

Nature's Loudest Voices Silenced on World Wildlife Day

Thursday 27 February, 2025

Nature's Loudest Voices Silenced on World Wildlife Day as High Voltage Threatens Costa Rica's Iconic Howler Monkeys

This World Wildlife Day (March 3rd), International Animal Rescue (IAR) is calling for urgent action to prevent the electrocution of howler monkeys, sloths and other arboreal wildlife in Costa Rica. Each year, hundreds of howler monkeys are fatally electrocuted on uninsulated power lines and transformers, a tragedy that not only devastates local wildlife but also disrupts vital ecosystems.

Howler monkeys play a crucial role as seed dispersers, helping to regenerate forests and maintain biodiversity. Their declining population poses a serious threat to Costa Rica's delicate rainforest ecosystems. Infant monkeys are particularly vulnerable, often found clinging to their electrocuted mothers, orphaned and traumatized.

Government Action - Is Costa Rica Delivering?

In January 2024, the Costa Rican government issued Decree No. 44329-MINAE, requiring energy providers to take wildlife protection measures before installing power lines. While this decree is a step forward, IAR warns that implementation is lagging, leaving countless animals at risk.

Gavin Bruce, CEO of International Animal Rescue, emphasizes the urgency of the situation:

"Howler monkeys are essential to the survival of Costa Rica's rainforests, yet they continue to die in tragic and preventable incidents. The government's decree is a promising step, but words must be backed by real action. Insulating power lines and making infrastructure safe for wildlife must be a top priority."

The Mental Toll on Rescue Teams

IAR Costa Rica's , Veterinary Director, Francisco Sánchez Murillo, and his team at the IAR Wildlife Rescue Center fight daily to save electrocuted monkeys. He describes the emotional toll:

"Every day, we witness the devastating impact of electrocutions. The suffering is unimaginable. The psychological weight of trying to save these animals, only to lose them, is overwhelming. The world needs to know this crisis is ongoing, and action is needed now."

Positive news

But, in this darkness, we are happy to report some positive news. After a period of rehabilitation, a troop of howler monkeys has been successfully released back into the wild in Costa Rica, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the International Animal Rescue (IAR) team. Among them is Estrellita, an orphaned monkey who miraculously survived after suffering severe burns and being rescued from her deceased mother following a tragic electrocution in March 2024.

Alongside Adele, Mostache, and Aleikum, Estrellita was moved from the rescue center to a secure pre-release enclosure, allowing the monkeys to gradually adapt to their new natural habitat. After a few days, the enclosure was opened and these rehabilitated monkeys started to explore the forest canopy for the first time. Very quickly, they started feeding in the trees and moved away from the enclosure. This crucial step marks a new beginning for this troop, ensuring they can thrive in the wild where they belong.

Gavin Bruce, CEO of International Animal Rescue, said: *"The successful release of this troop is a testament to the dedication and expertise of our team in Costa Rica. Seeing Estrellita and her troop take their first steps back into the wild is incredibly rewarding, especially knowing the challenges they've overcome. This release is not just about these four monkeys, it's about giving hope to all wildlife affected by human impact. We remain committed to rescuing, rehabilitating, and rewilding these incredible animals, ensuring they have a future where they can thrive."*

A Call to Action

IAR urges the Costa Rican government and utility companies to accelerate the insulation of power lines and implement immediate mitigation measures to prevent further loss of life. The organization also calls

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on the public, conservationists, and global supporters to raise awareness and demand action.

You can find out more information here:

<https://www.internationalanimalrescue.org/animals/howler-monkeys>

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