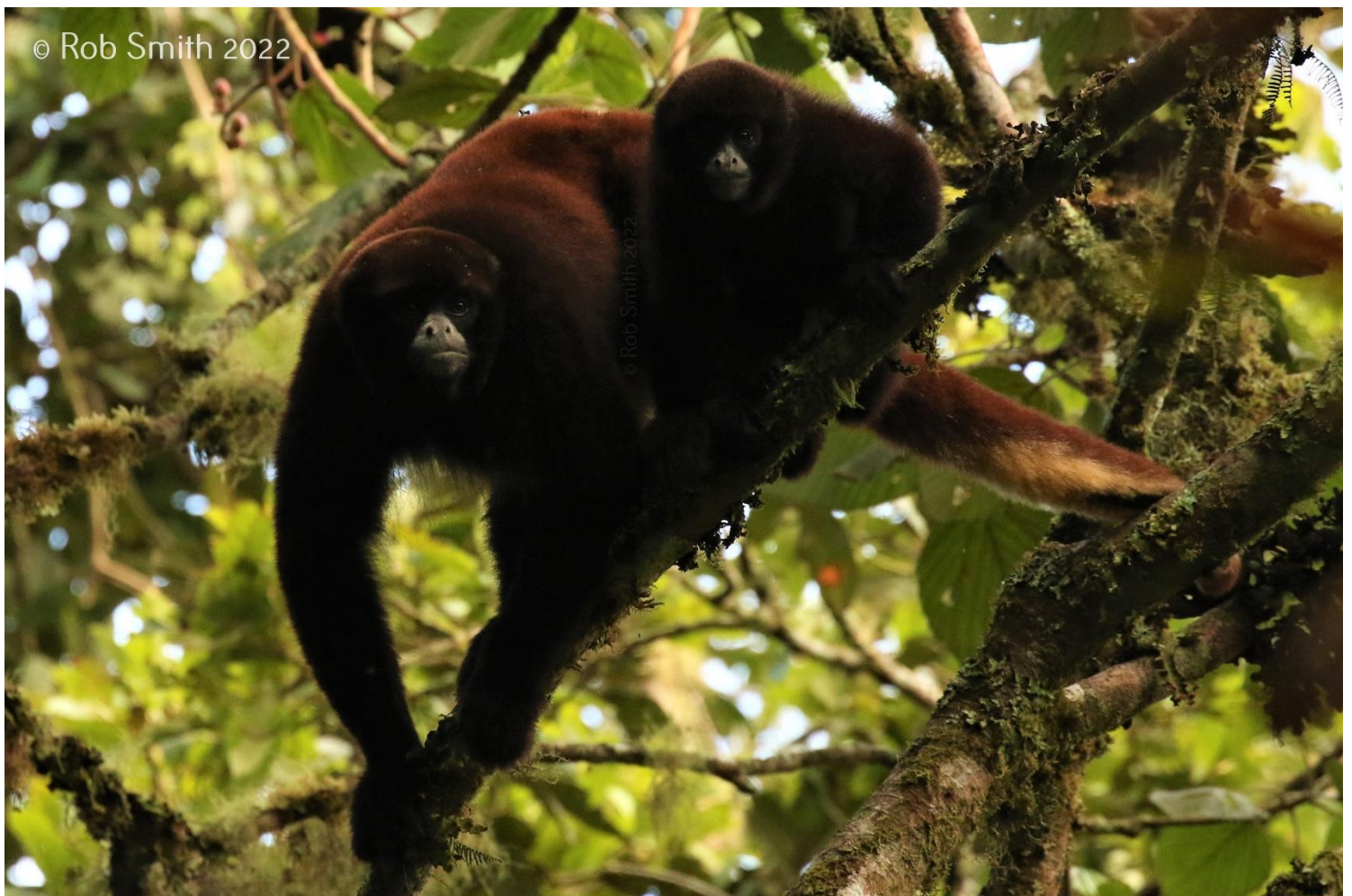


Peru and Brazil
Justin Brown and Rob Smith
May 30th to June 29th, 2022

At the end of May, I met Rob from Wild About Colombia in Tarapoto, Peru, and we continued north to a small city called Moyobamba. Rob had made arrangements with a contact from Neotropical Primate Conservation for us to visit a reserve with a troop of habituated yellow-tailed woolly monkeys. The drive to the town nearest to the reserve was long, and the hike from there was steep and very muddy (though we did go at the end of the wet season), but the experience was awesome. The reserve is on a private property, wherein the owner has agreed to preserve the remaining forest for the monkeys. The troop consists of at least 25 individuals, and they were a joy to watch. Nobody had been following the monkeys

since before the pandemic, but the reserve was an active research site pre-COVID. There was some concern that perhaps the monkeys wouldn't be as habituated after not being around people for two years, but they were totally chill when we found them. They stayed with us for over an hour, even accompanying us as we hiked down the mountain.



Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkeys, image: Rob Smith

I doubt there's a better spot for seeing this species. Rob's contact is very open to the idea of organizing visits for future tourists.





Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey, images: Rob Smith

Inquire with Rob for more information
(contact details at the end of the report). The area around Moyobamba is great for Rio Mayo titi as well.



Rio Mayo Titi, image: Rob Smith

Rob and I then flew to Manaus in Brazil for the start of a cruise down the Amazon River in search of primates with localized distributions. Before boarding the boat, we spent a couple of days in and around Manaus, checking off a few species like golden-handed and pied tamarins.



Pied Tamarin, image: Rob Smith



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Golden-Handed (Midas) Tamarin, image: Rob Smith

Once on the boat, the itinerary was to cruise all the way to the city of Santarém, exploring tributaries of the Amazon River en route.



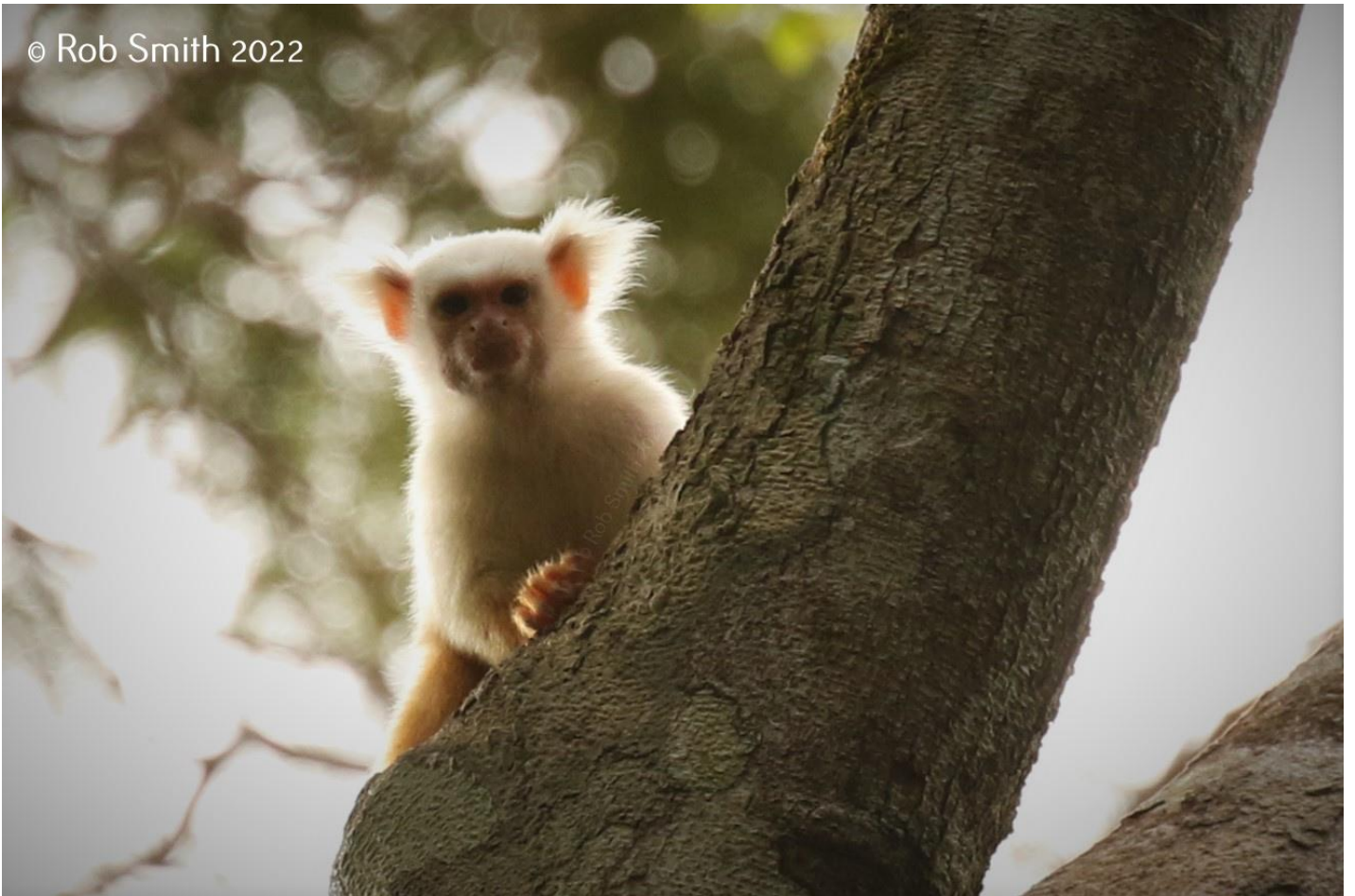
Our guide, Edson Sarmiento, had gotten consent from various indigenous communities prior to our arrival to search for primates in their forests, and we always paid an indigenous person to serve as our local guide.



Red-Backed Bearded Saki, image: Rob Smith



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Golden-White Tassel-Ear Marmoset, image: Rob Smith

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Satéré Marmoset, image: Rob Smith

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Maués Marmoset, image: Rob Smith

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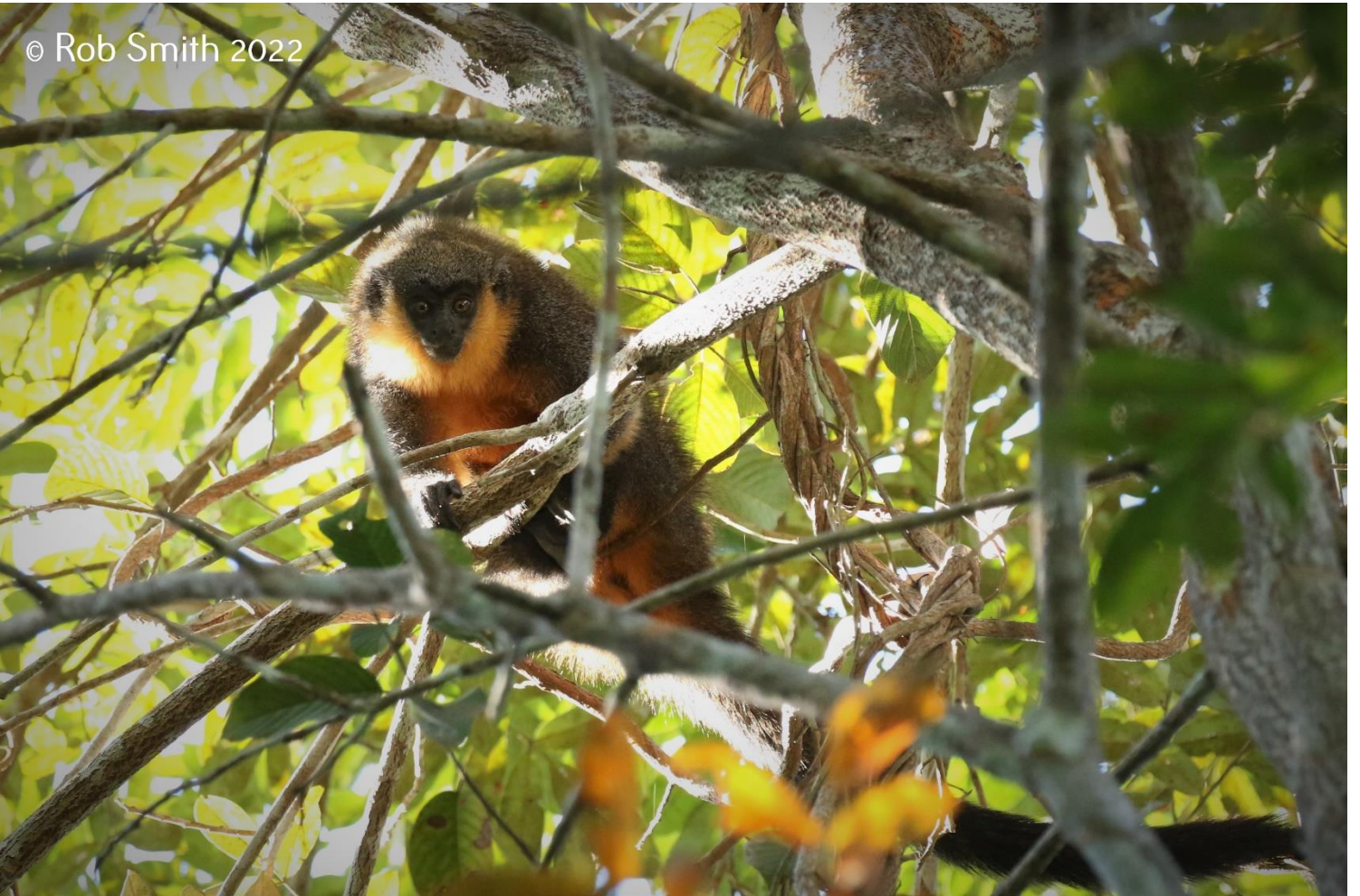
Silvery Marmoset, image: Rob Smith

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Martin's Ochraceous Bare-Face Tamarin, image: Rob Smith

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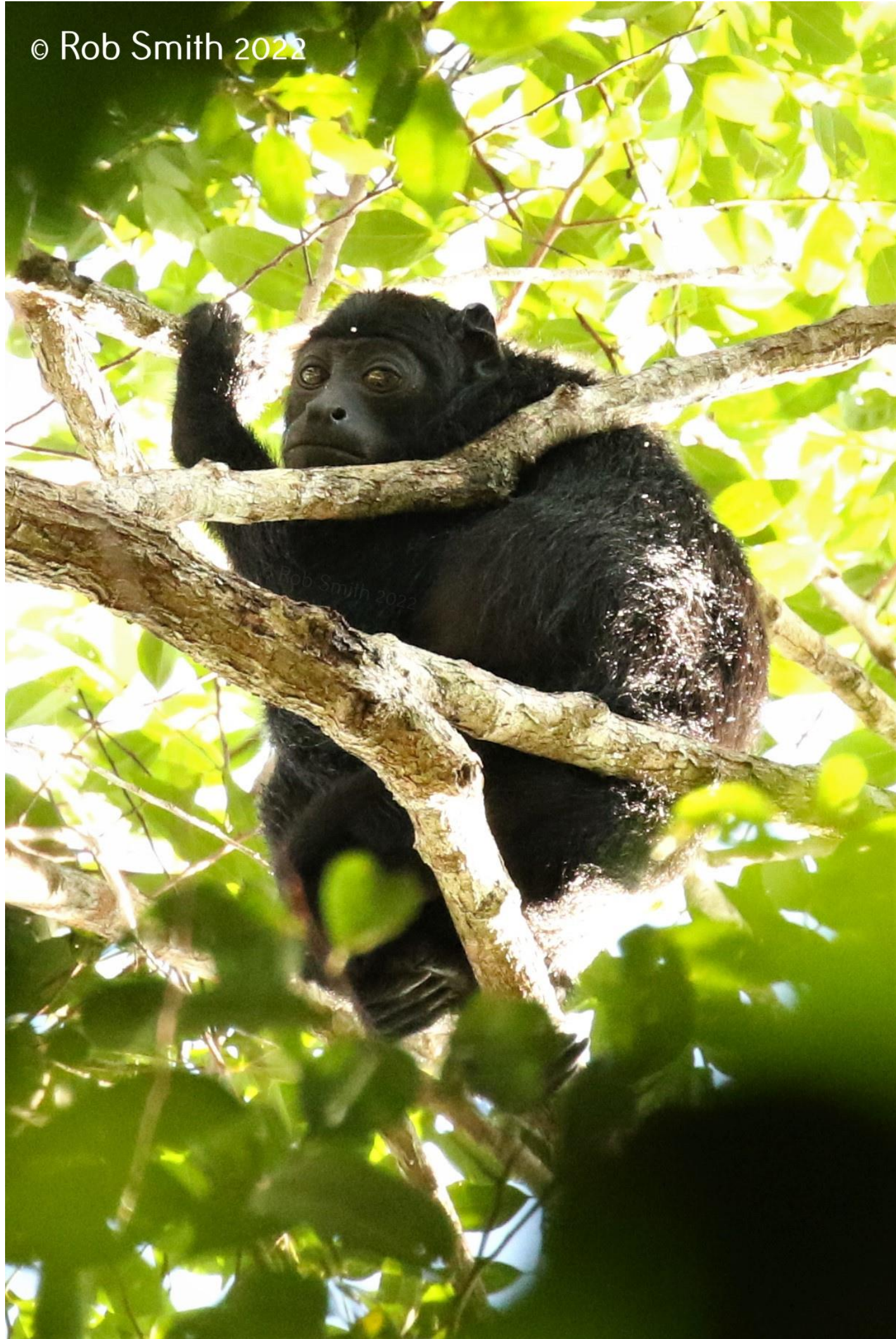
Hoffmann's Titi: Rob Smith

Edson believes strongly, and we're very much in agreement, that the indigenous people should be included as much as possible in wildlife tourism, for they are important stewards of the forests and can start to see a different economic benefit from the animals. Meeting these people, many of whom had never seen a foreigner, greatly added to the overall experience of the trip.



Local indigenous guide in the flooded (várzea) forest

© Rob Smith 2022



Amazon Black Howler Monkey, image: Rob Smith

Our focus was the primates of the region, but we saw plenty of other mammals, including river dolphins (tucuxi and pink) on an almost-daily basis, South American coati, red-rumped agouti, etc. Other sightings included:



Linnaeus's Two-Toed Sloth, image: Rob Smith



Pale-Throated Three-Toed Sloths, image: Rob Smith



Southern Tamandua, image: Rob Smith

But all our efforts were focused on the rare and range-restricted primates of the region.



Santarém Marmoset, image: Rob Smith

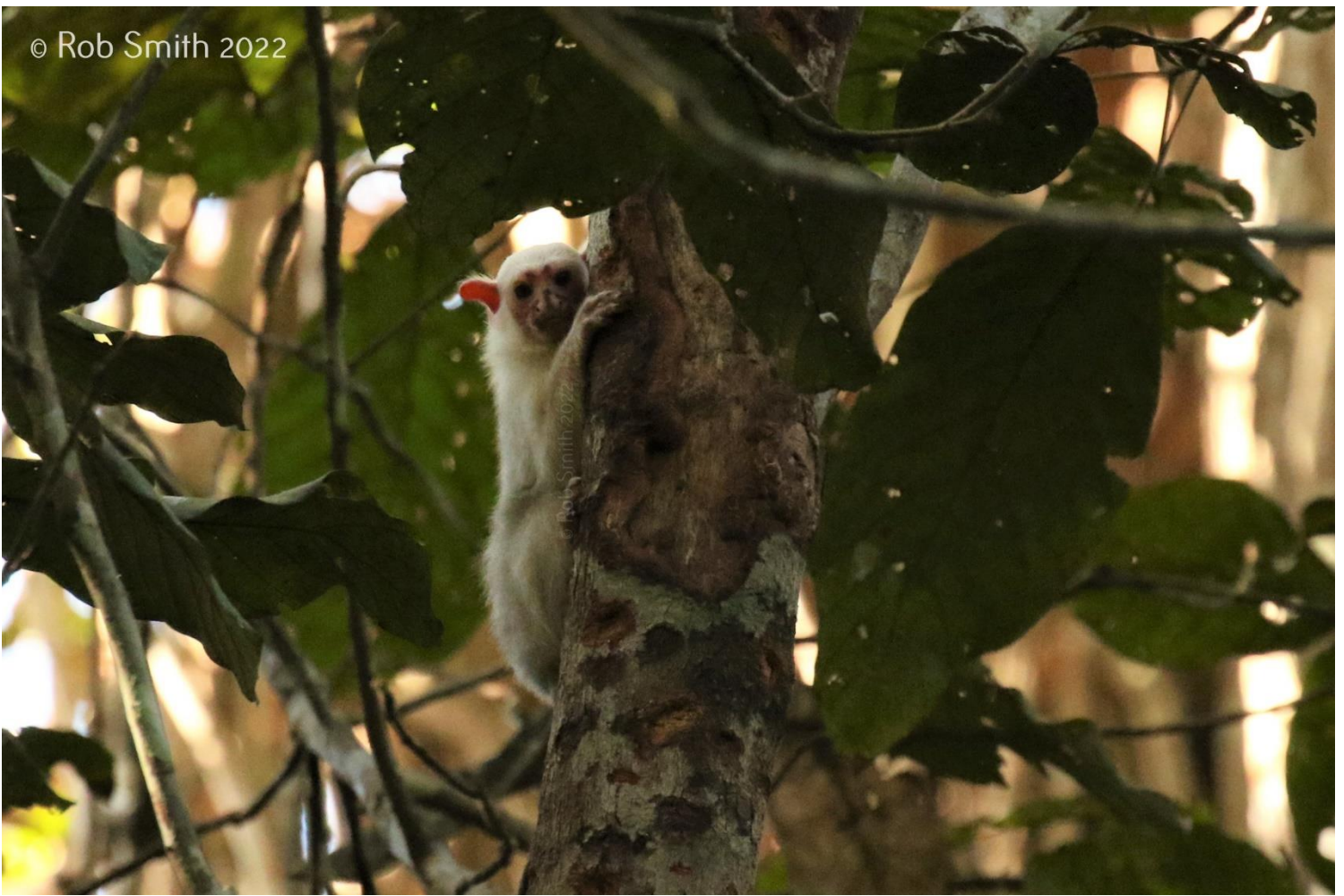


White-Faced Saki, image: Rob Smith



Red-Bellied (Dusky) Titi, image: Rob Smith

After two weeks on the boat and lots of terrific sightings, we arrived to Santarém, and then flew onward to Belém in order to see a few more primate species. This region of the Amazon is right on the "Arc of Deforestation," which delineates where the forest is being burned at the fastest rate. Consequently, the primate species that live here are especially threatened, often surviving in tiny fragments of forest. The small monkeys that we wanted to see--namely black tamarin and Schneider's marmoset--are able to cope much better than the larger monkeys with all of the habitat destruction, and finding them was pretty straightforward in secondary forest patches next to small villages.



Schneider's Marmoset, image: Rob Smith

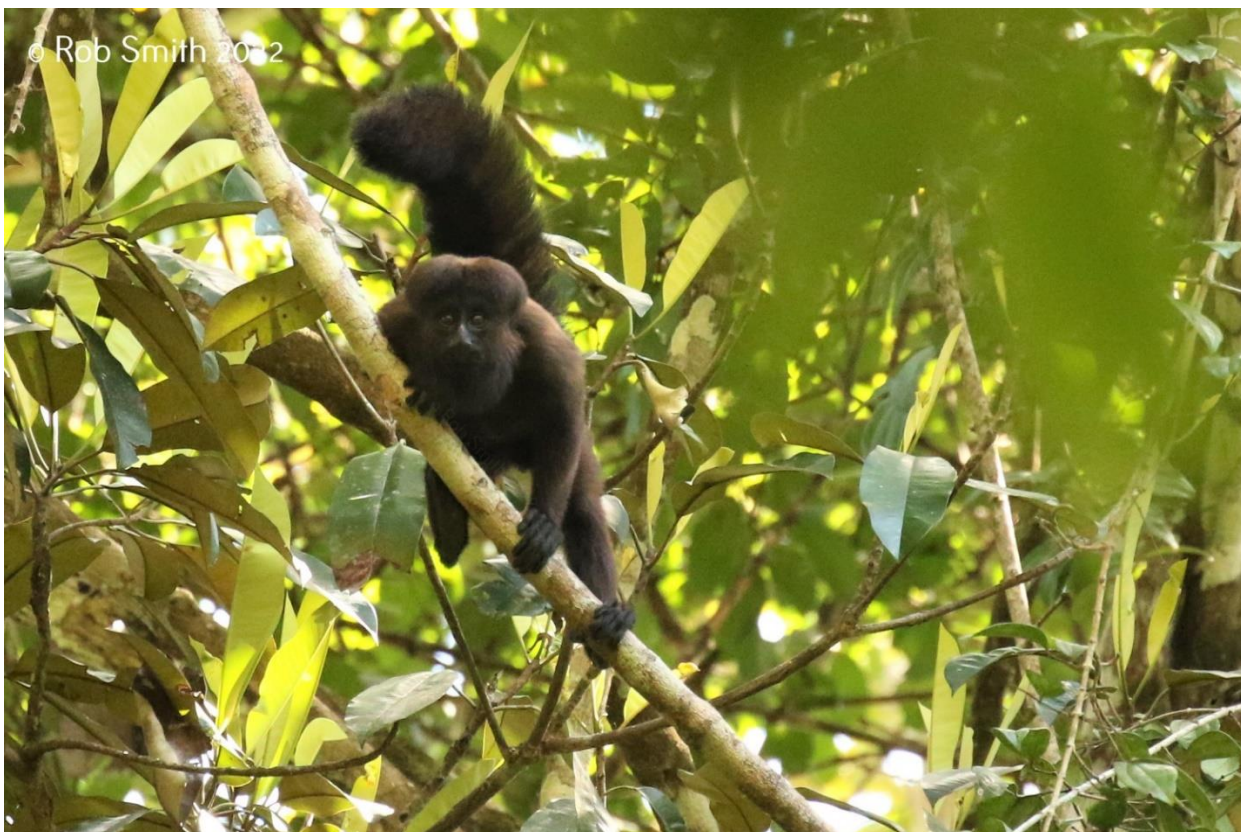
The larger monkeys have been pushed to the peripheries of their former ranges, and getting to these areas isn't simple. We traveled by motorized canoe for hours to one such area where black-bearded sakis and Uta Hick's sakis are known to occupy the same forest.



Uta Hick's Bearded Saki, image: Rob Smith

We're confident that we had sightings of both species, though distinguishing one from the other in the field is very difficult. We agreed that the first group of sakis we encountered was exclusively Uta Hick's, as we were able to watch the monkeys for a long time and all of the individuals we saw had significant "bleaching" (see photo above), a term Edson uses to describe the process by which the pelage of a primate

species becomes lighter in color over multiple generations. Black-bearded sakis are darker than Uta Hick's sakis, but can still have some brownish coloration on the shoulders and back. The second group of sakis we found appeared to be a mix of the two species. Edson got the first visible individual in his binoculars and immediately called it as a black-bearded saki. Rob got some so-so pictures, and I got a so-so video, of this individual. Another difficulty with identification of the two species is that there has been some interbreeding.



Black-Bearded Saki or Uta Hick's Bearded Saki or a hybrid (?), image: Rob Smith

If you're interested in doing this trip, Rob is going to offer it for May of 2023, with the pre-cruise and post-cruise primates as optional extensions. He can be contacted at rob@wildaboutcolombia.com



The team! Rob, Justin, and Edson (from left to right)