

La Esperanza, Peru: Community Based Conservation Project for the Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey (*Oreonax flavicauda*, Humboldt 1812)

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The highly endangered yellow-tailed woolly monkey (*Oreonax flavicauda*) occurs in a small area in northeastern Peru's cloud forest between 1700 to 2500 m asl, a very disturbed area due to forest destruction, human immigration and hunting pressure. Even though there are protected areas, they are not large enough to harbour a good population of yellow-tailed woolly monkeys by themselves and the risk of becoming isolated is very real and severe.

The conservation project carried out by the Museum of Natural History – UNMSM and the English NGO Neotropical Primate Conservation aims to help a local community in the creation of a reserve that would maintain the forest connection between two government managed reserves and protect populations of both yellow-tailed woolly monkeys and other endangered species of the area.

During this first year, the main goals were to promote conservation awareness in the local population through the development of various activities, such as environmental education and reforestation; and to carry out preliminary research on the status of the species in the area.



For the first goal, environmental related talks were given to both children and adults, and tree nurseries were built in the villages involved in the project. These combined activities had a positive effect on the population, making them aware of what they can do for the forest and themselves - they are a very forest-dependant population. Currently, the local population desire the community reserve and we are working on making it feasible for them.

For the second goal, two sites were selected, Peroles: a highly disturbed primary cloud forest and regenerating secondary forest interspersed with pasture; and Rio Blanco: an area of lightly disturbed primary cloud forest with a few scattered pastures. Census trails of various distances (~1-3 km) were established in both sites and visited monthly. Due to land conflicts in the lightly disturbed site, work has had to be stopped until disputes are settled. Therefore, only the Peroles site was evaluated and more work than expected was carried out.



A total of 86,550 m of census walks have been carried out so far. Twenty two mammal species, from eight orders, 16 families and 22 genera, were recorded during census work and *ad-lib* observations. Outstanding visual sightings were of rare species, such as the porcupine *Coendu bicolor* and the deer *Pudu mephistopheles*.

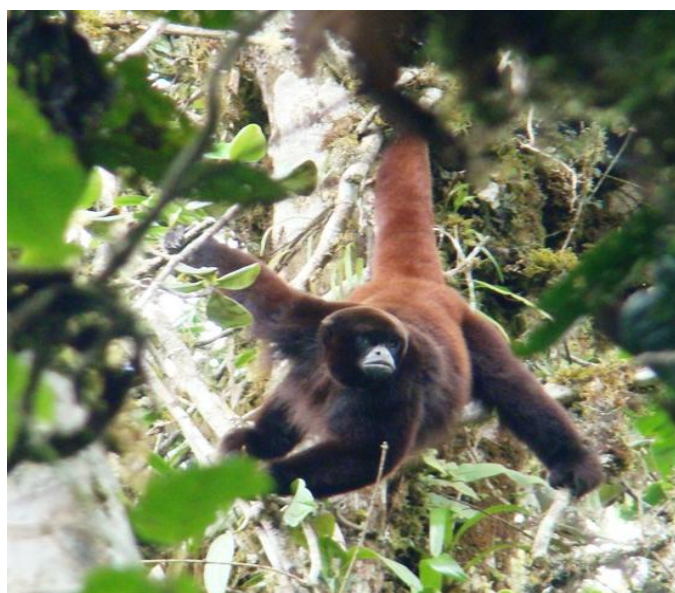
Interestingly, the only species with sufficient records for estimating density was *O. flavicauda*. This monkey was encountered a total of 49 times; 20 of which occurred during census walks; 15 during *ad-lib* observations and 14 through vocalizations. Average group size, including all reliable counts, was 8.8 (min 3, max 16). Using Krebs' (1999) formula [$D = ND/L^2(ESW)$] individual density was estimated at 22.7 per km².

The high density recorded is surprising, however, it must be remembered that this is only a preliminary estimate and no conclusions should be drawn from it until a full year of census data is collected and properly analysed. The unexpectedly high density is probably caused by a combination of higher food supply in this area compared to other sites visited and artificially high numbers of the species due to migration into this area from recently deforested outlying areas. Nonetheless, this high density should not be used as a representative sample for this species' natural density, especially in other areas where previous work suggests lower densities.

This first year of the project has been very productive, especially if we take into account the difficulties of the area where the yellow-tailed woolly monkey occurs. The census work is going to continue, as well as the activities for the creation of the community reserve that would maintain the continuity of the remaining stripe of forest.

For more information on the project see:

<http://neoprimate.org/wp-content/uploads/Year%20One%20Short%20Report.pdf>



Male yellow-tailed woolly monkey