

DEMOGRAPHY, DIET AND RANGE SIZE IN A POPULATION OF BLACK-HANDED SPIDER MONKEYS (*ATELES GEOFFROYI YUCATANENSIS*) FROM A NEW STUDY SITE IN BELIZE

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Studies of wild *Ateles geoffroyi yucatanensis* have occurred, or are ongoing in Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica, but no sites have been established in Belize. Across study sites, group composition, average sub-group size, diet and ranging patterns vary as a function of ecological and demographic variables particular to respective locations. Here we describe the age and sex compositions, average sub-group sizes, range sizes, activity budgets and diets of two recently habituated groups of spider monkeys at Runaway Creek Nature Preserve in Belize. Habituation and data collection began in June 2007 using a combination of all occurrences recording and group scans. Two separate and adjacent monkey groups were identified – Groups 1 and 2 – numbering 33 and 31 individuals respectively. Range sizes for both groups were determined using a minimum convex polygon of GPS location points. Group 1 ranged over an area of 114.43 ha (N=678) and Group 2 over 193.67 ha (N=181). Average sub-group size for all individuals of all age/sex classes in Group 1 group was 5.16 individuals, with a mode of 2 (N=415). In Group 2, average sub-group size was 4.48 individuals, with a mode of 3 (N=106). Between June 2007 and July 2009 the spider monkeys from both groups were observed feeding from 70 different plant species. These and future data emanating from this new study site represent an important addition to a small but growing number of studies that will further our understanding of within-species variability in response to differing socio-ecological variables across the range of *Ateles*.

Keywords: spider monkeys; Belize; demography; diet