

CASE REPORT: CONSUMPTION OF EMBAÚBA LEAVES AND FRUITS (CECROPIA PACHYSTACHYA) BY WILD MANED SLOTH (BRADYPUS TORQUATUS) FROM RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

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RESUMO

The maned sloth (*Bradypus torquatus*) is an endangered species endemic to the Atlantic rainforest, Brazil. Although studies have advanced our knowledge about the behavior and ecology of this species, little is known about its feeding ecology. Knowing the animals' diet and eating habits can contribute to the success of conservation strategies. In addition, keeping animals in captivity for their well-being, temporarily or permanently, can also add to the conservation of species, by allowing the access of relevant information, otherwise difficult to obtain. Studies on maned sloth diet conducted in Bahia and Espírito Santo, northern distribution of the species, have identified more than 30 species of plants that make up their diet. Nevertheless there is no study for southern localities, i.e., in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The maned sloth diet consists mainly of leaves, with a single report of a maned sloth eating fruits of *Cecropia hololeuca*, in the state of Espírito Santo. During our research activities, we found an injured *B. torquatus* female with its infant. Both were kept in treatment during a month, having both been released together after that period. We offered both mature and young leaves, besides fruits of *Cecropia pachystachya* to these animals. The adult animal accepted all food items since day one. The juvenile ate leaves using the thoracic limbs while grabbing the mother with the pelvic limbs. Although it is not an observation made in a natural environment, the prompt acceptance of the offered food items supports *C. pachystachya* might comprise the usual diet for these individuals, both leaves and fruits. It is known that the maned sloth feeds on other species of *Cecropia*, and individual animals have a restricted diet. Thus, this is the first report of the consumption of *C. pachystachya* by *Bradypus torquatus*. We believe that this observation will contribute to the knowledge about the species feeding habits. We also emphasize that this is even more relevant if we consider that keeping sloths of the genus *Bradypus* in captivity is not an easy task. However, the genus *Cecropia* is not among the five most consumed genera by *B. torquatus*, at least at Espírito Santo, different from what is known for *B. variegatus*, and should not be the only genus offered in captivity. In addition, this report shows the relevance to carry out more studies and deepen the knowledge about this species in the state of Rio de Janeiro, where food habits might differ from the rest of the species distribution.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: diet, fruit, maned sloth

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