

BEYOND THE TRAIL: HOW TOURIST ACCESS SHAPES MAMMAL ACTIVITY IN A HIGHLY VISITED NATIONAL PARK IN COSTA RICA

Received 20-VI-2026 ● Corrected 04-IX-2026 ● Accepted 30-IX-2026

Published October, 2026. elocation-id: e6648

<https://doi.org/10.22458/urj.v18i1.6648>

AUTHORS

Laura Porras-Murillo¹, Michelle Monge-Velázquez¹, Leonardo D. Bacigalupe², Luis Bernardo Vázquez³, Jaiber J. Solano-Iguaran⁴ & Grace Wong¹

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism can alter wildlife behavior without affecting species diversity, yet this phenomenon remains poorly known. Detecting such behavioral changes in highly visited protected areas is essential to understand the true effects of tourism on wildlife.

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate how tourist access influences medium- and large-bodied mammals in Manuel Antonio National Park, Costa Rica.

METHODS

Camera traps monitored mammals along public trails from April 2021 to August 2022, comparing restricted and unrestricted tourist access (COVID-19 policies and weekly closures).

AFFILIATIONS

1. Universidad Nacional (UNA), Heredia, Costa Rica.
2. Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia, Chile.
3. El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Chiapas, México.
4. Instituto de Fomento Pesquero, Puerto Montt, Chile.



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TOURIST ACCESS AND MAMMAL ACTIVITY

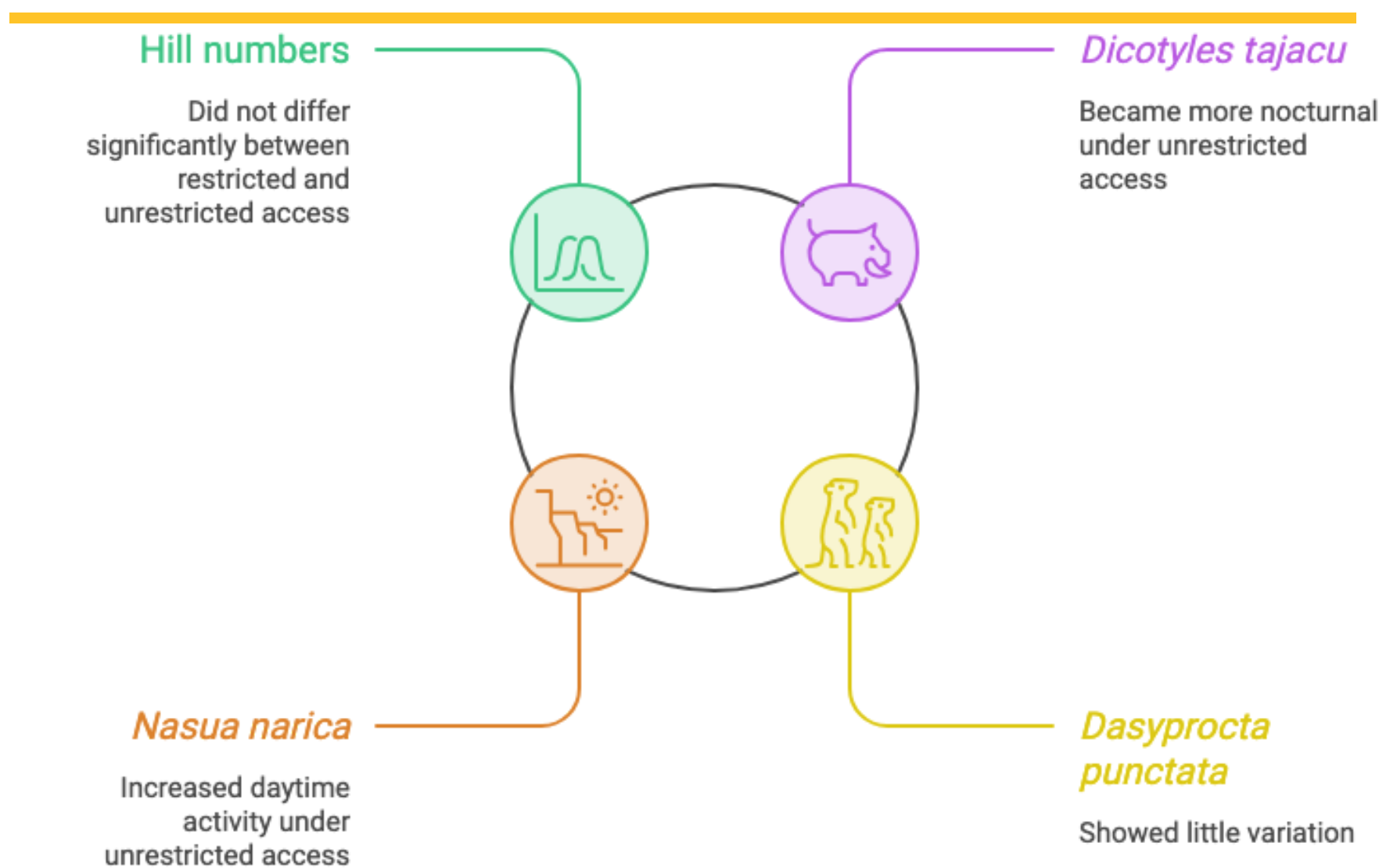


Image: Napkin.ai

RESULTS

A total of 16 mammal species were recorded, including the first documented *Puma concolor* in the park. Hill numbers did not differ significantly between restricted and unrestricted access. However, under unrestricted access, *Dicotyles tajacu* became more nocturnal, *Nasua narica* increased its daytime activity, and *Dasyprocta punctata* showed little variation.

CONCLUSION

Tourist access affected mammal activity patterns but not community diversity. Species-specific activity was therefore a more sensitive indicator of tourism effects than diversity metrics.