

SPATIAL USE AND ROUTE SELECTION OF A TRANSLOCATED HOWLER MONKEY GROUP: CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS.

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Though several studies have analyzed spatial use by howler monkeys, there is very little information on how translocated howlers initiate exploration and select routes within novel sites. Tree use has also been examined, but to our knowledge no studies have spatially and temporally described the process by which trees are selected and ultimately used for route establishment. The research presented provides information on how a group of translocated howlers in Los Tuxtlas, Mexico, initially establish their home range and use specific areas during the first months after their release. The release site consisted of an actively managed agroforest system. Within this area, all trees with ≥ 20 DBH were georeferenced and their species composition and structure were determined, along with individual DBH, height, and canopy width. Movements and routes of howlers were monitored during eight months, recording tree selection and use. Spatial and statistical analyses were applied to determine route patterns and tree selection. Our results show that, several months after release, routes selected by howlers tended to converge towards one dominant route that comprised the use of a group of key trees. This information may provide insight on strategies used by howlers for occupying novel sites as well as further evidence on how howlers cope with changing scenarios, which are essential elements that must be considered in order to develop successful translocation projects.

Keywords: route use, translocation, howler, conservation