



The first photo ever taken of an Andean night monkey.
(*Aotus miconax*) Photo by Alejandro Mego-NPC

Primate Conservation Inc. UPDATE

2009

Director's Report

Primate Conservation Inc. mission is to provide support for projects that study and protect the least known and most endangered primates in their natural habitats. In this year's update we are proud to present two reports, with photos from the field about two species that were so little known they had never been photographed. They were described in the 1900s from study skins in a museum but never studied in the wild. The pygmy tarsier, which was mentioned in the 2004 update, has finally been found by Sharon Gursky-Doyen and Nanda Grow from Texas A&M.

The Andean night monkey, which lives in Peru was found by a team of researchers studying the yellow tailed woolly monkey, which shares this same habitat. Both these research teams received funding from PCI for their first studies in these regions. Although PCI cannot take credit for funding the specific field season when these amazing discoveries were made, it because of our donor's generous support, that PCI can take credit for what we have always tried to do, "to help the next generation of Jane Goodalls get into the field to study primates." The funding PCI provided to these researchers at the beginning gave them the experience and credibility to get other grants to continue their studies that were then extremely successful.

As director of PCI, in these difficult economic times, I know it may be hard for donors to continue their support. But your support is needed now more than ever, because other funding may dry up, the effects of global warming on habitats and people are just beginning. The threats to forests and the primates that live in them will only increase. If we do not study and protect these little-known primates now, they may well be gone in 10 or 20 years. Your donations are needed and appreciated as both of these projects below and 25 other projects are applying to PCI for funding to start new projects or continue in-depth studies of monkeys in their natural habitat.



Pygmy tarsier, in hand, is one of the smallest primates. Only some mouse lemurs species weight less. Photo by Sharon Gursky-Doyen

News from the Field

Sharon Gursky-Doyen and Nanda Grow

Population Density Survey of the *Tarsius pumilus* in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia Funded in Spring, 2007

In August 2008, the world's smallest tarsier, *Tarsius pumilus*, commonly called the pygmy tarsier, was rediscovered after not being seen alive for more than 70 years. Pygmy tarsiers have previously only been known from two museum specimens collected in 1917 and 1930. Numerous attempts to locate a living population of this species have been conducted, but none had been successful until this past year. In 2008, a group of pygmy tarsiers were located in the mossy cloud forest of Mt. Rore Katimbu within Lore Lindu National Park, Sulawesi Indonesia. One female and two male pygmy tarsiers were successfully trapped using mist nets. The tarsiers were diagnosed as *T. pumilus* because they exhibited extremely small body size. Body weights ranged from 48 to 52

grams, (about 1.75 ounces or the weight of a medium sized chicken egg) less than half the average weight of *T. diana* and *T. spectrum*. They also have claws on all digits, elongated lower incisors, and distinctively shorter body lengths than other Sulawesi tarsiers.

The home range of the female pygmy tarsier was at least 1.2 hectares. All members of the group returned to the same sleep tree each morning and left their sleep tree before dusk had fallen completely. Scent marks and vocalizations were rarely detected. The tarsiers did not duet at dawn when returning to their sleep tree, nor did they consistently alarm call when birds of prey were observed circling above their sleep tree which may have been why other research teams failed to find them.

Pygmy tarsiers appear to live at extremely low densities. Using more than 200 mist nets, monitored over a period of 60 nights, only three tarsiers were captured. The difficulty in locating pygmy tarsiers may be related to low population density caused by different pressures than the lowland populations experience. Human advancement into the pygmy tarsier habitat is a serious threat. Lore Lindu National Park was established in 1993, but park policy has resulted in deforestation and illegal encroachment of numerous villages into the park. While the local population depends on forest resources, land encroachment may represent a larger threat than the harvesting of resources. Villages inside the park are experiencing population growth, creating a higher demand for agricultural land. Since the conservation status of *T. pumilus* is currently classified as data deficient, there is currently no conservation plan specific to these tarsiers. A determination of the density, geographic distribution and conservation threats is necessary to determine their level of risk so the park maybe effectively managed to protect them.



The Andean night monkey in its natural habitat. Photo by Noga Shanee

Noga Shanee and Sam Shanee of Neotropical Primate Conservation (NPC)

La Esperanza-Community Conservation and Research Project for the Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey (*Oreanax flavicauda*, Humboldt 1812) Fall, 2007

The Andean night monkey, *Aotus miconax*, is one of the least known of all Neotropical primates. The species

is listed by the IUCN as Vulnerable and it is endemic to the Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot in North Eastern Peru. This species had never been studied or photographed.

We occasionally encountered groups of this night monkey, as part of our work on the Yellow Tailed Woolly Monkey Project, a long term conservation initiative for the Critically Endangered *Oreanax flavicauda*, partially funded by PCI. These groups range between two and six individuals and are found in continuous forest as well as in very small patches of degraded and secondary forest.

In February 2008 we were called by neighbors to see a female night monkey hiding in a group of eucalyptus trees in the middle of the village, above the highway. She was at least 500 meters from the next part of forest and there were dogs waiting under her tree. Thinking of the possible risks she would have to go through if left there, we decided to catch her. Some of the local men climbed up the trees and took photos of her; these are the first photos of a live specimen of this species ever to be taken. They managed to catch her by hand and after taking measurements, released her in the closest big patch of forest.

We are planning to start the first systematic study of this species this May, to gather basic information on its abundance and ability to survive in degraded and remnant forests. Work will include group follows on a known group living in a patch of approximately 1 ha. We will also use playback of recorded *A. miconax* vocalizations to record presence/absence and estimate abundance, in transects of primary forest as well as within forest patches of different sizes.

This work will be part of our goal to conserve these special Andean forests and their little-known biodiversity which face increasing encroachment because a new road was recently built in this area.

How to Support PCI

PCI is an all-volunteer, tax-deductible private operating 501 (c) (3) foundation. Since our first grant in 1993 we have supported with full or partial or renewal funding 380 projects in 28 countries with primate habitats. Projects in Asia have received 40% of our funding, African projects 32%, Madagascar 22%, and South America 6%.

If you would like to contribute cash, stock or real estate to PCI or would like more information on a specific project please contact me at the address below. In order to keep our overhead to a minimum, so that as much of the money raised is used to support field conservation projects; we only send one newsletter per year. **This is our annual appeal for your donations.** Please do not forget about this as you will not receive other mail from us nor will we share your name with others. We appreciate your support and hope you will give generously to support one of these primate projects.

Sincerely,

Noel Rowe