

# **A Study on the Relationship between the Ité Palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) and the Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) at Pakuri**

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Tropical rainforests are the most biologically diverse terrestrial biomes. As humans increase consumption of forest resources, forests are increasingly hampered from optimally carrying out their ecological functions. The Ité palm is referred to as *the tree of life* because it provides many materials for the existence of indigenous peoples and animals. Unsustainable harvesting of its fruit, leaves, and other by-products, coupled with its destruction during large scale logging, may have an effect on wildlife that depend on it for survival. The tapir has been observed feeding on this species and is one of the large ungulates that roam the forests. This research sought to determine if there is a distinct and measurable relationship between the tapir and the Ité palm as a main food source. The study was carried out in the Amerindian reservation of Pakuri, mainly along the banks of the Mahaica River. Wildlife camera traps were positioned at areas with fruiting Ité palms, and areas without Ité palms but included other plant species that comprise the tapir diet. However, a relationship could not be established due to unpredictable rainfall and the subsequent flooding of the Ité reefs during the course of this research. Given the value of the Ité palm to the community, it is recommended that this research topic be further explored, as well as related studies on the sustainable use of the palm.

**Keywords:** Habitat destruction; wildlife food sources; wildlife displacement