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YELLOW-TAILED WOOLLY MONKEY (*OREONAX FLAVICAUDA*: HUMBOLDT 1812) ALTITUDINAL RANGE EXTENSION, UCHIZA, PERÚ

Néstor Allgas Sam Shanee Ana Peralta Noga Shanee

The yellow-tailed woolly monkey (*Oreonax flavicauda*) is endemic to a small area of montane cloud forest dominated by *Ficus* spp. in the Peruvian departments of Amazonas and San Martin (Leo Luna 1980) and neighboring areas of the departments of Huánuco and La Libertad (Graves & O'Neil, 1980; Parker & Barkley, 1981; Shanee, 2011). This species is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2008, A4c) and Endangered on Appendix 1 of CITES (2005). The main threats to *O. flavicauda* are massive deforestation for agriculture, subsistence hunting, logging and mining (deLuycker, 2007; Leo Luna, 1980; Shanee, 2011). In many areas habitat loss has forced this species into small forest fragments (Shanee et al., 2007; Shanee, 2011).

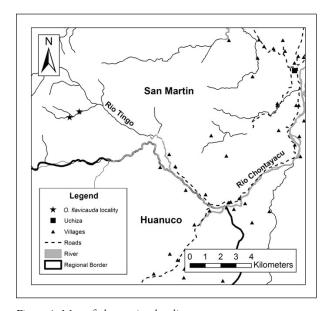


Figure 1. Map of observation locality.

Study sites Source (m a.s.l.) 1,084 Tingo de Uchiza, San Martín This study 1,560 Shunte, San Martín Shanee (2011) > 1,600 Pucatambo, Amazonas Leo Luna (1980) Bosque de Protección Alto Mayo 1,505 DeLukyer (2007) 2,400 Ongón, La Libertad Parker & Barkley (1981) Graves and O'Neil (1980) 1,670 Abra Patricia, Amazonas 1,550 Pucatambo, Amazonas Thomas (1927) 2,220 Cordillera de Colán, Amazonas Butchart et al (1995)

Table 1. Minimum altitudes where O. flavicauda has been observed in previous studies.

On the 25th and 26th of January 2013, while carrying out distribution surveys of the Andean night monkey (*Aotus miconax*), we encountered a group of *O. flavicauda* 14.5 km west of the city of Uchiza in San Martín department in an area known locally as Tingo de Uchiza (S 8°28'47.04", W 76°35'24.90"), just north of the border with Huánuco (Fig 1.). The group was found along an existing 1.1 km trail at altitudes between 1,084 and 1,373 m. a.s.l., just under 500 m lower than previous observations (Table 1). We observed the group feeding on fruiting figs (*Ficus* spp.) for 25 minutes before they crossed a small stream which feeds the Rio Trisneja where we were unable to follow. The group consisted of 12 individuals, including two females with infants.

The habitat was similar to that described by previous researchers (Shanee, 2011; Shanee & Shanee, 2011) with high humidity (up to 99% relative humidity at 14.7°C). Forests in this area are dominated by Moraceae (*Ficus* spp.) and Cecropiaceae (*Cecropia* spp.) as well as Fabaceae (*Inga* spp. and *Erythrina* spp.), Icacinaceae (*Citronella* spp. and *Styloceras* spp.) with a high density of epiphytes. Our observations were made in a long thin canyon with steep sides that culminated in the 400 m high *Velo de Plata* waterfall. It is possible that the extremely humid and cool microclimate created by the local topography and the effect of the waterfall have allowed the higher altitude forest type, which is home to *O. flavicauda*, to establish itself at these lower altitudes.

Local villagers stated that *O. flavicauda* is common in the area, which they had mistakenly identified as howler monkeys (*Alouatta* sp.). When informed about the species endemism and Critically Endangered status they showed a lot of interest in conserving the species. The Municipality of Uchiza is currently working with the San Martin Regional Government to create a new Regional Conservation Area (*Area de Conservación Regional*) which covers the area where our observations were made. More time will need to be spent in this area to see how much lower the species distribution reaches in this and other similar areas. With the current high rates of habitat loss throughout this species

distribution area, any additional areas of habitat suitable for them are of importance for its conservation.

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