



#8686

COSTA RICAN MONKEYS

Grade Levels: 5-13+

26 minutes

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DESCRIPTION

One-third of Costa Rica's land is designated as national parks. One park is home to the capuchin, howler, and spider monkeys, each an endangered species. The three groups have distinct similarities and differences in their habitats, diets, characteristics, and social structures. As scientists study the roles and functions of the female monkeys, they remain fascinated by these animals that are so similar to humans. NOTE: One brief mating scene.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Life Sciences

- ◆ Standard: Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment
 - Benchmark: Knows that all organisms (including humans) cause changes in their environments, and these changes can be beneficial or detrimental
 - Benchmark: Knows ways in which humans can alter the equilibrium of ecosystems, causing potentially irreversible effects (e.g., human population growth, technology, and consumption; human destruction of habitats through direct harvesting, pollution, and atmospheric changes)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To locate Costa Rica and to know why rain forest destruction occurs.
2. To learn about three monkey species: capuchin, spider, and howler.
3. To understand social relations and male-female interactions of primates.
4. To show the impact of deforestation on wildlife.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Costa Rica was once covered in ranches, with rain forest destruction proceeding at a rapid clip. Then, the country decided to take conservation seriously, and set aside one-third of its territory as national parks.

While spider, howler and capuchin monkeys continue to be endangered, they are flourishing.

The monkeys followed most closely in this video are the capuchins. They are exuberant foragers, who will strip leaves off trees, eat thorny branches and even kill small animals for food. After puberty, males leave their social group and take up with another gang of monkeys.

Spider monkeys are the most endangered of the three species in Santa Rosa. These large primates are hard to study because they range so widely in search of the fruits. Spider monkeys live in groups of up to 50, and, unlike the capuchins, it is the females who leave the social group after puberty.



Because their range is smaller, howlers suffer less from habitat destruction than capuchins and spider monkeys. They also taste bad, making them an unlikely target for those who kill monkeys for meat.

Until the 1970s, primate behavior research focused mostly on the Old World species (those living outside of the Americas) and concentrated on male aggression. When females were studied, it was usually in their capacity as mothers. Fedigan was one of the first wave of female primate researchers who have chosen to study social relations and male-female interactions.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. During the 1970s, the focus of primate behavior research began to shift away from the study of dominant males to the study of social interactions. What do you think triggered this change?
2. In this video, you will learn about three monkey species: capuchin, spider and howler. Would you guess that these monkeys are herbivores, omnivores or carnivores? List some items you think might make up their daily diet.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. List three similarities between capuchin society and human society. Name some important differences between our cultures.
2. Capuchin monkeys are incredibly dextrous and highly intelligent. They can be of great help to people with disabilities. Is it ethical to employ them in this way?
3. Capuchin females are the core of their social group—so why do they choose to live with males and put up with their shenanigans?



RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Chimpanzees of Uganda #8676
- A Costa Rican Youth: Meet Yesenia #3450
- Protecting Endangered Animals #2000



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid-safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **THE CAPUCHIN MONKEY SITE**

<http://www.mommensj.web2010.com/capuchin.htm>

See photographs, learn about diet, reproduction, and other general information of capuchin monkeys.

- **MONKEY**

<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/worldbook/atozscience/m/367940.html>

From the Discovery Web site, read about monkeys. Learn about their body, classification, group life, and communication.

- **HOWLER MONKEY**

<http://www.animalsoftherainforest.org/howlermonkey.htm>

Very clear pictures of howler monkeys. Learn other basic facts about this monkey presented on this site.

- **SPIDER MONKEY**

<http://www.oaklandzoo.org/atoz/azspdmky.html>

Clear picture and basic facts about this monkey.