

Creating Reserves for Titi Monkeys



Introduction

*The research of Proyecto Mono Tocón made clear that the situation for the San Martin Titi monkey (*Callicebus oenanthe*) is critical. The species has a limited distribution range, and most of its habitat has been destroyed to make place for agriculture. At this moment, there is no area where the species is officially and effectively protected. There are some "Municipal Conservation Areas" in which we have encountered titi monkeys, but the legal status of these areas is nationally under discussion and their protection is poor. High rates of deforestation have been reported in some of the conservation areas around Moyobamba. If we want to prevent the extinction of the San Martin Titi Monkey, urgent action is needed.*

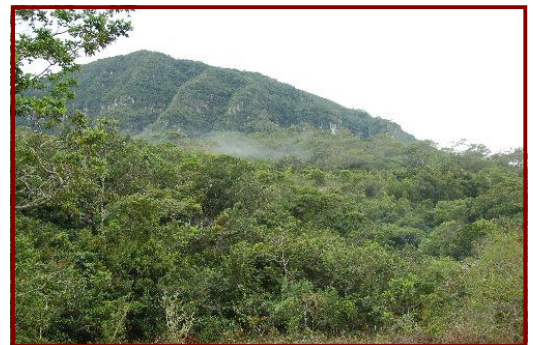
In this newsletter we report some important steps that our team in Peru took towards the protection of the species in the Alto-Mayo Valley.

Jan Vermeer, Project Director

Support to Mishquiyacu-Rumiyacu-Almendra area

During our research in 2008, we encountered good numbers of titi monkeys in the combined Municipally Conservation Area "Mishquiyacu-Rumiyacu-Almendra". This area is approximately 2.500 hectares, but only the lower part consists of habitat suitable for titi monkeys (below 1000 m asl.). However, the area is important for the conservation of other flora and fauna typical of this region, and its protection is important for Peru's biodiversity. Some rare and endemic bird species have been reported to live here. The area is crucial for the water supply of over 50.000 habitants of Moyobamba, and has potential for tourism. Unfortunately, due to its close proximity to Moyobamba, human pressure is very high. The protection of the area is insufficient, and much of the forest is being converted into agricultural grounds. Several conservation organisations are more or less active for the protection of this area, but both coordination and effective-

ness should be improved. Despite being aware of some of the difficulties that are involved with the management of this area, we decided to join the management committee in the hope that we can make a positive contribution to the protection of the titi monkeys in this area. This is important as we hope that we could make a connection between this population and the proposed reserve of Morro de Calzada, on which I will report later.



*The beautiful scenery of
Morro de Calzada*

Management of the Bosque de Protección Alto Mayo

There are reports of the presence of *Callicebus oenanthe* in the "Bosque de Protección Alto Mayo". However, considering the altitude of most of the reserve and the results of our studies, titi monkeys are probably only living in the lower parts, the buffer zone, of this huge reserve. Important populations of other endangered primate species, like yellow-tailed woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix flavicauda*), Andean night monkeys (*Aotus miconax*) and spider monkeys (*Ateles belzebuth*) are known to live in the area.

As Proyecto Mono Tocón is not only concerned about the conservation of titi monkeys, but also of other flora and fauna of Peru, we have decided to accept the invitation to become a member of the management committee of the reserve. Human pressure on the area is huge; an estimated number of 5.000 people is supposed to live within the borders of the reserve. Management is therefore often difficult, but

we hope that we can contribute to the protection of this unique cloud-forest, a stronghold for many endangered animal species.



The San Martin titi monkey is in urgent need of protection.

Creation of a Área Natural Protegida

Considering the high rates of deforestation in the distribution range of the *Callicebus oenanthe*, it is difficult to find areas that are suitable for the creation of a new reserve where a sustainable population of titi monkeys can survive. At this moment we do not know of any of such an area within the distribution range of the species, but there are still some gaps in our knowledge. Access to some areas is difficult due to the lack of roads or because the native communities that own the land do not allow us to survey their territories.

Instead of creating a large reserve for a sustainable population, we may need to create several smaller reserves that can be connected to each other with corridors, or where in the future an active management may be necessary to assure genetic exchange between isolated populations.

During our surveys we discovered to our surprise a very nice fragment of forest near Moyobamba. This area, known as the Morro de Calzada, is a forest reserve with no official conservation status. The Morro de Calzada is an impressive rock-formation that is partly covered with forest. The inhabitants of

the area have been protecting the forest as it holds the source of drinking water for several villages around the mountain. The Morro has a more or less religious value for the locals, and they are determined to protect its forest.

When we discovered during our surveys that the area has a good population of titi monkeys, we decided to discuss with the authorities the possibilities of obtaining a legal conservation status for the forests of Morro de Calzada, and its nearby forest known as "el Hombre de Piedra". They immediately accepted our proposal and since then the Proyecto Mono Tocón has compiled the necessary paperwork for the gazetting of an Área Natural Protegida of approximately 1000 hectares. Although further research needs to be conducted, we already know that a large part of this area is suitable titi monkey habitat, and this surface is likely to increase once the degraded secondary forest of the "Hombre de Piedra" will have recovered. Moreover, it may be possible to connect this conservation area through a corridor with the earlier mentioned conservation areas of "Mishquiyacu-Rumiyacu-Almendra".

The formalities for the creation of the conservation area are now in their final stage and it seems that all governmental levels agree with its creation. It is of course very important that the creation of the conservation area is supported by the local habitants, who have always protected the area from deforestation. Together with them we cannot only protect their source of drinking water, but also the future of an important population of titi monkeys. The local population is constantly being informed about the developments through presentations and workshops organized by Proyecto Mono Tocón.

Currently we work with a group of NGOs and governmental bodies on the management plan for the area.

We are also in the first stage of discussions with other communities who have requested help with the creation of two conservation areas in the south of San Martin. We intend to create these conservation areas in collaboration with our friends of the NGO Neotropical Primate Conservation.

With protected areas in both the southern and northern part of San Martin, we can protect populations of *Callicebus oenanthe* that may differ genetically and phenotypically.



Conventions for collaboration have been signed between authorities and Proyecto Mono Tocón.

Cooperation with other NGOs

The work of Proyecto Mono Tocón for the conservation of and research on the fauna of San Martin is increasingly known by other NGOs and authorities. That is why we are sometimes asked to support other organisations with their work. We conducted with Ucumari (www.ucumari.org) and Neotropical Primate Conservation (www.neoprimate.org) bird surveys in their working areas. Both organisations work especially on the conservation of yellow-tailed woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix flavicauda*), but together we try to expand our activities to the conservation of all flora and fauna in San Martin and Amazonas. We all have abilities that can help the others. The Proyecto Mono Tocón has also provided their educational comic book to both organisations, and we will help Ucumari with the establishment of an educational department. With Neotropical Primate Conservation we will make an analysis of suitable titi monkey habitat, based on their experiences with such a study for yellow-tailed woolly monkeys.

Collaboration with other organisations is also expanding. We assist the local association Tingana (www.tingana.org) with generating publicity for their important ecotourism program and with capacity building of their members. It is intended to increase the

educational value of their tourism activities by giving natural history courses to the guides of the project. We hope that we can help them also in the future with the management of their reserve, which is a paradise for birds, squirrel monkeys, capuchin monkeys and even giant otters. Collaborations with other organisations include the reactivation of the Regional Environmental Education Network, which should bring together forces of all conservation association of San Martin.



North-eastern Peru has a very high bird biodiversity that also needs protection.

The Morro de Calzada education program

Simultaneously with our work for the creation of the Regional Conservation Area of Morro de Calzada, we have decided to focus our educational activities on the communities around this zone, and especially in the villages of Calzada and Yantalo. When creating a conservation area, it is important that all neighbours understand the importance of forest-protection. Our educational department has developed in collaboration with the teachers and directors of several local schools an extensive educational program. For most of the scholar-year each class involved will receive lessons about different environmental subjects, like biodiversity, conservation, water, etc. Our team started in 2009 with compiling educational packages about these subjects, which are constantly being improved and expanded.



We also have plans to start a nature-club, to bring more infants in contact with the rich nature around their villages. For the educational work we receive much support from volunteers and students of the university, some of whom doing their thesis on environmental education with the project.



The education team has also been present at several events that were organised for the Year of Biodiversity.

Partners of the project

We have three new partners. The French association CEPA funded research on ucaris (more information in the next newsletter), and Basel zoo joined as a participating zoo, keeping *Callicebus cupreus*. The volunteers of Apenheul Primate Park donated 1000 euros for the educational department.



If you want to support the project, or if you want more information, please contact

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