

## Chapter 8

### Non-Volant Mammals of the Konashen COCA, Southern Guyana

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#### SUMMARY

We present the results of a large non-volant mammal survey conducted during a Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) expedition at two sites in the Konashen Community Owned Conservation Area (COCA) of southern Guyana from October 4 - 27, 2006. The purpose of the survey was to assess and document the biological diversity of large mammals and use the results to guide the development of a conservation management plan for sustainable resource utilization by inhabitants of the area. To survey for the presence of large mammals we used three methodologies: (1) tracks, scats, sounds, and visual observations (including hand-held photographs), (2) interviews with local people, and (3) camera phototraps. We suspect the presence of 42 large mammal species and confirmed 21 in the region. According to the 2008 IUCN Red List the Brown-bearded saki monkey (*Chiropotes satanas*) and the Giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) are listed as Endangered, and the Giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*), Bush dog (*Speothos venaticus*) and Brazilian tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) are considered Vulnerable. Both study sites are utilized as hunting areas for two weeks per year by the local people, but were otherwise pristine, undisturbed tropical rain forest. Our evidence suggests that the sites we sampled contain the full complement of the large mammal species characteristic of the Guayana Shield. Because this region has a very low human population density (0.032 humans/km<sup>2</sup>) the forests of the Konashen COCA is likely to contain an intact faunal assemblage of large mammals.

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#### INTRODUCTION

To implement effective conservation strategies, information on specific local biological diversity is essential. Often such information is unknown, incomplete, or unavailable to policymakers. The large mammalian fauna of the Guayana Shield Region is well known and widely distributed and, because the human population density is low, few species are severely threatened. Though much of the region is unoccupied, some areas support small numbers of Amerindian communities. Residents of these communities are mostly subsistence hunters that clear out small areas for cultivation. The region of southern Guyana such as the Konashen Indigenous District that borders Brazil to the south is an example.

The Konashen Indigenous District (KID) is approximately 625,000 hectares and is legally owned by fewer than 200 Amerindian individuals, mainly of Wai-Wai ancestry, living in the single community of Masakenari (labeled as Konashen on typical maps of Guyana) along the Essequibo River, and just north of the confluence of the Essequibo and Kamoia rivers. Small areas near the village have been cleared for cultivation. During the wet season the nearby landing strip at Gunns (located south of the confluence of the Essequibo and Kassikaityu rivers) in the savanna is flooded, preventing access by air to the village. Masakenari consists of single family houses, a school house, and a community center built of wood on a hill overlooking the Essequibo River. During the wet season the flooded river can rise more than 6 m. The previous village – Akuthopono – approximately 6 km distant, was flooded in 2000, and forced the establishment of Masakenari.