

## Guest Editors' Introduction

The 1980s may well be remembered as the Decade of the Platyrrhine. Knowledge of the Neotropical primates is developing vigorously on all fronts, attracting new, young investigators as well as more established scientists. No longer merely a "natural laboratory" for testing theories of ape and human evolution, the platyrrhines are now being investigated on their own merits. The 1990s may thus prove to be even more exciting, for many of the new facts and interpretations coming out of the New World indicate that some basic theories of anthropoid evolution will have to be revised.

This special issue of the *Journal of Human Evolution* contains a series of papers on the ecology, behavior and evolution of modern New World monkeys. A later issue will deal with the platyrrhine fossil record.

The trend to apply new techniques and pluralistic approaches, combining field and laboratory studies and captive simulations of natural conditions, is evident in Snowden's discussion of long call vocalisations in callitrichines. He illustrates some remarkable similarities shared with human speech. Likewise, new tools that redress our nearly night-blind haplorhine visual system made it possible for Wright to make the first systematic observations of *Aotus* in the wild. She describes what nocturnality means to a platyrrhine and compares this night-living New World monkey with nocturnal primates of other adaptive radiations. Asking very different questions but also concentrating on the behavioral ecology of a single, poorly known species. Boinski extensively documents the positional behavior and substrate preferences of *Saimiri oerstedii*. Boinski argues that factors such as predation, reproductive and mating strategies explain differences in adult foraging patterns that might otherwise be regarded as the results of selection for niche segregation in the moderately dimorphic (20–25%, but 30–50% in weight during the breeding season) Central American squirrel monkey. Rylands' work on two sympatric Brazilian callitrichines, *Callithrix kuhli* and *Leontopithecus chrysomelas*, presents the first published account on either of these imperiled forms and the most detailed study on any of the species of *Leontopithecus*. He brings new focus to the idea that callitrichine diets and foraging systems are heterogeneous. Ayres' long term study of *Cacajao* and *Chiropotes* uncovers how feeding strategies and social organisation in two of the order's few obligate seed predators are intertwined. He discovers that the most terrestrial of the New World monkeys lives in seasonally inundated Amazonian forests rather than in the savannah-like habitats that are plentiful in South America. Rosenberger and Strier build on another prominent theme of this decade's work, phylogeny reconstruction. Focusing on the newly studied, rare *Brachyteles arachnoides* and its adaptive similarities and differences relative to *Alouatta*, they attempt to forge links among morphology, behavior and ecology to develop a hypothesis of the adaptive radiation of the atelines.

The lead article in this series is devoted to a different topic altogether, one that during the 1980s unified all of primatology, especially Neotropical primatology: conservation. As Mittermeier, Kinzey and Mast point out in their review of the current status of the Neotropical conservation effort, political reform, educational programs and scientific research are the only weapons we can use to reverse the inevitable onslaught. Ecological and behavioral research will continue to increase the chances of survival for the platyrrhines and their habitats. Therefore, furthering the partnerships that already exist within the primatology community should rank high on our agendas as we approach the last decade of this century.

With that in mind, we dedicate this issue to Dr Ademar Coimbra-Filho, founder and director of the Centro de Primatologia do Rio de Janeiro. Coimbra personifies the scientist-conservationist. He has devoted half his life to the well-being and understanding of New World monkeys. With tremendous foresight, he directed the attention of conservationists and researchers alike to the largest primate-bearing country in the world, and, with Russ Mittermeier, began *the* model conservation program that is now spreading over the globe.

For their encouragement and supervision regarding the publication of these papers, we are greatly indebted to *JHE* editors Eric Delson, Peter Andrews and William Jungers. We also thank the many who reviewed manuscripts under pressing deadlines and substantively improved their quality with generous suggestions. Lastly, we thank Alies Muskin for generously giving us her time when it was most needed.

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