

Camera traps reveal Andean bears hate paparazzi

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A series of camera-trap images released by the Wildlife Conservation Society today shows rare Andean bears acting like angry Hollywood celebrities – at least when it comes to having their picture taken.

The stop-action [images](#) reveals adult bears and cubs repeatedly surrounding and attempting to dismantle the Reconyx camera traps secured to trees. One series of images shows a particularly determined bear attacking a camera and leaving it torn open and dangling. Another series shows a mother and two cubs converging on a camera then playfully scratching and biting it like a toy.

The remote cameras were set by WCS scientists studying Andean bears and other wildlife in Apolobamba National Natural Area of Integrated Management – a Bolivian protected area that borders Madidi National Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management, considered one of the world's most biodiverse protected areas. Fortunately for the scientists, more than one camera is often set, so that different angles of the same animal can be photographed. This allowed images from one [camera](#) to take images of the marauding bears while they attacked the other cameras.

"Andean bears are very curious animals," says Dr. Lilian Painter WCS's Bolivia Country Director. "But they are also very strong, and the cameras are like big flashing toys. Still we were able to record important images that will allow us to better understand their distribution, abundance and behavior, and conserve these delightful bears into the future."

Andean bears are Latin America's only bear [species](#). Also known as a spectacled bear, they often have light fur resembling glasses around their eyes. The species inhabits the mountainous regions of western Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The Andean bear's preferred habitat are high-altitude páramo grasslands and especially the adjoining dense cloud forests in steep, remote regions where the bears are rarely seen.

The wide-ranging Andean bears once had a safe haven in the undeveloped habitat of Andean cloud forests, but land is increasingly being fragmented for agriculture, grazing lands, and human settlements. The future of this wondrous but vulnerable species depends on the creation and effective management of a network of protected areas that can sustain the bears in the wild. Fortunately for the photographed bears, and thanks to the Bolivian government, they live in one of largest continuous protected patches of cloud forest across three national protected areas: Apolobamba, Madidi, and Pilon Lajas.

Madidi National Park alone contains 11 percent of the world's birds, more than 200 species of mammals, 300 types of fish, and 12,000 plant varieties. The 19,000 square-kilometer (7,335 square mile) park is known for its array of altitudinal gradients and habitats from lowland tropical forests of the Amazon to snow-capped peaks of the high Andes.

Working with government partners in Bolivia and Peru, the Greater Madidi-Tambopata Landscape Conservation Program aims to develop local capacity to conserve the landscape and mitigate a variety of threats to biodiversity and wildlife including Andean bears, including road construction, logging, unsustainable natural resource use, and agricultural expansion. In addition, WCS conserves the Andean bear across its range, from Ecuador to Venezuela. WCS aims to develop local capacity to conserve the habitat of the species and mitigate a variety of threats to them, including human-wildlife conflict and habitat destruction for

agriculture.

WCS's Queens Zoo exhibits Andean [bears](#) as part of a Species Survival Plan, a cooperative breeding program that helps to maintain healthy populations of the animals in zoos throughout the U.S.

Provided by Wildlife Conservation Society

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