Articles

A New Primate Record for Bolivia: An Apparently Isolated Population of Common Woolly Monkeys Representing a Southern Range Extension for the Genus *Lagothrix*

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The common woolly monkey (*Lagothrix lagothricha*) inhabits mature terra firme and seasonally flooded forests in western Amazonia to an altitude of 1800 m in the Andean foothills, from Colombia to the Río Tambopata in southern Peru (Fooden, 1963; Ramirez, 1988; Eisenberg, 1989; Emmons and Feer, 1999; see Fig. 1). The distribution of *L. lagothricha cana* is known to reach the Bolivian border in two areas of Brazil; along the Rio Abunã in northeastern Pando Department (Brown and Rumiz, 1985), and along the Rio Guaporé-Iteñez in northeastern Beni and Santa Cruz Departments (Wallace *et al.*, 1996; D. Romero, pers. comm. to R. B. Wallace, 1997; see Fig. 1). Nevertheless, as yet no official sightings exist for woolly monkeys in the Bolivian Amazon (Brown and Rumiz, 1985; Wallace, 1995). Apparently, *L. l. cana* historically occurred in the northeast corner of Pando Department, Bolivia, but this premise stems from anecdotal information (Izawa and Bejarano, 1981; Brown and Rumiz, 1985; Buchanan-Smith *et al.*, in press). Overhunting is suggested as the cause for the current absence in this area (Izawa and Bejarano, 1981).

On September 22, 1999, we observed woolly monkeys on two occasions at an Andean cloud forest site within Madidi National Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management. The observations occurred at an altitude of approximately 1500 m in a narrow steep-sided valley running north-south (14°39.63'S, 68°41.49'W), about a 6-hour hike south-west from the local community of Pata (14°37.73'S, 68°40.32'W). Upon arriving at the crest of the valley in the late afternoon of 21 September, 1999 (*c.* 17:30 hrs) we heard vocalizations from the valley below. They were varied, a mixture of yelps and trills, and at times resembled both spider monkeys (*Ateles*) and parrots (*Amazonas*).

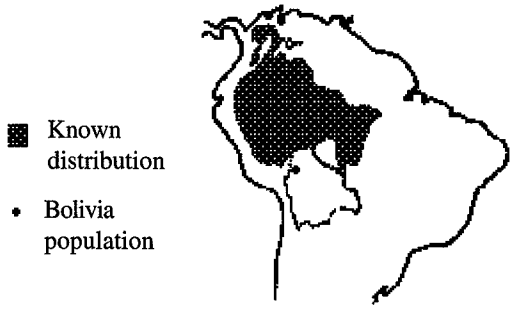

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of the woolly monkey, *Lagothrix lagothricha.*

The following day during the mid-morning (*c.* 10:15 hrs) we observed a woolly monkey group of at least five animals: an adult male, an adult female, a young juvenile and two unsexed larger individuals. We observed them from the opposite side of the valley at a distance of *c.* 100-150m for about 30 minutes. The monkeys were initially located due to vocalizations similar to those of the previous afternoon. They were apparently resting, but later they saw us and moved off rapidly down the valley. These primates were large, robust animals with the classic *Lagothrix* body shape. Overall, individuals were dark smoky gray with ventral areas noticeably darker and head and face essentially black. There was some individual variation in pelage color; the adult male had a darker line running from the head down the middle of the back to the tail. Another individual in the group had clear tawny patches on both hindquarters.

Early in the afternoon (*c.* 14:00 hrs) we disturbed a very dark gray (almost black) adult female carrying an infant. Before fleeing, the female was resting in a nest approximately 25 m up in the canopy. The nest was approximately 60 x 30 cm in size and made from small sticks, twigs and leaves. Another similar-sized nest was observed the following day. The origin of these nests is unclear, but on examination contained no feather remains and was probably too small for spectacled bears (*Tremarctos ornatus*), signs of which we were observing in this forest. Apparently these nests are frequently used by the woolly monkeys but as yet local inhabitants have not actually seen them being constructed (F. Portillo, pers. comm. 1999).

A local informant, Florel Portillo, said that the observed social group used the entire length of the valley ranging from about 1300 m to 1900 m a.s.l. The vegetation in the valley is low elevation Andean cloud forest with abundant mosses, tree ferns, bromeliads and orchids and a mossy ground layer on the steep slopes. Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruviana*) are frequently observed in this forest. Apparently the woolly monkey social group we observed is particularly partial to the small basins within the valley where the forest canopy reaches 30-35m, but also uses the dryer and lower forest found on the steeper slopes. Furthermore, several local inhabitants reported these monkeys as more common in higher cloud forest between 1500 m and approximately 2500m. Social groups of between 10-20 animals are most commonly observed at these more remote sites (F. Portillo, pers. comm. 1999).

The provisional distribution map presented in Figure 2 is a result of the sighting reported here as well as anecdotal information from three reliable local sources; Florel Portillo, Francisco Novack and Park Guard Radamir Sevillano. In general, the forests of northern La Paz Department remain relatively unexplored from a biological perspective, and to date lowland forests have received far more attention than the cloud forest formations occurring between 1500-3500 m a.s.l. Apparently this woolly monkey population has a localized and disjunct distribution in a limited geographical area. Faunal surveys and anecdotal information from adjacent Bolivian lowland forest suggest the absence of this species in forests below 1000 m a.s.l. (Parker and Bailey, 1991; Novack, Portillo, Sevillano and B. Hennessey, pers. comm. 1999). Indeed, this primate is locally known as 'mono rosillo' or 'marimono del frio', which

Cover photograph: The pygmy marmoset, *Cebuella pygmaea*. Photo: Russell A. Mittermeier.

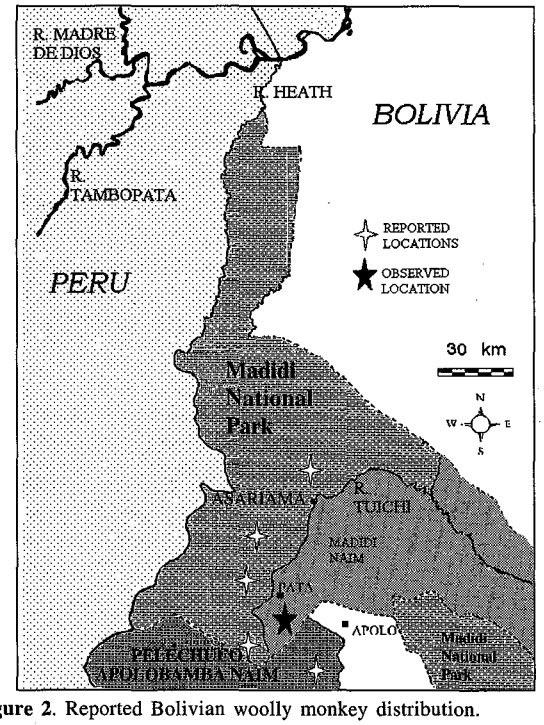

Figure 2. Reported Bolivian woolly monkey distribution.

roughly translated means 'spider monkey of the cold', further suggesting their restriction to the cloud forest in this region.

According to available distributional information this *Lagothrix* sighting represents a southern range extension for the genus and would seem to be an isolated population (see Figure 1). This isolation could be a result of over-hunting in the adjacent lowland forests of Bolivia and southern Peru. However, the relatively high densities of another popular bushmeat primate, the black spider monkey (*Ateles chamek*), within the lowland portions of Madidi National Park (Parker and Bailey, 1991) would argue against this. If this population is naturally isolated, and especially given its peculiar distribution with regard to habitat, then the possibility of it representing an undescribed subspecies must be considered. To this end, we intend to return to the area in late 1999, when in collaboration with the Bolivian National Parks Service and the Bolivian Faunal Collection, we intend to obtain further biological information, including samples for genetic analysis. For the moment, however, we prefer to consider this an apparently isolated population of *Lagothrix lagothricha cana*. We appeal to any Peruvian colleagues who have more accurate information regarding the presence or absence of *L. lagotricha cana* in southern Peru, particularly south of the Río Tambopata, to please contact us as soon as possible.

Finally, from a conservation perspective, Figure 2 demonstrates how the known distribution of this population is entirely within two Bolivian protected areas; Madidi National Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management and Apolobamba Natural Area of Integrated Management. Although these woolly monkeys are occasionally hunted by local inhabitants, this practice is apparently becoming rarer and this region of Bolivia is very sparsely populated. Indeed, large areas of the theoretical distribution of this population are completely uninhabited. However, the ongoing construction of a road through the Tuichi valley from Apolo to Asariama will facilitate access to some of these remote areas and may pose problems for these woolly monkeys in the future.

Acknowledgments: We were first alerted to the presence of this primate species in June 1999 following conversations with Park Guard Radamir Sevillano. Francisco Novack independently described woolly monkeys to us in July 1999, and accompanied us providing substantial logistical support on our trip to Canton Pata. Critically, Florel Portillo guided us to the monkeys with great skill, enthusiasm and determination. We would also like to thank the Bolivian National Parks Service (SERNAP) for permission to work in the protected areas of northern La Paz Department and for providing logistical support on many of our field trips. Finally, we acknowledge the continuing support of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

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