

Thomas Donegan & Paul Salaman
tdonegan@proaves.org

Sumario

Las especies de mamíferos grandes observadas en el campo incluyen un hormiguero (*Tamandua tetradactyla*), un primate del género *Saguinus*, un marsupial del género *Marmosa* o *Marmosops*, por los menos dos géneros de ardillas y varios roedores. Armadillos (*Dasybus novemcinctus*) y guaguas (*Agouti paca*) fueron capturados por los guías de la expedición. El oso de anteojos *Tremarctos ornatus*, el tapir de montaña *Tapirus pinchaque*, y el jaguar *Panthera onca* fueron reportados por cazadores locales.

Summary

Large mammal species observed in the field in Serranía de los Churumbelos include; an anteater (*Tamandua tetradactyla*), a primate of the genus *Saguinus*; a marsupial of the genus *Marmosa* or *Marmosops* and at least two genera of squirrel. Armadillos (*Dasybus novemcinctus*) and Borugas (*Agouti paca*) were also captured. Spectacled Bear *Tremarctos ornatus*, Mountain Tapir *Tapirus pinchaque*, and Jaguar *Panthera onca* were reported during talks with local hunters.

Introduction

Large mammals form an important part of forest ecosystems, and are of great importance as figurehead species for conservation, yet as relatively little is known of their ecology and distribution in the Neotropics, further studies are important in establishing species distributions and the ecological role of mammals within the forest community. Large mammal fieldwork aimed to compile a basic large mammal species inventory for each site. Although the richest diversity in Neotropical mammals is found in Chiroptera and Rodentia, large mammal surveys give a global idea of the status of forest and hunting pressures and are a good tool for approaching this group of vertebrates. Furthermore, Threatened species analyses in the Neotropics concentrate on large mammal groups which are relatively well-known and capable of field identification without collection.

Methodology

Observations for large mammal species were largely opportunistic. Whilst observation transects were being conducted as part of bird surveys, any mammals viewed were identified and recorded. Whilst in local villages, talks with local people focused on large mammals as well as birds. Several species in captivity were observed and photographed.

Identification was made possible using Emmons and Feer (1997) and further with Tirira (1999). It was considered a productive use of expedition resources to spend a small amount of time identifying species and collecting ecological information on the mammals found in Study Sites, many of which are Threatened and are charismatic species which could potentially act as ‘umbrella’ species for protective measures. Due to general low encounter rates, these methods were considered more resource-efficient than employing a large mammal-specialist.

Large mammals recorded

The following species were observed during expedition fieldwork:

Southern Tamandua *Tamandua tetradactyla*: Observed at dawn by TD and AC at **SS1**. A solitary individual walked along the forest floor and scaled a tree trunk, climbing almost to the canopy at 30 m above ground level.

White-fronted Capuchin-Monkey *Cebus albifrons*: Observed in noisy small groups around **SS1**, and also once near a clearing at **SS3**. One individual was photographed in captivity in Mirafior (near **SS1**). A small group of probable *Saguinus* Capuchins were also observed briefly from the road, but were not identified to species level. Monkeys were untypically sparse in the lowland regions, as they are extensively hunted for meat and pets. Most worryingly, some local petrol companies and/or the military pay local people to catch monkeys, which are then used as guards in their security posts. One hunter was encountered at **SS2** attempting to catch monkeys for this purpose. No Primates were encountered at that site.

Large arboreal Opossum sp. *Caluromysiops* or *Caluromys sp.*: Observed during a nocturnal bird search on an island in the Río Fragua at **SS1**.

Olingo *Bassaricyon sp.*: Observed once at dusk at **SS5**. It was very inquisitive, moving through the lower canopy towards our torchlights, making screeching noises.

Kinkajou *Potos flavus*: Heard calling once at night at **SS6**. This represents an elevation extension to 2,200 m with previous records only to 1,750 m.

Spectacled Bear *Tremarctos ornatus*: The most notable report by local hunters is the presence of this species (CITES Appendix I and Vulnerable) in Serranía de los Churumbelos. This was confirmed at **SS7** where extensively scarring by claw-marks on several trees and damage to palm sprouts is typical of the species. Spectacled Bear is endemic to the Andean region (Eisenberg 1989), with its range extending through the Andes from northern Colombia and Venezuela through to Peru and Bolivia. The major threats to its survival are habitat loss because of the increasing human population in the Andes and deforestation for timber and plantation crops; hunting because they are often regarded as pests which raid crops; and for food, medicines and talismans. Hunting is illegal but law enforcement is difficult.

Others: Whilst at **SS1**, our host, Don Salamon, hunted and killed a **Paca** *Agouti paca*. Talks with hunters around **SS1** also revealed the presence of **Jaguar** *Panthera onca*. Our guides at **SS2** captured several **Nine-banded long-nosed Armadillos** *Dasybus novemcinctus*. **Puma** *Puma concolor* and **Mountain Tapir** *Tapirus pinchaque* were recognised in informal interviews with local people.

References

- Emmons, L. H. and Feer, F.** (1997) *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: a field guide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Emmons, L. H., B. M. Whitney & D.L. Ross Jr.** (1997). *Sounds of Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: An Audio Field Guide*. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. NY.
- Tirira, D.** (1999) *Mamíferos del Ecuador*. Museo de Zoología. Centro de Biodiversidad y Ambiente. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador. Sociedad para la Investigación y el Monitoreo de la Biodiversidad Ecuatoriana. pp 392. Quito.