

Bertholletia excelsa Bonpl. Seed Removal in a Primary Forest in the Southwest Amazon

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Bertholletia excelsa Bonpl. (Brazil nut) is an important extractive resource and one of the main sources of income for many traditional forest communities. The agouti (*Dasyprocta spp.*) is primarily responsible for seed removal and dispersal as this species has its seeds enclosed in a fibrous endocarp that most species cannot penetrate. The objective of this study was to quantify the rate of Brazil nut seed removal and to photograph possible seed dispersers and predators. This study was conducted in the landholding Rio de Janeiro in the Chico Mendes extractive reserve, Acre, Brazil. We randomly selected 20 trees in this landholding and placed 20 Brazil nut seeds below each tree at a distance of 10 m from the tree trunk. Seeds were placed in two rows 20 cm apart. A 60 cm nylon thread and a yellow ribbon were glued to the end of each seed. Seeds were not replaced after removal. Removal was rapid, indicating that these seeds are a highly-procured food source. Of the 400 seeds, only 45 were relocated. We found only a cut nylon thread for 329 seeds and for 29 seeds, neither the seed nor the nylon thread was located. Mounted cameras recorded images of rats (*Proechimys sp.*). It is likely that *Proechimys* were responsible for removing the nylon thread and are likely the major predators of Brazil nut in the study site.

Key words: *Bertholletia excelsa*, seed removal, Amazonia

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