

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE OF THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED ECUADORIAN WHITE-FRONTED CAPUCHIN (*CEBUS ALBIFRONS AEQUATORIALIS*) IN WESTERN ECUADOR

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Cebus albifrons aequatorialis is a critically endangered primate found only in western Ecuador and extreme northern Peru. These forests are among the world's most severely threatened ecosystems, with only about 5% of the original forest remaining. We report the results of surveys for *C.a.aequatorialis* in 12 protected areas in western Ecuador between 2002 and 2005. The reserves, which range in size from 138 to 243,638 ha, were selected because either (1) informal reports had suggested the presence of *C.a.aequatorialis*, or (2) they were near to other sites known to harbor *C.a.aequatorialis*. We used ground surveys in combination with local interviews to assess presence/absence at each site. In addition, we carried out thorough censuses of four of these reserves over 15 total months. Population densities based on absolute counts at these sites ranged from 1.6-22 individuals/km² (median=2.4). Jauneche, the 138 ha reserve with 22 individuals/km², was a clear outlier. Discarding this point and combining these data with other published results, we estimate that *C.a.aequatorialis* occurs at a mean density of 2.76 individuals/km² over its geographic range. Population densities were not significantly correlated with forest fragment size (Pearson's $r = -0.409$, $p > .05$). Using the GLC2000 land cover database in a GIS, we calculate that there are about 7422 km² of relatively undisturbed forest and 7058 km² of degraded forest that could possibly support *C.a.aequatorialis* in western Ecuador, although it appears to have been extirpated from much of this habitat. Urgent conservation action is needed for its continued survival.

Keywords: conservation, census, platyrrhine, biogeography