Smith P - Caluromys lanatus - FAUNA Paraguay Handbook of the Mammals of Paraguay

BROWN-EARED WOOLLY OPOSSUM

Caluromys lanatus (Olfers, 1818)





FIGURE 1 - Adult, Brazil (Nilton Caceres undated).

TAXONOMY: Class Mammalia; Subclass Theria; Infraclass Metatheria; Magnorder Ameridelphia; Order Didelphimorphia; Family Didelphidae; Subfamily Caluromyinae (Myers et al 2006). The genus *Caluromys* contains four species one of which occurs in Paraguay. *Caluromys* is derived from the Greek meaning "beautiful mouse" (Palmer 1904), *lanatus* means "woolly", in reference to the woolly pelage of the species (Braun & Mares 1995). Thomas (1901) expressed regret at Allen's (1900) usage of the suffix *-mys* in the generic name, as this ending had previously been reserved for Rodentia.

This species was Azara's "*Micouré second, ou micouré laineux*" and is supported by a fluid preserved specimen that was sent to Madrid, the holotype (MNCN-M2630). Olfers (1818) explicitly based his description on Azara's Micouré second, but prior to the discovery of this obscure work the species was often known by the objective junior synonym *C.lanigera* (Desmarest 1820). (Voss et al 2009).

There are four subspecies, that present in Paraguay is C.l.lanatus Olfers 1818 (Type Locality Caazapá, Paraguay). The species description was attributed to Iliger (1815) by Redford & Eisenberg (1992) and Massoia et al (2000) but this is a nomen nudum and the error was corrected by Cáceres & Carmignotto (2006). Synonyms adapted from Cáceres & Carmignotto (2006). [Didelphys] lanata Illiger, 1815:107. Nomen nudum. D[idelphys] lanata Olfers, 1818:206. Caazapá, Paraguay, based on de Azara (1801). Didelphis lanigera Desmarest, 1820:258. Caazapa', Paraguay; based on de Azara's (1801). Didelphys lanigera Waterhouse, 1841:98. Name combination. Micoureus lanigera Lesson, 1842:186. Name combination. Didelphys ochropus Wagner, 1842:359. Barra do Rio Negro, Amazonas, Brazil. D[idelphys] ornata Tschudi, 1845:146. "der mittleren und tiefen Waldregion," Peru. Didelphys [Philander] lanigera Thomas, 1888:339. Part; name combination. Philander cicur Bangs, 1898:161 "Pueblo Viejo, Colombia." P[hilander]. ornatus: Bangs, 1898:162. Name combination. [Didelphys (Philander)] cicur Trouessart, 1898:1238. Name combination. [Didelphys (Philander) laniger] ochropus Trouessart, 1898:1238. Name combination; synonymy of Didelphys (Philander) laniger derbiana. [Didelphys (Philander) laniger] ornata Trouessart, 1898:1238. Name combination. Caluromys cicur Allen, 1900:189. Name combination. Caluromys laniger Allen, 1900:189. Name combination for Didelphis lanigera Desmarest, 1820. Caluromys derbianus ornatus Allen, 1900:189. Name combination. [Caluromys] ochropus Thomas, 1901:196. Name combination. C[aluromys] I[aniger] cicur Thomas, 1901:196. Name combination. [Caluromys] ornatus Thomas, 1901:196. Name combination. [Didelphys (Philander) laniger] ornatus Trouessart, 1905:855. Name combination and incorrect gender. P[hilander] [aniger] cicur Thomas, 1913:358. Name combination. P[hilander] [aniger] ornatus Thomas, 1913:358. Name combination. Philander laniger jivaro Thomas, 1913:360. "Sarayacu on the Pastasa River," Pastaza, Ecuador. Philander laniger Cabrera, 1916:514. Name combination. Micoureus ochropus Matschie, 1916:269. Name combination. Micoureus ornatus Matschie, 1916:269. Name combination. Micoureus juninensis Matschie, 1917:283. "Chanchamayo in der Nähe von La Merced, Provinz Junin, Peru" Micoureus meridensis Matschie, 1917:285. "von Briceno in der Montana de la Sierra bei Merida in Venezuela" Micoureus cahyensis Matschie, 1917:288. "Am Rio Cahy in Rio Grande do Sul," Brazil. Micoureus bartletti Matschie, 1917:288. "Chamicaros-Fluß, südlicher Nebenfluß des Marañon zwischen Huallaga and Ucavali," Loreto, Peru. Micoureus nattereri Matschie, 1917:291. "von Caissara, Matto Grosso," Brazil. [Philander laniger] ochropus: Cabrera, 1919:33. Name combination. Mallodelphis lanigera ochropus: Miranda-Ribeiro, 1936:355. Name combination. Mallodelphis lanigera hemiura Miranda-Ribeiro, 1936:355. Type locality unknown. Mallodelphis lanigera vitalina Miranda-Ribeiro, 1936:355. "Barra do Paraope ba, Minas Geraes," Brazil. Mallodelphis lanigera nattereri Miranda-Ribeiro, 1936:356. Name combination. Mallodelphis lanigera modesta Miranda-Ribeiro, 1936:356. "Mato Grosso, provavelmente Pantanal," Brazil. Caluromys laniger ochropus Tate, 1939:163. Name combination. [Caluromys laniger] meridensis Tate, 1939:163. Name combination. [Caluromys laniger] jivaro Tate, 1939:163. Name combination. Caluromys laniger ornatus Sanborn, 1949:277. Name combination. P[hilander] lanata Hershkovitz, 1951:552. Name combination. Philander calmensis Vieira, 1955:347 Incorrect subsequent spelling of Micoureus cahyensis Matschie, 1917. Caluromys lanatus cicur Cabrera, 1958:2. Name combination. Caluromys lanatus lanatus Cabrera, 1958:2. Name combination. Caluromys lanatus ochropus Cabrera, 1958:3. Name combination.

Caluromys lanatus ornatus Cabrera, 1958:3. Name combination.

ENGLISH COMMON NAMES: Brown-eared Woolly Opossum (Gardner 2007), Western Woolly Opossum (Wilson & Cole 2000), Cáceres & Carmignotto 2006), Woolly Opossum (Redford & Eisenberg 1992).

SPANISH COMMON NAMES: Comadreja lanuda (Chebez 1996), Comadreja lanosa (Chebez 1996, Massoia et al 2000), Cuica lanosa (Chebez 1996, Redford & Eisenberg 1992), Cuica lanuda (Massoia et al 2000), Chucha (Massoia et al 2000), Zarigüeya lanuda occidental (Emmons 1999), Zarigüeya lanosa, Filandro lanoso (Massoia et al 2009).

GUARANÍ COMMON NAMES: Mbicuré lanoso (Chebez 1996), Mykuré viyú (Chebez 1996, Massoia et al 2000), Micuré lanoso (Massoia et al 2006).

DESCRIPTION: A medium-sized opossum with dense woolly fur. Dorsally they are predominately pale brown in colouration, frequently with shades of greyish or reddish, and more strongly orange on the shoulders, limbs and crown. Some individuals possess a greyish patch between the shoulders. Ventrally they are yellowish-white, darkening to greyish medially. Head somewhat greyer with a dark stripe along the centre of the face passing from the forehead, between the eyes and along the rostrum; contrasting with whitish cheeks. Snout short, giving the face a vaguely flattened appearance. The large, rounded eyes have brownish or orange orbital rings which accentuate their "teddy bear-like" appearance. Eyes give a bright orange-yellow reflection at night. Two long supraocular bristles are present and 10 black vibrissae. Ears are large, rounded and naked with pinkish-tan colouration, appearing dark against the pelage. The reddishbrown feet are strong with well-developed pads for gripping and long claws on all digits except the thumb of the hindfeet. Tail is densely-furred along half the dorsal side and 20% of its ventral side, and is approximately 140% body length. Females develop a pouch only when they have young, and abdominal and inguinal mammae are confined to the pouch region. The terminal portion of the tail is naked, usually pale yellowish in colour and is fully prehensile. Juveniles are similar but greyer in colouration.

CRANIAL CHARACTERISTICS: Braincase large, rostrum short but robust. Paraoccipital process does not surpass occipital condyle. Postorbital processes well-developed, lambdoidal and sagittal crests reduced. Dorsal projection of superior portion of zygomatic reduces orbit size. Small palatine foramina and foramen rotundum, and no foramen ethmoidale. Palatal process absent but rostral process of premaxillae present so that upper canine inserts in maxillary bone. Nasal bone broadens posteriorly with tips extending anteriorly above or beyond I1 so that nasal orifice is not visible dorsally. Mandible with two mental foramina. Angular process obtuse and weakly inflected. Maxillopalatine, palatine and maxillary fenestrae all absent. Transverse canal foramen lacking. *Condyloincisive Length* 59.5mm (56.5-62.8mm); *Zygomatic Width* 34.8mm (32.7-37.1mm); *Width of Braincase* 20.6mm (19.4-22.3mm); *Interorbital Constriction Width Posterior to Postorbital Processes* 8.4mm (7.6-9.2mm); *Rostral Length* 22.8mm (21.7-24.0mm); *Rostral Width* 13.0mm (12.3-13.8mm); k 25.8mm (22.2-27.1mm); *Length of Palate* 31.9mm (30.5-33.4mm); *Width of Palate* 17.7mm (17.1-18.2mm); *Mastoid Width* 23.3mm (21.4-25.6mm); *Basioccipital Length* 8.7mm (8.2-9.2mm); *Cranial Depth* 18.9mm (16.6-21.1mm); *Length of Molar Row* 9.8mm (9.2-10.1mm); *Length C to M4* 20.6mm (18.2-22.2mm). (Patton et al 2000).

DENTAL CHARACTERISTICS: 15/4 C1/1 P 3/3 M 4/4 = 50. Crowns of I2-I5 asymmetrical with longer anterior than posterior cutting edges. Upper canine simple lacking accessory cusps. Upper premolar small and situated directly behind the canine. Clear gap between small P1 and much larger P2. P3 with well-developed cutting edges but shorter in height than P2. M1 wider than M4 and upper molars lack ectoflexus. Molar dentition weakly carnassialized and weakly dilambdodont with a continuous shelf along anterior margin of crowns of M1-M3. Mandibular teeth with distinct lingual cusps in i1-i4, a p2 taller than p3, a deciduous p3 with a complete tricuspid trigonid, a labially salient hypoconid in m3, and a large and well-developed entoconid in m1-m3. Occlusal area of molars reduced. (Redford & Eisenberg 1992, Cáceres & Carmignotto 2006).

GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS: 2n=14 (Svartman & Vianna-Morgante 1999). FN=24. (Redford & Eisenberg 1992). The autosomal complement consists of four pairs of large biarmed and two pairs of medium-sized subtelocentric autosomes; the X-chromosome is a small biarmed element and the Y-chromosome is very small but appears distinctly biarmed (it is uni-armed in other *Caluromys* species). (Patton et al 2000).

TRACKS AND SIGNS: No information. This is a predominately arboreal species that rarely descends to the ground (Redford & Eisenberg 1992).

EXTERNAL MEASUREMENTS: A medium-sized opossum with tail approximately 140% head and body length. **TL:** 66.1cm (60.2-70.2cm); **HB:** 27.3cm (20.1-31.9cm); **TA:** 38.77cm (33-44.6cm); **FT:** 4.22cm (3-5.1cm); **EA:** 3.49cm (3-4.1cm); **WT:** 320g (310-520g); **WN:** 3.6g. (Massoia et al 2001, Emmons 1999, Redford & Eisenberg 1992, Marshall 1978 (Cáceres & Carmignotto 2006).

SIMILAR SPECIES: Unlikely to be confused if seen well. This is the only medium-sized, arboreal, pale brownish opossum with dense woolly fur. Note also the characteristic vertical line down the centre of the face.



DISTRIBUTION: Widely distributed in the Neotropics, east of the Andes from central Colombia and southern and western Venezuela south through eastern Ecuador and western Brazil to Bolivia and eastern Paraguay, reaching extreme northern Argentina in Provincia Misiones (Departamentos Eldorado, Montecarlo, Iguazú, Guaraní and General Belgrano - Barquez et al 2006, Chebez 2009). In Brazil the species has been recorded from the following states: Acre, Amazonas, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, São Paulo y Rio Grande do Sul (Patton et al 2000, Brown 2004, Cáceres et al 2008, Martinelli 2010). In Bolivia the species has been recorded in Departamentos Beni, La Paz and Santa Cruz (Anderson 1997).

Brown (2004) lists the following specimen for Paraguay Departamento Canendiyú; Curuguaty 13.3 km N (Myers. 1979. MZUM). There are four described subspecies, the nominate subspecies *C.lanatus lanatus* (Olfers 1818) being found in Paraguay, northern Argentina, and

from Mato Grosso to São Paulo states in Brazil. *C.l.cicur* (Bangs 1898) is the most northerly subspecies occurring in eastern Colombia and western Venezuela. *C.l.ornatus* (Tschudi 1845) is found in extreme eastern Ecuador, much of eastern Peru (except the north-eastern corner) and central-west Bolivia; *C.l.ochropus* (Goldman 1914) is the most wide-ranging subspecies occurring in southern Colombia and Venezuela, the Orinoco and Amazon Basins of Brazil and Amazonian Peru and Bolivia.

HABITAT: Found in humid and gallery forest, generally being trapped in the canopy and subcanopy at heights of 5-15m. Reports also exist of individuals in xerophytic forest and dense savanna.

They are apparently able to survive in quite fragmented forest as well as larger tracts. Martinelli (2010) provides details of a suburban population in Peirópolis, Minas Gerais, Brazil, located in a highly disturbed area strongly modified by sugar cane agriculture and with islets of native cerrado type vegetation. The species showed no preference for native over introduced trees when foraging.

ALIMENTATION: *Foraging Behaviour and Diet* The species would seem to be mainly frugivorous but opportunistically omnivorous (Casella & Cáceres 2006). The anatomy of the digestive tract shows specialisations for a diet of fruit and plant matter, having a large hind gut and caecum (associated with a plant based diet) and a small stomach chamber (associated with frugivory). In Brazil and Peru they are largely nectar feeders and likely play an important role in the pollinisation of certain plant species.

A stomach of an individual from southern Brazil contained hundreds of *Ficus* seeds of which only 0.9% had been predated, whilst others in this region were observed to consume fruits of *Cecropia, Piper, Cyphomandra* and Solanaceae. Coleoptera larvae, Lepidopterans and Hymenopterans were the most prevalent arthropod items in stomach samples from Paraná, Brazil with small birds and small mammals figuring in 40 and 60% of the stomachs analysed respectively (n=5). Nowak (1991) describes them as omnivores, noting that the diet consists of fruit, seeds, leaves, vegetables, insects and small vertebrates and even carrion. Massoia et al (2009) mention a video of a specimen from PN Iguazú eating an adult *Cacicus haemorrhous* at a colony of that species whilst Vieira & Astúa de Morães (2003) note a sight record of predation on Spiny Rats of the family *Echimyidae*.

Diet in Captivity Captives have been fed on a diet of meat, fruit and eggs, showing a preference for bananas (Bucher & Fritz 1977) whilst another group had a preference for meat (Nowak 1991). **REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY:** Little known.

Seasonality Two females from the Amazon Basin of Brazil were trapped with pouched young at Rio Juruá during July and November, with post lactating females trapped in the same area in February, March and October, leading the authors to assume that year-round breeding occurred. (Patton et al 2000).

Pregnancy Females have an oestral cycle of 27-29 days throughout the year but develop a pouch only when carrying young. Litter size is 3 or 4 for the southern population inhabiting Paraguay, but generally 1 or 2 further north in the range - notably less than for most other marsupials. Sex ratios of three litters from a seasonal forest in southern Brazil were strongly male biased 1:0.22 (Cáceres & Carmignotto 2006).

Development of Young As the young grow they may be carried on the back, tail or hang onto the pelage as the mother moves through the trees (Massoia et al 2000). The species failed to breed in captivity during a three-year study. Males attempted to mount and performed pelvic thrust displays but were rejected by the females. (Bucher & Fritz 1977).

GENERAL BEHAVIOUR: *Activity Levels* Nocturnal, solitary and arboreal, this species rarely descends to the ground. Nowak (1991) states that they are active mainly during the evening, night and early morning and pass the day in tree hollows or holes in branches. It occasionally forages in pairs, but because of its canopy habits and nocturnal behaviour it is rarely seen and is trapped only in low numbers (Nowak 1991). Captive individuals became more excitable in small cages (Bucher & Fritz 1977).

Locomotion They are agile climbers but relatively slow moving when compared to other arboreal Didelphids, walking deliberately through the trees and using the prehensile tail as a fifth limb. They are known to use power lines when crossing roads, though some individuals also cross on the ground, as evidenced by a roadkill specimen in PN Iguazú (Chebez 2009).

Home Range Population density estimated at 13.3/km² in Amazonas State, Brazil, with a biomass of 4.6kg/km² (Cáceres & Carmignotto 2006).

Refuges Massoia et al (2006) mention a platform of twigs and leaves at a height of 12m in PN Iguazú.

Grooming The Iguazú individual emerged from its nest at 7pm, remaining at the entrance for 15 minutes as it scratched and groomed its pelage.

Mortality Animals at Flora y Fauna Itaipú Binacional have been electrocuted by power lines and Nelson Peréz-Villamayor is in possession of a mummified specimen that died in this way (Nelson Peréz-Villamayor pers. comm.). Images of an animal killed in a similar manner are provided by Martinelli (2010). A roadkill specimen was found at PN Iguazú on 11 April 1994 (Massoia et al 2006).

Parasites In Brazil individuals have been found infected with *Trypanosoma cruzi* (Thatcher 2006). Nymphs of *Amblyomma* on a specimen in Peru. (Cáceres & Carmignotto 2006).

Vicente et al (1997) listed the following nematodes in this species from Brazil: Aspidodera raillieti Travassos, 1913 and Turgida turgida (Rud., 1819) - the latter is described as C.philander, but the locality of Goiás corresponds to this species and not C.philander.

Physiology Nogueira et al (1999) describe the penile morphology of this species.

VOCALISATIONS: Typically silent for much of the time (Emmons 1999). Open-mouthed threat displays are accompanied with hissing noises. Clicking sounds are used during courtship and other male female encounters and may progress into chirps at high intensity. (Redford & Eisenberg 1992)

HUMAN IMPACT: Previously much in demand for its fur, though the demand has now abated (Emmons 1999). Impact on fruit crops has been suggested, but this is likely to be negligible in Paraguay given the apparent rarity of the species compared to other potential fruit eaters. They are of potential interest for laboratory studies (Bucher & Fritz 1977). Massoia et al (2006) mention a leather bag made by indigenous groups from the leather of this species in the Museo Aníbal Cambas in Posadas.

CONSERVATION STATUS: Globally considered to be of Low Risk Near Threatened by the IUCN, see http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/3648/all for the latest assessment of the species. The major threat to species would seem to be habitat destruction and though undoubtedly under-recorded it would seem to be nowhere common in Paraguay. The species was previously hunted for its pelage though this would no longer seem to pose a threat. An urgent review of the conservation status of this species is required. Flores (2006) considers the species potentially vulnerable in Argentina, though Chebez (2009) notes that is reasonably common in areas of suitable habitat.

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