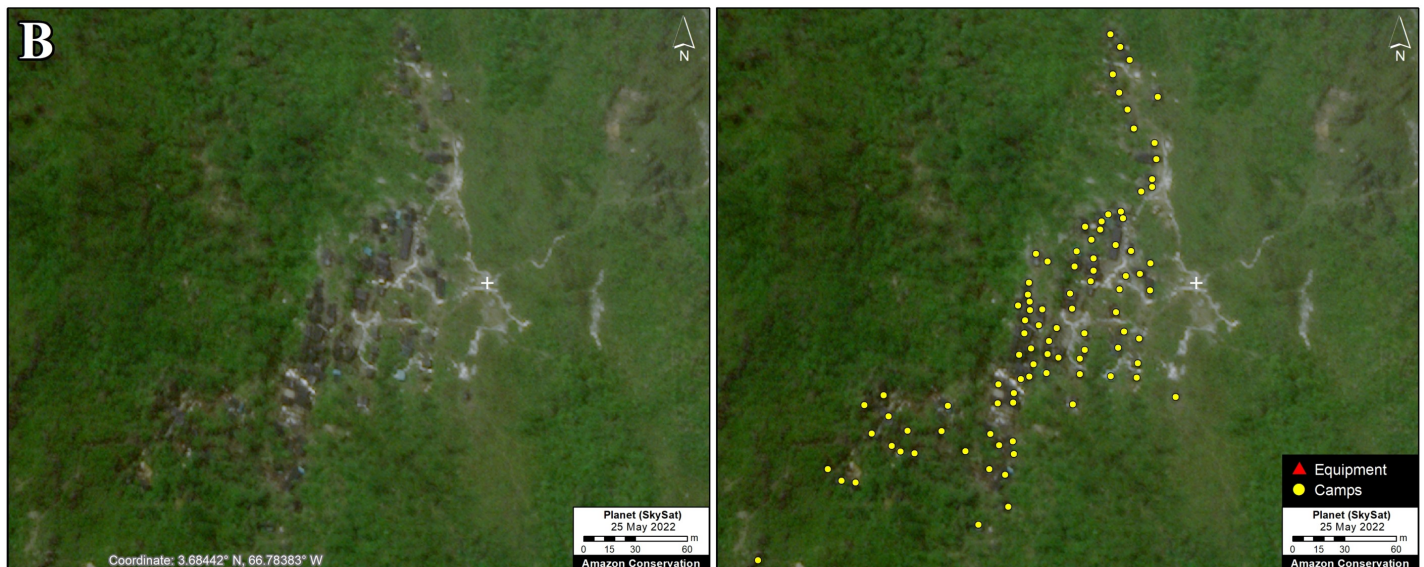
Zoom A



(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-tepuis-in-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Panel-A-Tepuis-25May2022-200dpi.jpg>)

Zoom A. Mining equipment and camps on Yapacana tepui, without (left panel) and with (right panel) the mining data. Data: Planet, ACA/MAAP. Click twice to fully enlarge.

Zoom B



(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-tepuis-in-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Panel-B-Tepuis-25May2022-200dpi.jpg>)

Zoom B. Mining equipment and camps on Yapacana tepui, without (left panel) and with (right panel) the mining data. Data: Planet, ACA/MAAP. Click twice to fully enlarge.

Zoom C



(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-yapacana-tepui-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Panel-C-Tepuis-6Dec2021-200dpi-v2.jpg>)

Zoom C. Mining equipment and camps on Yapacana tepui, without (left panel) and with (right panel) the mining data. Data: Planet, ACA/MAAP. Click twice to fully enlarge.

Zoom D

(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-yapacana-tepui-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Panel-D-Tepuy1-17Jul2022-200dpi.jpg>)

Zoom D. Mining equipment and camps on Yapacana tepui, without (left panel) and with (right panel) the mining data. Data: Planet, ACA/MAAP. Click twice to fully enlarge.

Zoom E

(<https://www.maaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/maaproject.org-maap-159-mining-on-top-of-yapacana-tepui-yapacana-national-park-venezuela-Panel-E-Tepuy1-17Jul2022-200dpi.jpg>)

Zoom E. Mining equipment and camps on Yapacana tepui, without (left panel) and with (right panel) the mining data. Data: Planet, ACA/MAAP. Click twice to fully enlarge.

Methodology

We tasked very high-resolution Skysat satellite imagery (0.5 meters), using the host company Planet's tasking dashboard, for the Yapacana tepui. We then closely and manually analyzed these images, documenting both mining camps and equipment. We researched aerial examples of mining areas in other countries to improve our identification abilities.

Acknowledgements

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Citation

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