

GIANT ANTEATER MYRMECOPHAGA TRIDACTYLA (MAMMALIA: XENARTHRA) IN THE IGUAÇU NATIONAL PARK REGION

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RESUMO

The giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla* Linnaeus, 1758) is the largest representative of the order Pilosa and family Myrmecophagidae, being able to measure up to two meters in length and weigh around 40 kg. This species has distribution in most of South America and in some Central American countries, but in the last 10 years its populations have decreased by almost 30%, due to loss of habitat caused by human actions through fires and deforestation, also due to high rates of road kill of the species on the highways, most of which are close to Conservation Units. All these actions led the species to enter the category of Vulnerable according to criteria adopted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in Brazil it is considered VU and in Paraná it is Critically Endangered. Although it is found both in open environments and in forests, until recently the records in forest habitats were scarce, which changed with the expansion of the use of sampling with camera traps. In this work we report records of giant anteaters in the western region of Paraná, within the Atlantic Forest Biome, in an ecotone area between the Semideciduous Seasonal Forest and the Mixed Ombrophilous Forest. The research used sampling with camera traps in 20 forest remnants, including the Iguazu National Park (PNI). The sampled remnants ranged from 4.6 to 181 thousand hectares (PNI), with 400 capture stations and a total effort exceeding 10000 cameras day. The giant anteater was only registered at five capture stations, all within the PNI. In fact, among large mammals (over 20 kg), the giant anteater was the only species restricted to the PNI, while others, including the jaguar (*Panthera onca*), the South American tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) and the white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari*), were registered in at least one more remnant. The fragmentation and forest loss that occurred since the 1950s and even the natural rarity may be the explanation for the species being absent in the remaining remnants. The low recolonization of the fragments may also be a factor, which may be linked to the low use of the matrix, although research with telemetry is necessary. Much of the matrix is formed by monocultures of grains and pastures, environments probably with few resources, since in the region the formation of termite mounds is uncommon and very fought on pastures. Persecution can also be a responsible factor, although there are no data on conflicts, and the species is little known by the local population. About road kill, a common threat in other regions where the species occurs, there are no cases recorded in projects developed on BR-277, BR-163 and BR-469 highways,

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main roads close to the PNI, which reinforces the low use of the matrix. In this context, research that seeks more information on eating habits, use of space and understanding the threats that affect the species is necessary, in order to both understand the ecology of the giant anteater in a forest environment and to indicate actions for conservation.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Anteater, Atlantic forest, Conservation, Conservation unit, Distribution.

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