



Cotton-top Tamarin

Sanguinus oediopus

Range: A very small natural range in Northwestern Colombia

Habitat: Large trees in tropical forests, secondary growth, and open woodlands

Diet: Insects, fruit, plants, nectar, and sap. They will also eat eggs, amphibians, and other small animals such as mice if they are able to catch them.

Lifespan: 25 years in captivity and about 14 years in the wild

Description: A small primate that stands between 10-17 inches tall and weighs less than 2 lbs. The most distinguishing characteristic of the Cotton-top Tamarin is the bright white crest of fur that covers the head and upper back of males and females. The rest of the coat is brown and with a lighter colored underside. They have a long, non-prehensile tail and limbs that aide in climbing and leaping through the trees. Individuals have a variety of high-pitched calls that are used to mark territory, or sound an alarm.

Breeding: Cotton-top Tamarins live together in groups consisting of one dominant mated pair and their offspring of both sexes. After a gestation period of about 140 days, the female gives birth to two babies. The adult male usually helps to carry the young which can weigh as much as 25% of the mother's body weight, but all the members of the group help to raise the babies. They pass the young tamarins back to their mother for feeding time. At 4 weeks of age, the young will begin to eat soft food in addition to their mother's milk.

Behavior/Adaptations: Cotton-top Tamarins are highly social primates. They depend on the structure of their family group to help raise their young, and watch out for predators. They are diurnal (daytime) primates that spend almost all of their time running quadrupedally through the treetops. They have non-opposable thumbs, which can make it difficult for them to grip to branches. However, all of their nails except the large toe are long, and claw-like to assist with mobility. Tamarins are very vocal and visible in their daily activity and need to be constantly vigilant for predators.

Predators: Raptors, Cats, Mustelids, Snakes

Conservation: Cotton-top Tamarins are highly endangered and are listed on appendix I of CITES. The total population remaining in the wild is unclear with estimates ranging between 2500-6000 individuals. Tamarins are threatened by habitat loss, illegal logging, and fires. They are also tremendously prized in the illegal pet trade.

Interesting Facts:

- Cotton-top Tamarins have at least 38 individual vocalizations.
- They are extremely important seed dispersers in their ecosystem. Plants rely on the little primates to eat their fruit and disperse the seeds throughout the forest.
- They almost always give birth to non-identical twins.

Information taken from the following sources:

http://pin.primate.wisc.edu/factsheets/entry/cotton-top_tamarin

http://www.theprimata.com/saguinus_oedipus.html

<http://www.oaklandzoo.org/animals/mammals/cotton-topped-tamarin/>

http://www.mnzoo.com/animals/animals_CottonTamarin.asp

<http://www.brookfieldzoo.org/czs/Brookfield/Exhibit-and-Animal-Guide/Tropic-World/Cotton-Top-Tamarin>

http://www.iayork.com/Images/2007/12-24-07/Cottontop_Tamarin.jpg