

THE WOOLLY MONKEY PROJECT (TWMP) – REPORT NO. 1- 2005

Update: Jan 28 – March 28, 2005

The first two weeks of this phase of the project were spent in Bogotá, Colombia buying in supplies and communicating with the UAESPNN Park System, with regards to commencing work at Amacayacu National Park under our current research license, and accommodation for the next six-months.

On February 20th, 2005 an official meeting was held in the tourist centre at Amacayacu National Park with Jaime Celis, park director, and the Curacas and Cabildos¹ of Mocagua, Macedonia, El Vergel, Zaragoza, San Martin and Palmeras, the six indigenous communities of the Southern part of the national park (Fig 1).



Photo Source: Hannah Parathian, TWMP.

Fig 1. Meeting with the Cabildos and Jaime Celis, the Director of Amacayacu.

The purpose of this meeting was to formally introduce the Woolly Monkey Project, and to arrange further meetings in the communities themselves. The first of these meetings was held in Mocagua on February 24th, to select those who would make up our team of co-investigators, or Churuqueros² as they are known locally, in the area belonging to the Mocaguans, which is subject to a prohibition on the hunting of large bodied primates (Fig 2).

¹ In each indigenous community there is a social and political hierarchy composed of a Cabildo and a Curaca. The Cabildo is a committee, similar to a *town council*, chosen by the community. The Curaca is the local leader and representative, whom oversee meetings of the Cabildo.



Photo Source: Alex King, TWMP.

Fig 2. The team of co-investigators from Mocagua arranging a field trip.

The second meeting was held the following day in San Martin, several kilometres up the Amazon River, to select the co-investigators for that area, which is subject to no such prohibition. A primary reason for selecting these communities is prohibition, or lack thereof, as one of the main aims of the project is to find data in both hunted and un-hunted areas, in indigenous land (Resguardos), which is also a protected area.

These meetings were used to discuss timetables, answer questions from the local people regarding the project and to agree salaries. Further meeting have now been arranged to refine proposed methodology for the census.



Photo Source: Alex King, TWMP.

Fig 3. Local co-investigators from the community of San Martin and TWMP staff coordinating field work teams.

² Hunters with expertise in tracking woolly monkeys (Churucos).

Discussions have also taken place with teachers and parents in Mocagua regarding the logistics of teaching English classes and providing an Environmental Education Programme at the local primary school. Our proposals were embraced with open arms, and a suggested date for commencement of the environmental education has been agreed as March 17th.

Our field advisor, Dr Sara Bennett³ assisted us in the arrangement of these meetings at which she introduced The Woolly Monkey Project as an integral component of the Management of Natural Resources Plan.

On 21st February 2005 we received a visit from Rachel Hevesi, a representative of The Monkey Sanctuary Trust, Looe, Cornwall, England, who as a sponsor of The Woolly Monkey Project have been assisting us in fund-raising and promotion in the UK Immediately prior to this visit, Rachel met with Helen and Carlos Palomino, members of The Ikama Peru Project⁴ in Rio Mayo, Peru, with whom the Woolly Monkey Project has been working in conjunction in planning the implementation of the environmental education campaign CONSERVEMOS NUESTROS MONOS AMAZONICOS (Conserve Our Amazonian Monkeys).



Photo Source: Alex King, TWMP.

Fig. 4. Dr. Sara Bennett introducing TWMP as part of the Management Plan of Natural Resources in Amacayacu.

³Dr. Bennett is a specialist in biology conservation and Amazonian ecosystems, and member of the IUCN/SSC Cracid Specialist group. She has been developing research in the Colombian Amazon for the past twenty years, and is also the principal researcher of two long running projects in Amacayacu: "Management of Natural Resources" (3 years) and "Piuri Project" (5 years).

⁴Primate conservation project in the Peruvian Amazon

During our field trips in the resguardos of Mocagua and San Martin, the local co-investigators and TWMP staff (fig 5 & 6), marked 50 m intervals along four line transects, for a total of 25 km (13 km in Mocagua and 12 km in San Martin respectively), in order to carry out the census of large vertebrates.



Photo Source: TWMP.

Fig. 5. Local co-investigator from the Pucacuro region in Mocagua and TWMP staff.

The trails in San Martin were frequented by hunters, and mammal sightings were scarce, confirming the impact of hunting on wild populations of large vertebrates (data in prep.).

The Environmental Education Programme was implemented in Mocagua. The teachers and TWMP staff classified the different age groups of the schoolchildren, and workshops were developed with each group. (fig. 7).



Photo Source: TWMP.

Fig. 6. TWMP staff: from left to right: Angela Maldonado, Hannah Parathian and Alex King.

Photo Source: TWMP.



Fig. 7. TWMP staff (Alex King) during a role-play activity with children from the 3-6 years old group.

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