

Conservation news

New northern miqui group discovered in Brazil's Caparaó National Park

In the course of survey work to assess the population viability of the northern miqui in one of this primate's last remaining strongholds, a team supported by the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) has discovered a new group of this Critically Endangered species. The miqui, or woolly spider monkey, is the largest New World primate. It was recognized as two distinct species—the northern miqui *Brachyteles hypoxanthus* and its southern counterpart *B. arachnoides*—in the late 1980s.

Endemic to eastern Brazil's Atlantic Forest, the northern miqui is one of the world's most threatened primates. It was once widely distributed throughout this region but hunting and habitat destruction have taken a heavy toll. The species is now confined to a handful of isolated fragments of forest, each harbouring small subpopulations with limited and declining genetic diversity (see also *Oryx*, 2009, 43, 254–257). The entire wild population is believed to number <1,000 individuals.

Caparaó National Park is an important location for conservation of the northern miqui but until recently there was a lack of detailed information about the population and the threats to its survival. The CLP-funded team has already started to gather essential data on the distribution, density and status of this Critically Endangered species. The team's research is also contributing to the implementation of the targets proposed in the National Miqui Action Plan.

The presence of an entirely new group on the west side of the Park is an unexpected bonus. The group was found in December 2015 in an area of the Park where northern miquis had never been recorded before. This previously unknown subpopulation is even more significant because of its size. The team counted at least 50 individuals, including seven juveniles and five infants. The discovery of such a large and healthy additional group is a boost for conservation of the northern miqui and provides a strong foundation for the implementation of a long-term research programme at Caparaó National Park.

The project has also paved the way for additional primate research in the Park. In addition to helping the team with fieldwork related to the northern miqui project itself, students from the Carangola campus of Minas Gerais State University are also embarking on studies of their own that will help to focus more attention on the Park's wider primate community. Other threatened primates were also recorded during the survey in the Park, including the Endangered buffy-headed marmoset *Callithrix flaviceps*, the Near Threatened black-fronted titi *Callicebus nigrifrons* and black-horned capuchin *Sapajus nigratus*.

This year the team aims to expand its field research into other areas of the Park, and is planning to develop education and awareness activities that help engage local communities, tourists and policy makers in miqui conservation. By harnessing the potential of this charismatic monkey as a flagship species the team hopes to encourage the local community to take pride in the Park's unique biodiversity and play an active role in its protection.

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Life after COP21: what does the Paris Agreement mean for forests and biodiversity conservation?

In Paris, 2015 finished with the achievement of an historic agreement between 195 countries to tackle the threat—and reality—of climate change. The main objective of the so-called Paris Agreement is to keep global temperature rises below 2°C while at the same time making significant efforts to limit the rise to no more than 1.5°. The Agreement will formally enter into force after 55 countries, accounting for at least 55% of global emissions, submit their greenhouse gas emissions reduction plans to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Paris Agreement has a special significance for global forests and efforts to conserve biodiversity. By providing a framework to reward countries both for reductions in deforestation and expansion of sustainable forest management practices, the Paris Agreement finally recognizes the critical role that forests and biodiversity play in global efforts to reduce emissions—detail that was deliberately omitted from the Kyoto Protocol. This recognition will enable forests to play a central role in national strategies to tackle climate change. This momentum around the importance of forests and tackling drivers of deforestation has already led to an unprecedented level of international support to curb deforestation globally. For example, at the Paris conference Norway, Germany and the UK announced a combined commitment of USD 5 billion for efforts to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+).