

**BEHAVIORAL EFFECTS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY ON WILD WHITE-FACED CAPUCHINS
(*CEBUS CAPUCINUS*) AT CURÚ WILDLIFE REFUGE AND
HACIENDA IN PUNTARENAS, COSTA RICA**

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For decades, Costa Rica has provided an ideal setting for primatological studies. At a basic level, all primatological studies involve primate-human interaction in the form of habituation. Habituation is an important tool that primatologists utilize to gain insight into social hierarchy, advanced social learning, and rare behaviors of primates. However, the subject of habituation raises an ethical dilemma—what are the immediate costs to the subject during the habituation process and into the future? Unfortunately, very little research has been done on New World primate populations regarding this issue. White-faced capuchins (*Cebus capucinus*) in Curú Wildlife Refuge and Hacienda (CWR), located in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, were observed using instantaneous focal animal and group scan sampling for a period of 8 weeks in March and April 2012. One group of monkeys (approximately 2 to 5 troops) was habituated and another (also comprised of 2 to 5 troops) was not. The habituated group showed significantly less fear of humans and often visited the center of human activity in the refuge to feed on fruit provided by the owner of CWR. The unhabituated group exhibited significantly more fear of humans and spent significantly less time eating and foraging. While the habituated monkeys at CWR are not overhabituated, they could become that way. Overhabituation is an important problem that has affected and will continue to affect white-faced capuchin populations in Costa Rica. It is critical that the short- and long-term consequences of habituation be studied more carefully. It is also critical to deal with white-faced capuchin populations that are already overhabituated. The objectives of my study were to: a) determine differences in activity budgets of specific white-faced monkey troops based on exposure level to humans, b) assess long-term negative implications for health and safety of white-faced monkeys from altered activity budgets as a result of habituation, and c) assess “unnatural” threats to white-faced monkeys from altered behavior.