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## Morrillo Beach Eco Resort unveils primate rescue center this March with help of Boulder County veterinarian

### This eco-resort, created by former Colorado ski patrollers, continues its mission and dedication to wildlife and creating meaningful travel experiences for visitors

[Morrillo Beach Eco Resort](#) is thrilled to announce the opening of its Primate Rescue Center, a first-of-its-kind facility in Panama's Veraguas Province dedicated to rehabilitating and releasing injured and orphaned primates. The team decided to tackle the issues affecting the critically endangered Azuero Mantle-Backed Howler Monkeys due to deforestation of areas outside of the resort. Set to open this March, the center builds on the resort's long-standing commitment to eco-conscious tourism and wildlife conservation.

It all started with a baby monkey known as [Melikki](#). Melikki landed in the arms of Morrillo Beach Eco Resort owners Ryan and Cari Mackey in October 2021 after her mother died from electrocution of the high power lines and fell on the ground with Melikki on her back. Melikki was rescued by the Foundation for the Conservation of Primates of Panama and brought to the Mackeys for fostering until she could be released.

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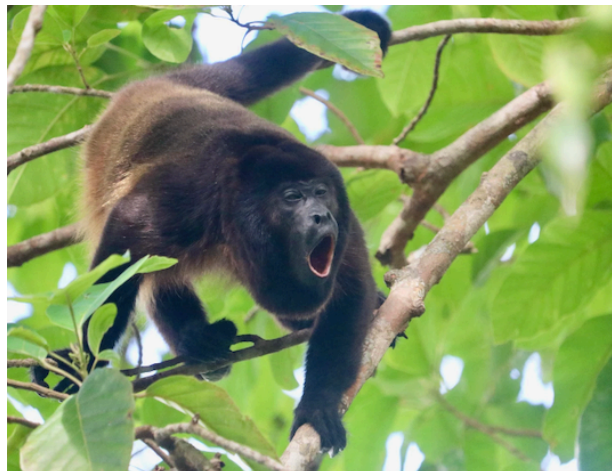
The Colorado Department of



INSTEAD OF RESTING IN PEACE MELIKKI,  
LET'S RAISE HELL AND DO SOMETHING  
ABOUT YOUR LOSS OF LIFE, YOU SWEET  
LITTLE BABY. WE WILL MISS YOU FOREVER.

“As you can easily imagine, this sweet little nugget immediately filled our hearts, gave our lives a new purpose, and created a fierce devotion to her successful release back into the jungle where she belongs with the other monkeys,” said Cari Mackey. She was on the road to success, but unfortunately, after nine months and guidance from a primate specialist, **Melikki** passed in July 2023. Following the loss of Melikki, Mackey continues her dedication to wildlife with fervor.

This first started with years of phone calls, emails, and pleas to do something about the power lines that continually electrocute the wildlife in the area. After many efforts, they finally succeeded in March 2023. They fully insulated the power lines that border the Eco Resort as a private group of electricians worked into the night to switch out the power lines in place with insulated cable. The team’s next step is to continue with solar installation while they tackle deforestation head-on with tree planting so that even guests can be a part of planting. Now, they are thrilled to dedicate their Primate Rescue Center to Melikki and be a source for other injured monkeys this March.



“The moment we lose a monkey is not something

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Joshua Lucero, a 28-year-old Thornton youth pastor, was charged with felony sexual assault on a child, according to court records.

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anyone should witness, and then to hear the anguish of the troop of monkeys when they realize they have lost one of theirs is so intensely sad, and honestly, it makes you feel horrible for being a human and a part of what has caused it," added Mackey.

To help the Primate Rescue Center come to life, the Mackeys turned to fellow Coloradan, Dr. Matt Rooney DVM. Rooney is a surgical specialist with extensive experience in wildlife care, especially endangered species. With a veterinary degree from Colorado State University, his experience spans working with mountain gorillas in Africa, rehabilitating parrots in Guatemala, and conducting zoological disease research at institutions such as the Denver Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx Zoo, and Lincoln Park Zoo. Rooney serves as a board member for the Primate Rescue Center.

"I was immediately drawn to Cari's vision," the veterinarian shared. "From the start, it was clear this project had heart and purpose. My role has been to help set protocols, share my experience, and ensure the center is built on best practices for wildlife rehabilitation. The ultimate dream is for those cages to stay empty, but we know the reality is that animals will continue to need help due to electrocution, car accidents, and habitat loss."



The center, beginning with a 250-square-foot clinic, will focus on treating and rehabilitating up to four animals at a time. Animals will be housed in isolation enclosures to recover and gradually transition back to the wild under a strict, hands-off care policy. The facility's ultimate goal is always to release animals

back into their natural habitats.

The Primate Rescue Center aims to be a vital resource for both wildlife and the surrounding community. Guests at Morrillo Beach Eco Resort will be able to observe the animals from a respectful distance, learn about conservation efforts through live feeds like the MonkeyCam, and see firsthand how the resort's initiatives contribute to protecting Panama's incredible biodiversity.

Local communities and Panama's wildlife authorities will also benefit from the center, as it provides a much-needed facility for injured and orphaned animals in an area with limited resources for wildlife rehabilitation.

The opening of the Primate Rescue Center marks the beginning of a larger vision for conservation in Panama. The team plans to expand its operations over time, drawing on the expertise of international wildlife organizations and establishing a model for responsible wildlife care in the region.

For the Mackeys and their collaborators, this project is about more than just providing care. It's about inspiring others to join the fight for conservation. "It's exciting to see how everyone, from our guests to the local community, wants to be a part of this journey," she said. "This isn't just about rehabilitating animals; it's about fostering a connection to nature and reminding people that they have the power to make a difference."

Guests staying at Morrillo Beach Eco Resort can look forward to being part of this exciting new chapter, experiencing the beauty of Panama while supporting its wildlife. To learn more about Morrillo Beach Eco Resort and its efforts, please visit the [website](#) and [blog](#).

### **About Morrillo Beach Eco Resort**

Nestled along the pristine shores of Panama's Pacific coast, Morrillo Beach Eco Resort offers a unique blend of sustainable luxury and authentic cultural experiences. Dedicated to environmental stewardship, the resort integrates eco-friendly practices into every aspect of its operations, from solar-powered facilities to conservation initiatives that protect the region's rich biodiversity. Morrillo Beach Eco Resort is an idyllic destination for adventure seekers, wellness enthusiasts, and nature lovers alike.

Guests can enjoy various activities, including surfing, snorkeling, hiking, and yoga, or simply unwind in the resort's tranquil setting. With a commitment to supporting the local community, Morrillo Beach Eco Resort partners with nearby artisans, farmers, and guides to provide guests with an authentic taste of Panamanian culture. For more information, visit Morrillo Beach Eco Resort's website or follow us on social media @MorrilloBeachEco.

## About the Author



sbryant

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