

UNRAVELING THE SECRETS OF THE SHORT-EARED DOG (ATELOCYNUS MICROTIS), AN AMAZONIAN ENDEMIC

THE SHORT-EARED DOG IS AN ELUSIVE, MEDIUM-SIZED CANID LARGELY RESTRICTED TO UNDISTURBED LOWLAND AMAZON FORESTS. VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN OF ITS BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY.

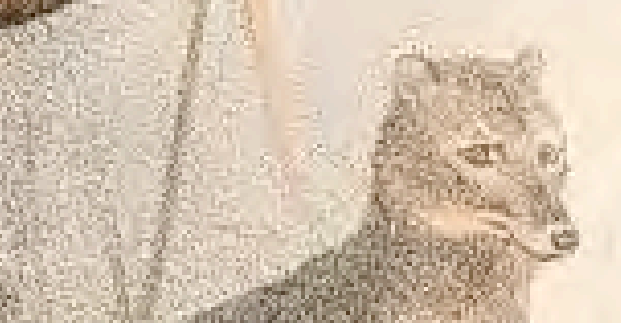
SO RARE THAT UNTIL 2000 NO FIELD STUDY HAD EVER BEEN ATTEMPTED. SO RARE THAT MANY OF THE AMAZON'S MOST EXPERIENCED FIELD BIOLOGISTS HAVE NEVER SEEN US. SO RARE THAT THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS IN ZOOS AROUND THE WORLD TODAY IS ZERO.

HOW RARE ARE WE?

LEITE PITMAN, R.; NUNNONCA, E.; CRUZ, D.; SWARNER, M.; KLORFINE, S.; BUTRON, O.; SILLERO-ZUBIRI, C.; MACDONALD, D. W.; WILLIAMS, R.



MORE INFO: [HTTP://WEB.MAC.COM/RENATA_LEITE/ATELOCYNUS_MICROTIS](http://web.mac.com/renata_leite/atelocynus_microtis)



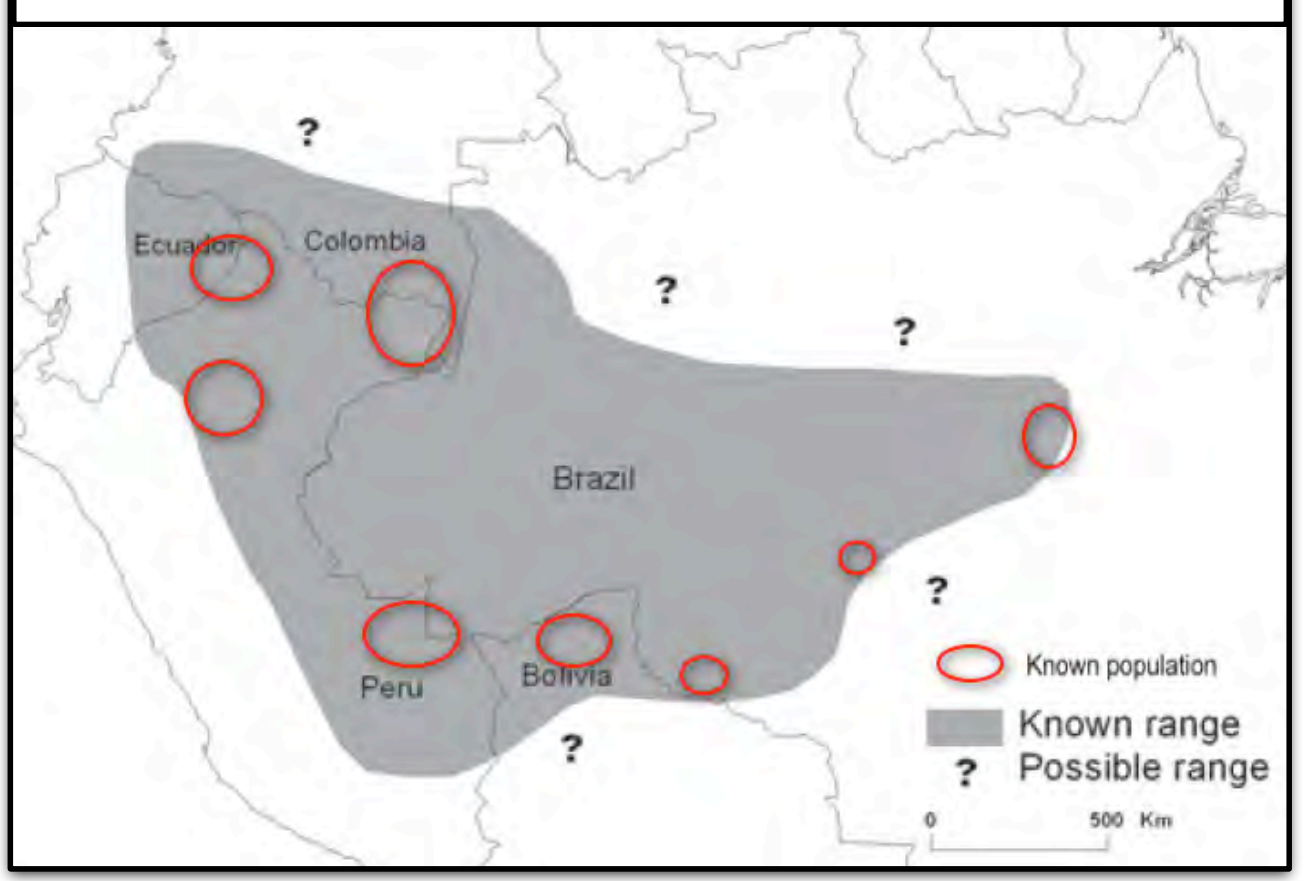
IN 2000, A TEAM OF ESPECIALLY STUBBORN RESEARCHERS HEADED TO THE AMAZON TO STUDY THE SPECIES.

THEY FOUND ITS DISTRIBUTION IN THE BASIN PATCHIER AND MORE RESTRICTED THAN PREVIOUSLY BELIEVED...



...INCLUDING THIS ~6 MO-OLD PUPPY (LACY), TRACKED FOR 2 MONTHS...

LIKE OTHER WILD CANID MOTHERS, MAMMAY SOON BEQUEATHED THEIR SHARED TERRITORY, FULL OF FOOD, TO HER DAUGHTER.



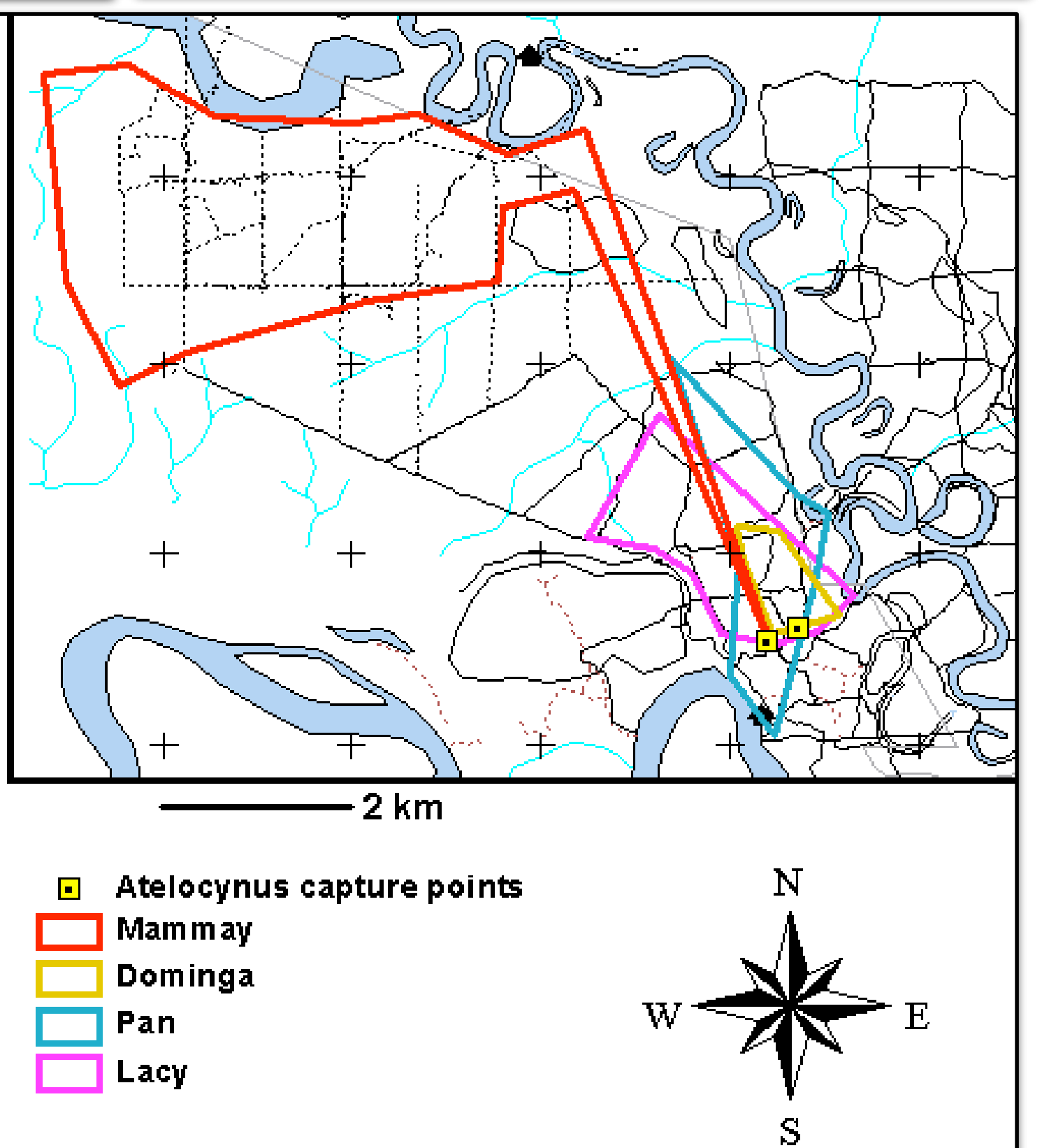
...AND RECORDED NEWBORNS AROUND OCTOBER IN SEVERAL LOCALITIES IN PERU. THEY RADIO-TRACKED FOUR DOGS AT LOS AMIGOS, PERU...



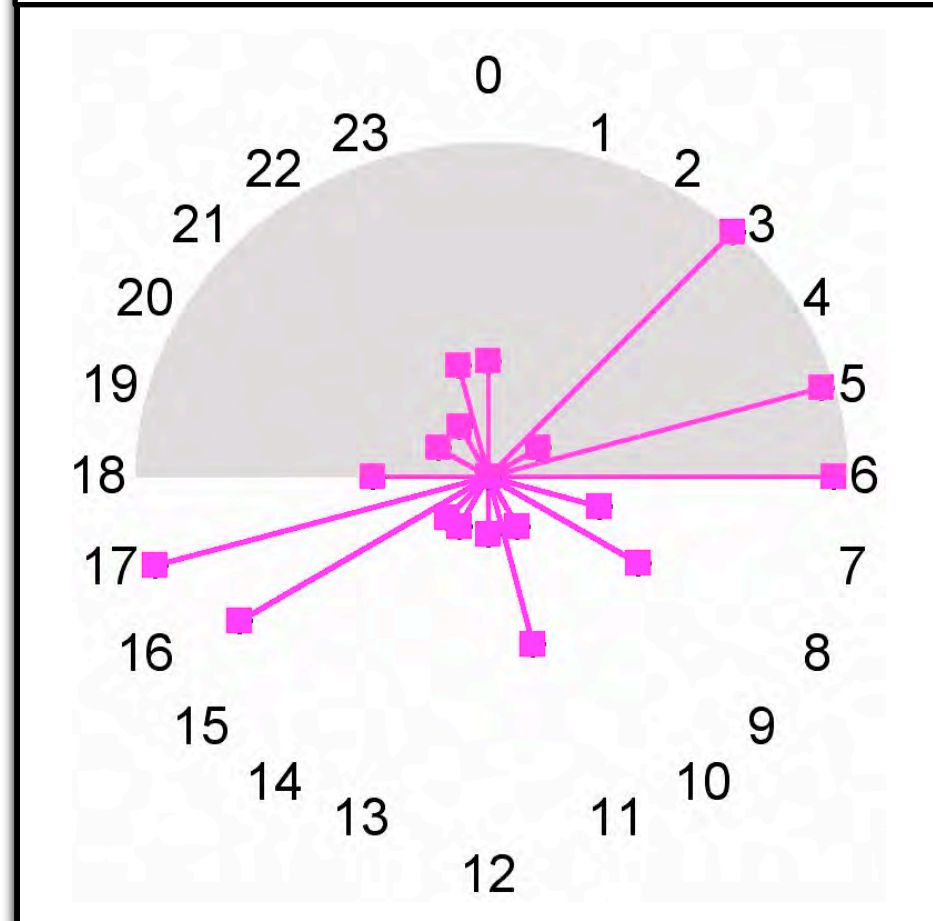
...AND HER MOTHER (MAMMAY), FOLLOWED FOR A YEAR.



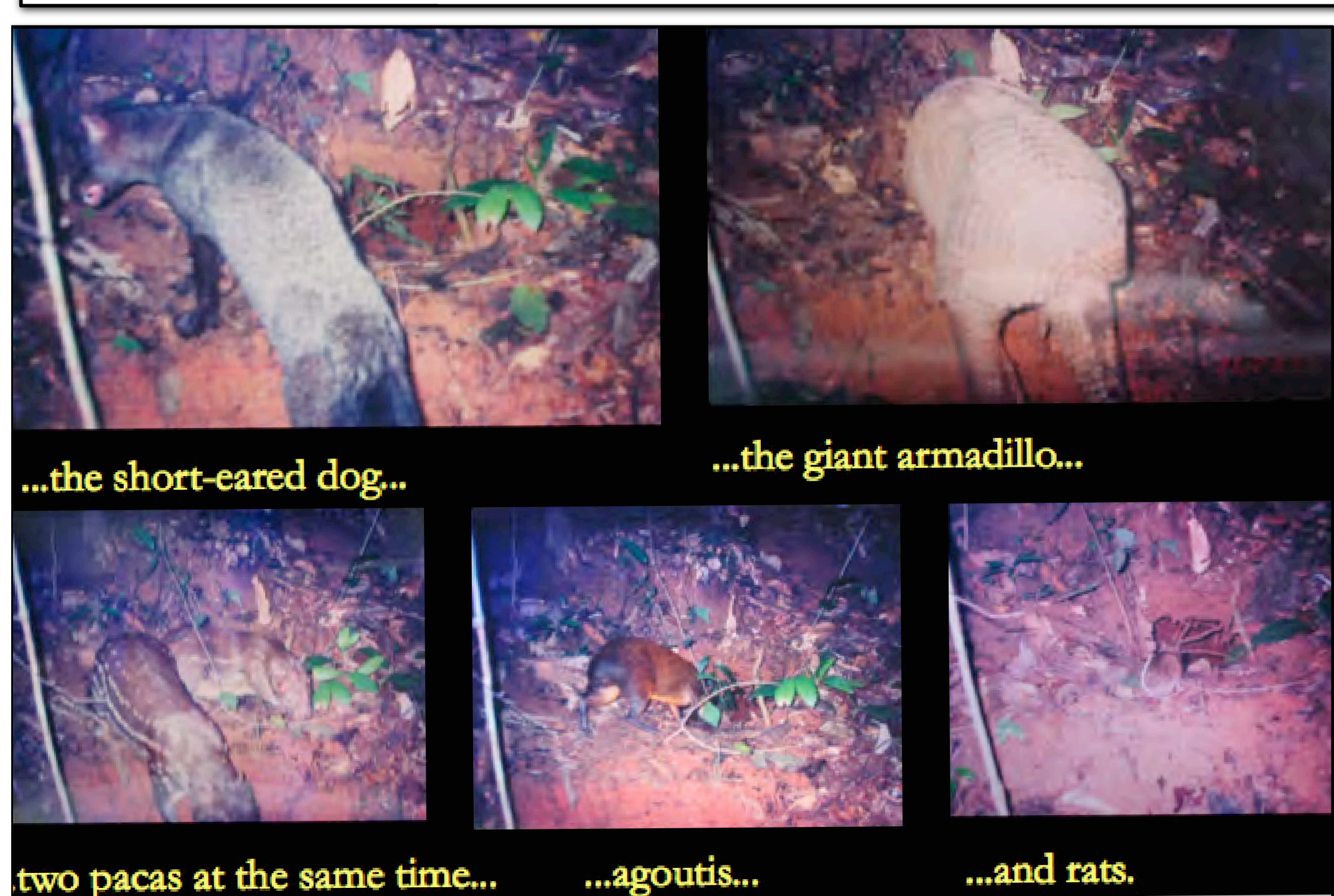
THE RED LINES IN THE MAP SHOW HOW MAMMAY MOVED AWAY FROM HER DAUGHTER. LACY STAYED BEHIND IN THE HOME RANGE WHERE SHE WAS BORN, SHOWN IN THE MAP BY THE PURPLE LINES.



THE RESEARCHERS ALSO TOOK OVER 100 CAMERA-TRAP PHOTOS, WHICH REVEALED THAT THE SPECIES IS A FRUGIVORE AND A SCAVENGER MOSTLY ACTIVE AT DAWN AND DUSK. THE GRAPH BELOW SHOWS THE TIMES OF DAY THE SPECIES WAS ACTIVE (LONGER ARROWS = MORE SIGHTINGS).



WALKS WITH A TAME INDIVIDUAL ON A LEASH ALLOWED THEM TO OBSERVE WILD DOGS. THIS FEMALE IN HEAT FOLLOWED THE TAME MALE FOR A FULL HOUR!



THE DOGS USED BURROWS MADE BY THE GIANT ARMADILLO (PRIODONTES MAXIMUS). THE IMAGE ABOVE SHOWS A SINGLE BURROW BEING VISITED BY MANY DIFFERENT SPECIES ON THE SAME DAY. INDIVIDUAL DOGS WERE OBSERVED USING UP TO NINE DIFFERENT BURROWS AND LOGS IN A DAY, RESTING INSIDE FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS. APPARENTLY IT HELPS THEM AVOID PREDATORS...

BUT IT DIDN'T HELP LACY: AFTER TRACKING HER FOR 2 MONTHS, THEY DISCOVERED THAT SHE HAD BEEN EATEN BY A 4-METER BOA CONSTRUCTOR!



JAGUARS AND PUMAS ALSO PREY ON THE SPECIES. BUT IT'S THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMAZON THAT'S THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE SPECIES. 20 YEARS FROM NOW THE AMAZON WILL BE FRAGMENTED IF CLEAR-CUTTING ISN'T STOPPED. AND THAT PUTS ONE OF THE WORLD'S RAREST, MOST BEAUTIFUL CARNIVORES AT VERY SERIOUS RISK.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: THANKS TO INRENA FOR PERMITTING RESEARCH IN PERU, AND TO IDEAWILD, WILDLIFE MATERIALS, DISNEY CONSERVATION FUND, CONSERVATION FOOD AND HEALTH, CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL, WWF AND FRANKFURT ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

