

Monkey Matters in Madidi

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Greater Madidi-Tambopata Landscape, Bolivia and Peru

In Bolivia's Madidi National Park in 2002, I discovered a new species of monkey, *Callicebus aureipalatii*. The species was later named the Golden Palace, or Madidi, titi monkey through an online auction, the proceeds of which went to support this primate's endangered rainforest habitat. This discovery followed my team's rediscovery of two other titi monkey species in the region, last seen in 1938. In the years since, my work has expanded from designing and conducting field research to directing conservation activities in the Greater Madidi-Tambopata Landscape of Bolivia and Peru. In addition to supervising 15 students, I work with more than 10 local organizations to manage and monitor protected areas in this bi-national region, strengthen the administrative capacity of the indigenous population, and address issues related to the management of natural resources, including wild chocolate, timber, native bee honey, and handicraft materials.

I worked with three Bolivian primatologists—Jesús Martínez, Heidy López Strauss, and Lesly López—to design a poster to teach local communities about two of the newly discovered endemic species of titi monkeys. As a result of our research, the World Conservation Union has just declared these two monkeys, *Callicebus modestus* and *Callicebus olallae*, endangered. Generating local awareness, pride, and support for these monkeys is critical to their conservation in the

face of the road development and hydroelectric dam construction that destroy and fragment their habitat.

As equally important as instilling conservation concerns within local communities is generating interest and support among urban leaders and decision-makers at the government level. The online auction for naming the Madidi titi monkey garnered a lot of local press attention, and in doing so, helped reinforce the importance of the Madidi protected area among residents of La Paz, Bolivia's administrative capital. The La Paz state and the Bolivian national government now promote Madidi as a new "natural wonder of the world." In another project, I worked with USAID and colleagues from other non-profit organizations to create a major billboard exhibition—along a main road in La Paz—featuring the biodiversity and people of the Madidi region. For four months, weekly press releases will highlight the importance of the region. On my next field trip to the remote complex of pristine natural grassland and unexplored tropical forest of the Greater Madidi-Tambopata Landscape, I will be on the lookout for the Madidi titi monkey!

The recently discovered Golden Palace, or Madidi, titi monkey lives in the tropical rainforests of Bolivia's Madidi National Park.



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