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MANAGING MONKEYS AND MANGOS

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The Refugio de Vida Silvestre Curú, Costa Rica, is an example of a one family's effort at sustainable development. The refuge and hacienda encompasses 1500 hectares. Utilizing only the lowlands for human economic pursuits, 1/3 of the land has been used to produce cattle and mangos. The remaining uplands have been set aside for use by wildlife. These areas had been previously logged and are currently in various stages of regrowth. Living fences (live trees joined by barbed wire), divide the lowlands into human-use areas. The fences, intentionally planted with food-bearing plants, act as corridors connecting forest habitats, encouraging movement by wildlife throughout the refuge. "Mini-plantations," not used by the family, have been planted to draw animals from the cash crops and to encourage lowland use by animals where they can easily be seen by ecotourists. There are 14 known white-faced capuchin troops at Curú, ranging from 7-37 individuals, with an average of 17.85 individuals per troop. Census data from 1991-1996 estimate there are 250-295 capuchin monkeys at Curú, giving them a population density of between 16.68-20 monkeys per square kilometer. Eliminating cattle pastures, which are not utilized by the monkeys, the population density increases to 20.02-24.04 monkeys per square kilometer. These numbers are the minimum population density, suggesting that this reserve is home to one of the largest population of white-faced capuchin monkeys in Central America and demonstrating that conservation and economic pursuits are not mutually exclusive.

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