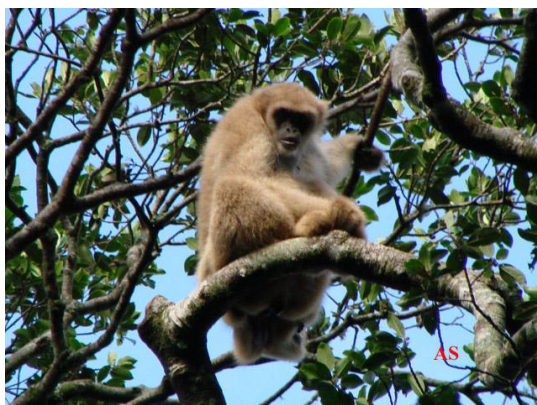


Meetings with the muriquis *Brachyteles arachnoides* (E. Geoffroy, 1806) in São Francisco Xavier, Serra da Mantiqueira, São Paulo, Brazil.

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The Muriqui, or woolly spider monkey, genus *Brachyteles* is the largest primate in the Americas, lives restricted to the Atlantic forest of Brazil and is among the most endangered monkeys in the world, having few known populations. This generous is divided into two species, the North spider monkey (*B. hypoxanthus*) and South spider monkey (*B. arachnoides*). Both are very similar, but the South has a black face with more compact. According whit literature consulted (see below), the distribution known in the scientific community for the muriquis is:

1 - The Northern muriquis (*B. hypoxanthus*): a) the state of Minas Gerais: Fazenda Montes Claros Caratinga in Sossego Forest and Farm Creek sand, b) in Espírito Santo State in Caparaó National Park.

2 - The Southern muriquis (*B. arachnoides*): a) Rio de Janeiro state in Itatiaia National Park, Organ Mountains National Park Area and Bocaina Cairuçu Environmental Protection (APA), b) in Paraná state: the Environmental Protection Area Guaraqueçaba (APA), c) in São Paulo State are the largest populations of this species, mainly in the Serra do Mar State Park in the areas of nucleus Cunha, Curucutu, Mongaguá, Pedro de Toledo and São Sebastião, in the Xintoé Ecological Station, Carlos Botelho, Intervales State Parks, Alto Ribeira State Tourism Park (PETAR) in Jacupiranga and Jurupará State Parks and Juréia-Itatins Ecological Station. In the Mountain range, beyond the Itatiaia National Park, are found in the San Francisco Xavier and Monte Verde. There is also a small population at Fazenda Barreiro Rico, Anhembi, São Paulo state, where he record a group of four individuals on 14/7/2005, and at the Caetets Experimental Station.

Since 2002 we have been visited São Francisco Xavier, district of São José dos Campos county, Sao Paulo state, in the mountain range, where we have seen groups of southern muriquis (*Brachyteles archnoides*), and take many movies and photos, including recordings of their rich vocalization. In São Francisco Xavier region we estimate there are about 300 spider monkeys, divided into eight to nine groups. Also, we have information of some other groups of wooly spider monkeys in neighboring counties, that we will plan to visit soon.



So far, we had eight trips to this region (see below), with several forest excursions, where we saw and followed mainly one group about 60 muriquis (1) that inhabits the forests of Monte Verde Farm (22 ° 54'04 .05 "S / 45 ° 59'26 .95" O). This group often divided into sub-groups, usually from 15 to 35 individuals.

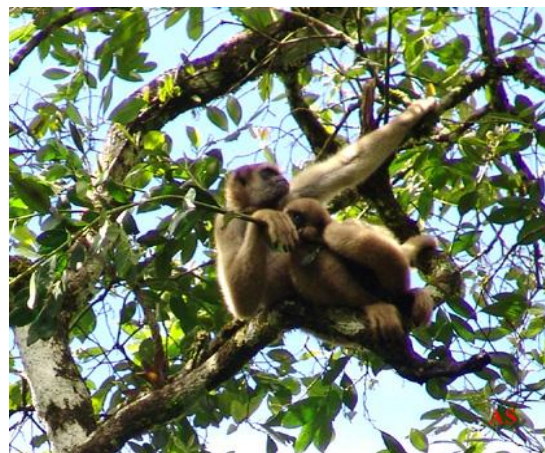
These groups were composed normally by males and females and, fortunately, babies, which shows that still find the environment to breed. In 03/10/2006, we saw and record a couple copulating for 20 minutes in a top of high tree, scene incredibly rare and perhaps never seen before and registered.

We also made observations of the group about 30 individuals who inhabit the forest valley of Mandala Farm neighbour of Monte Verde Farm. It is important to mention that it is very difficult to count the number of individuals groups of primates, because they are almost always in motion, and in the case of spider monkeys often the group is divided into small groups of four to six, which are more than 50 a bunch of other meters, which further complicates the counting, because it is difficult to keep under constant observation and simultaneously the various groups. We also noticed some sometimes splits the group into smaller groups of only females and other males only. On border between the two farms have a tree plantations (*Pinus* and *Eucalyptus*) and farther to the hill forest becomes low nebular forest, which form is unsuitable for the locomotion of the wolly spider monkeys, which require higher and forests natural, so we conclude that the two groups do not communicate, they are separated groups. Reinforces this conclusion that the group of Mandala farm be unsociable, unlike the wolly spider monkeys of the group in Monte Verde farm area are very sociable, perhaps because they are in the area of the trail between São Francisco Xavier to Monte Verde county in Minas Gerais state, used by tourists which provides many encounters with humans. Our observations were made many times on this trail or nearby.

We noted that these animals are yellow-gold, when under the light of sun, and very gracious, not to mention the surprising agility with which move in the trees, despite the size. We also found some organization in these groups, because many times when humans or domestic animals like dogs approaching, big males come first as if to "make sure what's happening and when there is some danger they are usually those who give the alarm. We noted that females are very careful with their sons and we never saw "angry" with them. Instead, they were concerned when patients with the playful pups.

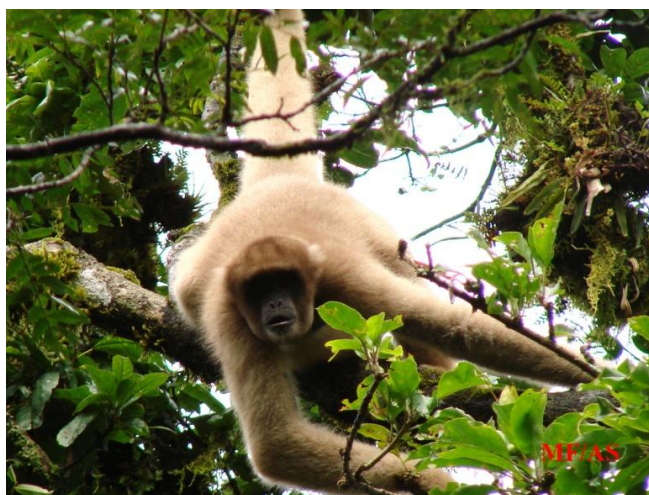
Another curiosity is that the spider monkeys tend to "take a break for a nap" at noon about an hour. The entire group stay quiet, the animals 'resting' lying in thick trunks in the trees (pictured below), many of them far apart of others, but always communicate vocally, from time to time, as if to ensure that all are still there. Once we saw and filmed three females "resting together whit a babies, and wake up together and then slowly begin to move, gathering the group.

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A curious fact is that too often "we was take a nap near and in the company of these animals about twelve meters of us, observing them from time to time. But there was one or two animals always "watching us" from time to time as "a sentinels of the group".

In 03/15/2007, we saw spider monkeys drinking water in large bromeliads, moreover, several in a huge bromeliad, avoiding the danger of going down near the ground. Another incredible scene was in 17/03/2007, when we were watching a group of fifteen individuals, two of them "were full of us" and started making threat gestures and vocalizations, the body leaning forward and "barking" appearing to say us "go away" (photo below).



In our archives we have more than 8 hours of digital edited videos of these rare and beautiful animals, and many photos of these unforgettable encounters. Many of these gatherings of more than two hours of pure contemplation and pleasure of being there in direct contact with a beautiful animal, extremely rare and endangered.

However, all these pleasant gatherings may will be finish if do not done an effective program of protection in the region, creating protectes reserves of the remaining forests and to develop a process of environmental education for landowners, the local population and the surrounding area, to know more about this rare and beautiful species and start to evaluate it as a common good, and even its economic value as well to be exploited for tourist, of course, with strict rules of observations. Watching tourism can become one of the most promising economic branches, where there are natural forests and endangered animals, such as the wolly spider monkeys.

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Principals meetings:

- 1- Day 16 May 2002 – Fazenda (farm) Mandala. Group of 14 murikis
- 2- Day 02 Nov. 2002 – Fazenda Mandala Group of 16 muriquis.
- 3- Day 19 June 2003 – Fazenda Monte Verde. Group of 19 muriquis.
- 4- Day 08 April 2005 – Fazenda Monte Verde. Group about 18 muriquis.
- 5- Days: 10 and 11 May 2006 – Fazenda Monte Verde. Day 10, group around of 20 muriquis. Day 11 group around of 30 individuals.
- 6- Days: 15 until 17 May 2007. Fazenda Monte Verde. Day 15 group around 30 muriquis. Days 16 and 17 group of 6 muriquis.
- 7- Days 8 and 9 May 2008. Fazenda Monte Verde. Group more of 36 muriquis (we losted the account from the 36th, there were a few more). Day 9 group of 20 muriquis.
- 8- Days: 4 until 6 November 2010. Fazenda Monte Verde. Day 4 group of 6 males and day 5 group of 7 females with 4 sons, being one newly born (recém nascido).

Observations:

☛(1) in spite of observing large groups with 30 to 35 individuals, we conclude that the entire group of Monte Verde farm is about 60 individuals, because sometimes a flock of 30 to 20 individuals went to a distant valley, where, in Early next day, we saw the other part of the group of about 30 to 35 individuals. Watching this group came to hear the vocalizations of the other group simultaneously realizing clearly that the group was divided into two approximately thirty individuals each.

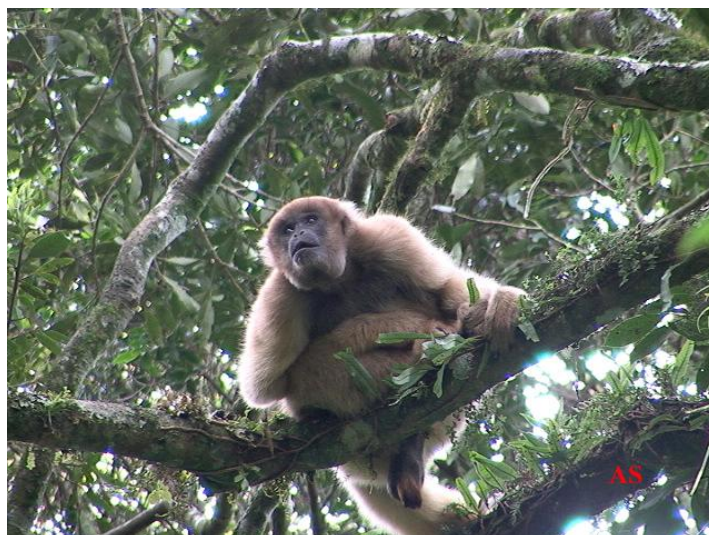
(2) in almost all meetings were females with newly hatched chicks

Acknowledgments

We tank the proper of the farms cited and Manoel França, our friend in our field observations.

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Below see more five pictures



Waiting muriquis



Antonio Silveira and Manoel França