



Primatologists at the Front Line: Tackling Wildlife Trafficking on the Colombian–Peruvian Amazon Border: the case of the Nancy Ma’s night monkeys

Angela MALDONADO (amaldonado@entropika.org)

Fundación Entropika, Leticia, Amazonas, Colombia

The Nancy Ma’s night monkey (*Aotus nancymaae*) has been one of the most heavily exploited Neotropical primates in the Brazil–Colombia–Peru tri-border region, where decades of biomedical extraction, illegal trafficking, postexperimental releases, and accelerating deforestation have placed wild populations under serious threat. In response, Fundación Entropika, a grassroots organisation based in Leticia, Colombia, has implemented a long-term, multidisciplinary conservation strategy that has been refined over almost two decades.

Our approach combined participatory research with targeted legal and policy interventions. We conducted the first population assessments for the region, evaluated genetic diversity across Amazonian River barriers to understand population structure, and carried out pathogen surveillance in wild groups to identify emerging health risks. In parallel, we pursued legal action against a biomedical facility and the environmental authorities responsible for issuing trapping permits, achieving a landmark ruling that strengthened wildlife protection in Colombia.

Despite persistent intimidation from wildlife traffickers, our work generated the scientific evidence required to upgrade the national IUCN conservation status of *A. nancymaae* from “Least Concern” to “Endangered”. These findings also supported its inclusion in Colombia’s 2024 list of threatened species, effectively prohibiting any further use of this species in biomedical research.

This long-term experience demonstrates that effective primate conservation depends on sustained, interdisciplinary collaboration grounded in science, legal advocacy, and community engagement. Our results further underline the urgent need for binational cooperation in data sharing, population health monitoring, and enforcement of emerging conservation policies to safeguard one of the most threatened owl monkey species in the Amazon.