

## **Black Howler Monkeys in El Salvador: A Result of the Pet Trade**

Author: Hernández, Karenina Morales

Source: Neotropical Primates, 13(2) : 37-38

Published By: Conservation International

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1896/1413-4705.13.2.37>

---

BioOne Complete ([complete.BioOne.org](https://complete.BioOne.org)) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at [www.bioone.org/terms-of-use](https://www.bioone.org/terms-of-use).

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

---

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.



**Figure 1.** Female black howler monkey in San Diego Forest, El Salvador, February 2005.



**Figure 2.** The two female black howler monkeys in San Diego Forest, El Salvador, February 2005. (Photos courtesy of CEPRODE.)

---



---

## BLACK HOWLER MONKEYS IN EL SALVADOR: A RESULT OF THE PET TRADE

The geographical distribution of the black howler monkey, *Alouatta pigra*, is restricted to the south of Mexico (in the state of Tabasco, the north of Chiapas, and the Yucatán peninsula), Guatemala (Petén), and Belize (Horwich and Johnson, 1986; Horwich and Lyon, 1990; Rowe, 1996; Estrada and Mandujano, 2003). The only monkey reported as native to El Salvador is the black-handed spider monkey, *Ateles geoffroyi*, which is found mainly in the forests of the Jiquilisco Bay in the Department of Usulután, in the southeast of the country (Morales Hernández, 2002).

The park guards of the San Diego Forest have been reporting the presence of two monkeys there since 2004.

The San Diego Forest (SDF) is a dry tropical forest in the department of Santa Ana (northern El Salvador) on the border with Guatemala. It covers 1,842 ha, with altitudes ranging from 440 to 780 m above sea level (CEPRODE-FIAES, 2000). SDF is outside the known range of spider monkeys in the country (Morales Hernández, 2002), and it was first thought that they were spider monkeys that had been released there. I visited this area three times to verify their presence.

The guards described these monkeys as “all black.” Drawings and pictures of different Mesoamerican monkeys were shown to them in order to correctly identify the animals, but they never recognised them as “spider monkeys” (*Ateles geoffroyi*). The monkeys were eventually found during my third visit to SDF, on 16 February 2005, and I was able to verify that they were in fact two female howler monkeys, *Alouatta pigra*.

According to the information I have to date, their presence is a result of the pet trade, but their origin remains unknown. The authorities received recommendations from expert primatologists who have studied howler monkeys in the wild that they would best be left in the San Diego Forest and monitored. Their relocation would be expensive, traumatic for the animals, and pointless. They are both females and so will not reproduce. They are surviving well there, eating leaves and fruits of vegetation such as *Brosimum allicastrum*, *B. terrabanum* and *Ficus* spp. (CEPRODE-FIAES, 2000). Howler monkeys are adaptable (Eisenberg, 1979), although both *A. palliata* and *A. pigra* are seriously threatened, because of forest destruction within their small geographic distributions (Crockett and Eisenberg, 1987). It is important for us to know how these animals got there, and why their presence has been ignored for so long. It is urgent that national and international authorities along the borders and within the countries reinforce their efforts to protect endangered primates such as *Alouatta pigra*, as well as other wildlife, from the pet trade.

*Acknowledgments:* My sincere thanks for the important contribution by Ana Cecilia López Peña from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), who accompanied me during all my visits to San Diego Forest. I am grateful also to MARN for providing logistical support for the visits, and to the guards in San Diego Forest and the conservation organisation CEPRODE; and also to Rodrigo Samayoa, of the Working Mammal Group of El Salvador. I also thank Robert H. Horwich, Kymberly Snarr, Shirley McGreal, Juan Carlos Serio Silva and Gabriel Ramos Fernández for their advice and support.

**Karenina Morales Hernández**, Mammalogy Working Group El Salvador, Community Conservation, Inc., Apartado Postal 326, Santa Ana, El Salvador. *Current address:* Department of Anthropology, School of Social Science and Law, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford OX3 0BP, UK. E-mail: <kareninamorales@yahoo.com>.

## References

- CEPRODE-FIAES. 2000. *Estudio de Flora y Fauna Vertebrada del Bosque San Diego y La Barra*. Metapán, Santa Ana, El Salvador.
- Crockett, C. M. and Eisenberg, J. F. 1987. Howlers: Variations in group size and demography. In: *Primate Societies*, B. B. Smuts, D. L. Cheney, R. M. Seyfarth, R. W. Wrangham and T. T. Struhsaker (eds.), pp.54–68. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Eisenberg, J. F. 1979. Habitat, economy, and society: Some correlations and hypotheses for the Neotropical primates. In: *Primate Ecology and Human Origins: Ecological Influences on Social Organization*, I. S. Bernstein and E. O. Smith (eds.), pp.215–262. Garland STPM Press, New York.
- Estrada, A. and Mandujano, S. 2003. Investigaciones con *Alouatta* y *Ateles* en México. *Neotrop. Primates* 11(3): 145–154.

- Horwich, R. H. and Johnson, E. D. 1986. Geographical distribution of the black howler (*Alouatta pigra*) in Central America. *Primates* 27(1): 53–62.
- Horwich, R. H. and Lyon, J. 1990. *A Belizean Rain Forest: The Community Baboon Sanctuary*. 3rd Edition. Orangutan Press, Gays Mills, Wisconsin.
- Morales Hernández, K. 2002. Wild populations of spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*) in El Salvador, Central America. *Neotrop. Primates* 10(3): 153–154.
- Rowe, N. 1996. *The Pictorial Guide to the Living Primates*. Pogonias Press, New York.