

Saving golden-mantled howler monkeys

by Jane Sloan, Director, Yakusinchí Reserve



Jane Sloan

Young Ecuadorian golden-mantled howler monkey awaiting release into the wild.

Yakusinchí Reserve is a project to preserve and increase a fragment of extraordinary sub-tropical cloud forest in the foothills of the central western Andes of Ecuador.

This mountainous, hilly and difficult land, purchased but not considered owned – only loaned for life – by husband and wife conservation team, Briton Jane Sloan and Ecuadorian Daniel Recalde, is exuberantly tropical and mystical. Extreme rainfalls nurture the exotic plant life and produce numerous waterfalls and streams rushing over rocks to feed the bigger rivers down on the plains that stretch to the Pacific Ocean.

In the last six years, Jane and Daniel have purchased six tracts of adjoining land, now amounting to some 250 acres, which makes for a small but respectably-sized wildlife reserve that already is home to numerous wild inhabitants ranging from monkeys,

puma, ocelots and peccaries to armadillos, toucans, parrots and snakes and many more species. The last piece of high mountain land was recently purchased with the help of Rainforest Concern in an urgent bid to save the lives of an important group of Ecuadorian golden-mantled howler monkeys that lives there. The then owner of the land was threatening to clear the whole area of forest, making these large and glamorous monkeys homeless and facing certain death due to lack of food. Howler monkeys feed on wild fruits, flowers and the leaf shoots of particular trees and live in the very highest trees in the canopy, following the ripening fruits and flower buds. Thanks to the generous help of Rainforest Concern, Yakusinchí Reserve was able to buy the land and to save the lives of these monkeys, keeping one very important species from certain extinction in the Yakusinchí area.

In the future, Yakusinchí hopes to purchase more land to create an ecological corridor to restore the wildlife's ability to move as and when it needs, to enable species once more to reproduce and repopulate without compromising available food and habitat space.

Yakusinchí Wild

Within Yakusinchí Reserve is another project: YakusinchíWild – a rescue and rehabilitation centre for cloud forest wildlife in distress. This is a project in its infancy but developing fast. The centre is being built within the forest setting at Yakusinchí Reserve, with the sights, sounds and smells that these animals know best – meaning that they will be several steps ahead in their recovery as soon as they arrive at Yakusinchí. The clinic and small hospital are built but not yet equipped. The quarantine is being built right now, with separate areas for mammals, birds and reptiles. Next will be a rehabilitation enclosure for two-toed and three-toed sloths, and a nursery and rehabilitation enclosures for howler monkeys. In the very near future there will be large enclosures in the Yakusinchí forest for all cloud forest species, from the spectacled bear and capuchin monkey to ocelots, pumas and iguanas down to the neediest little bird or reptile.

YakusinchíWild intends to be the flagship rescue and rehabilitation centre in Ecuador, teaching the best ways of caring for wildlife that end up in captivity, for whatever reason, and the incredibly complex programmes needed to ensure safe release back into the forest.

Yakusinchí Reserve and YakusinchíWild are happy to welcome adventurous visitors and volunteers for an experience that is certainly different! Please see our website at www.yakusinchí.com