

Neotropical Primate Conservation Through Captive Breeding and Reintroduction Programs

Jason McKenney

Center for environmental Studies
Brown University

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Abstract

The environmental science program at Brown is still in a formative stage. This thesis represents the first attempt to integrate environmental issues and primary experimental research in an independent study format.

The thesis is composed of three chapters which address neotropical primate conservation issues in an increasingly specified manner. The first chapter is a review of the threats to these species, including habitat destruction and direct human activity. This chapter describes past methods of endangered species preservation and analyzes their effectiveness. It concludes in support of captive breeding and rerelease programs for these animals.

The second chapter is an overview of a large scale ongoing conservation program for a single species, the golden lion tamarin. This chapter describes the conservation process in detail and particularly focuses on the most successful elements of this international species preservation project. This program demonstrates clearly how cooperative efforts between scientists, foreign governments and local people result in effective species conservation. This chapter concludes by stressing the importance of endangered species research as a motivational force in the formation of preservation programs. Scientific interest and knowledge promotes public interest and aids in the initiation of conservation projects. This is used as a spring board into my own primary research.

The third chapter is a formal experimental write-up of the behavioral studies performed at Roger Williams Park Zoo. Food sharing behavior was observed among white-faced sakis (*Pithecia pithecia*) over a period of several months. Data collection focused on instances of food sharing among related individuals and breeding pairs. Specific behaviors were associated with instances of food sharing. Trends in food sharing reflected the social dynamics of these family groups. Father-offspring sharing was observed more frequently than mother-offspring. Food sharing was observed between siblings within a family but not between siblings housed alone. Patterns of food sharing between mated pairs suggest that sharing among this species aids in reinforcing a pair bond.