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PREDATION ATTEMPT BY DOMESTIC CATS (*FELIS CATUS*) ON A RONDON'S MARMOSET (*MICO RONDONI*) INFANT IN AN URBAN FOREST RESERVE IN PORTO VELHO, RONDÔNIA, BRAZIL

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Introduction

Mico rondoni is a recently described marmoset species endemic to the state of Rondônia, Brazil (Ferrari et al., 2010). The species is considered vulnerable to extinction, with the main threats being habitat loss and fragmentation, agriculture, livestock, urban expansion, rural settlements, increased road and energy matrices (Messias and Valença-Montenegro, 2018). Estimates indicate that 38% of the species' distribution has been converted due to the expansion of agriculture and infrastructure works, and it is expected that over the next 11 years this loss will increase to 50% of its distribution (Ochoa-Quintero et al., 2017). However, ecological and

behavioral data are scarce for the species, and more information is needed to propose conservation measures in both rural and urban environments.

Studies indicate that *Mico rondoni* exhibits tolerance to environmental changes/disturbances (Messias and Valença-Montenegro, 2018), but that it has been recorded at very low abundance when compared to other species of the family (Ferronato et al., 2018) and is probably absent in fragments smaller than 0.1 km² (Medeiro et al., 2019). *M. rondoni* has also been observed to form mixed associations with *Leontocebus weddelli* (Gusmão et al., 2015). There are no records of predation for the species to date; in general, it is difficult to observe this type of event in callitrichids (Ferrari, 2009). Potential predators of the species include birds of prey (Picho-Paucar and Torre, 2020) and medium-sized primates (Costa et al., 2020), based on information from other representatives of the family.

In the present paper we report a predation attempt by domestic cats on a *Mico rondoni* infant in an urban forest remnant in the municipality of Porto Velho, in southwestern Amazonia.

Material and Methods

The municipality of Porto Velho is the capital of the state of Rondônia, with an extent of 34,091 km². The city is crossed by the Madeira River (Fig. 1). The forest area where the present study was carried out is 1.17 kilometers away from the Madeira River. This forest is a protected area according to the Brazilian Forest Code because it is traversed by a small whitewater river that is approximately 10 m wide. According to the residents, the presence of groups of *Mico rondoni* in association with *Leontocebus weddelli* are common in this area, and stray dogs and cats are also present in the area.

Results and Discussion

The event occurred on April 22, 2020 at 3:00 pm. The marmoset group included seven individuals (six adults and one infant), and they were located approximately 1 m above the ground feeding on bananas (*Musa paradisiaca*) that were planted on the banks of the river by the local people. Three domestic cats were nearby, and they preyed upon the marmoset group. The cats took advantage of the short distance and jointly attacked the group of marmosets in an attempt to capture the primates. At the moment of the attack, the infant fell off the back of one of the adults, into the water. The cat caught the infant, but a local resident who observed the interaction promptly intervened and separated the cat from the marmoset, and later dried off the infant and kept it in a bucket (Fig. 2).

The infant was taken to the veterinarian to be treated for the multiple perforations caused by the cat's teeth. After

the procedures were completed, the animal was released near the place where the event took place (Fig. 3). Unfortunately, the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Center of Porto Velho is currently closed and not receiving any animals.

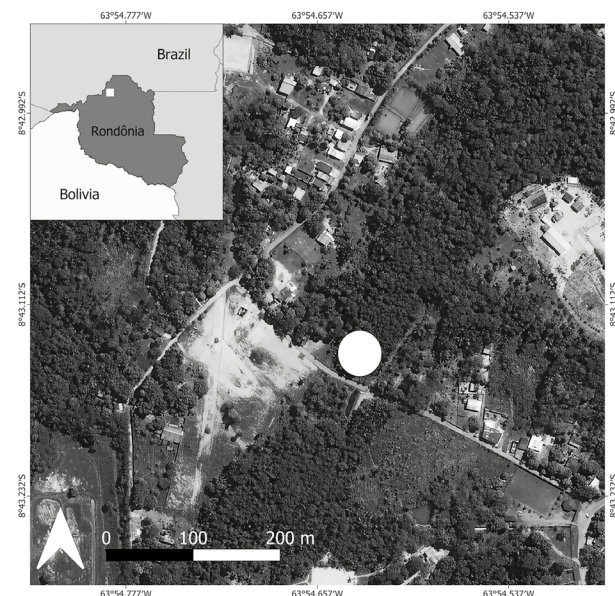


Figure 1. Location of the predation attempt by *Felis catus* on the *Mico rondoni* infant. The squared area in the inset map indicates the location of the city of Porto Velho.



Figure 2. *Mico rondoni* infant after attempted predation by *Felis catus*. Photo: Marcos Fernandes.



Figure 3. *Mico rondoni* infant in recovery after veterinary treatment. Photo: Marcos Fernandes.

Although not successful due to the intervention of the local resident, this predation attempt shows the potential impact of the presence of feral domestic animals on threatened primate species in urban forest environments. This particular situation is especially challenging due to the small total size of the remaining *Mico rondoni* population and the small number of mature individuals (Messias and Valença-Montenegro, 2018), so that the loss of individuals to exotic domestic species could represent a serious threat to the maintenance of the species.

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