

Project Title: Group size, habitat use and population density of black howler monkeys (*Alouatta pigra*) and black-handed spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi yucantanensis*)

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Project summary:

My aim in this study was to provide preliminary data on population density, habitat use and grouping patterns of the two primate species (black howler monkey and black-handed spider monkey) living in the eastern edge of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, Chiapas, Mexico. There is limited information on the behavioral ecology of the study species, and no published reports from the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is important for animal conservation because it contributes to a forest corridor linking the reserve to the forests of Guatemala. I chose a 5 km² survey area within the reserve based on previous survey work done in May 2003 and July 2004. During those initial visits local Lacandon Maya reported occasionally seeing howler and spider monkeys in the study area. I gathered data for this project from May 15 to August 15, 2005, and used transect and animal census methods to estimate population density and botanical plots to collect plant phenological data. However, no groups of either study species were encountered during transect surveys, although I would occasionally hear the long calls of howler monkeys in the distance. Currently, I am continuing to identify the plants gathered from the botanical plots. This has proven to be especially difficult because there is little published information on the plants in this area. I have submitted a paper *Folia Primatologica* concerning population density of the study species and habitat quality, and plan another publication on the identification and taxonomy of the rainforest plants of eastern Mexico.