

**Community Conservation Project for
the Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey
(*Oreonax flavicauda*), Peru**

*Shanee, N. *Shanee, S.
samshanee@gmail.com
Neotropical Primate Conservation,
36D Brondesbury Villas,
London

The yellow tailed woolly monkey (*Oreonax flavicauda*) is Critically Endangered and currently features as one of the world's 25 most threatened primate species. (www.primatesg.org/newT25.htm). *Oreonax flavicauda* is only found between ~1500-2500 meters above sea level within the Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot in the departments of Amazonas and San martin, Peru. The species is also restricted to areas of primary montane cloud forest (Butchart et al 1995). The area of this species distribution is characterized by low levels of economic development and the highest rates of human population growth in Peru. Constant immigration into these areas has led to clear cutting of large areas of forest. The heavy rains and steep slopes leave land unsuitable for agriculture and farming after just a few years, at which time people move on to new areas. A preliminary study (Shanee and Shanee 2007) conducted between March and May 2007 showed that the main threats facing *Oreonax flavicauda* throughout its range are deforestation and hunting, even within officially protected areas.

We have identified the lands of the Comunidad Campesina de La Esperanza as a priority area for the conservation of this species. The forests in this area currently form a natural



Photograph by Sam Shanee

Rescued infant *O. flavicauda*

corridor linking three protected areas and we have verified the existence of the species in the area. We have also confirmed the presence of the endemic and little known Andean night monkey (*Aotus myconax*). Due to extremely difficult terrain, climatic conditions and the large migrant population, very little research has been made on either of the species.

The immediate threats to the primate populations we identified in this area are timber extraction, clear cutting for cattle ranching and land trafficking. Two mining companies are also currently operating in the area and an ever growing human population. On the other hand we found local communities very open to conservation ideas and willing to cooperate in the development of this project. The main project objectives are:

- 1) Creation of a community-run reserve to protect this natural corridor. This will ensure the future of this forest refuge and genetic flow between populations, thus reducing loss of



fitness through genetic drift and in-breeding.

- 2) Census and ecological research on mammals focusing on primate species within the proposed reserve area. We will also investigate the possibility of triangulation using playback techniques to improve accuracy of population estimates for *O. flavicauda*.
- 3) Intensive education work for both local school children and the adult population. We plan to start an environmental education programme in all schools within communities involved with the project and arrange talks and workshops for adults focusing on conservation, and capacity building for sustainable development and economic alternatives.
- 4) Development of production and markets for alternative products such as handicrafts, weaving, and native agricultural produce to substitute income generated from logging, cattle ranching and non-native monocultures
- 5) Reforestation of unused pastures and other deforested areas with native tree species that have value to both human and non-human primates living in the area.
- 6) Upgrading of the Andean night monkey's (*A. myconax*) conservation status from Vulnerable to Endangered, to ensure that adequate

investigation and conservation efforts are available for the species.

Persons who would like to help with census work, environmental education or GIS mapping of the area, or those with novel ideas that could be integrated into the larger project, are welcome to contact us at nogashanee@gmail.com. For more information see www.neoprimate.org



Photograph by Sam Shanee

Wild adult female *O. flavicauda*

References

- Butchart, S.H.M., Barnes, R., Davies, C.W.N., Fernandez, M, and Seddon, N. (1995). Observations of Two Threatened Primates in the Peruvian Andes. *Primate Conservation*. Vol 16. pp 15-19.
- Shanee, S. and Shanee, N. (2007). Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey, *Oreonax flavicauda* (Humbolt, 1812), Pilot Project Report, Peru 2007. 32 pages. [<http://neoprimate.org/wp-content/uploads/Full%20report.pdf>]

