

Cotton-Top Tamarin

Saguinus oedipus



Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Primates*

Family: *Callitrichidae*

Characteristics: Small bodies with long white hair on the crown of their head. The hair usually reaches down to the shoulders. Their face is almost bare, but are marked with very fine white hairs. Their backside is a brownish-gray and their fronts and arms are white. The tail is large and covered in the same brownish grey as the back, but gives way to a very dark brown towards the tip.

Behavior: Cotton top tamarins are quadrupeds that live in groups of up to 13. They rarely leave the trees unless foraging amongst fallen leaves. Because they live among thick foliage, they have to primarily communicate via a complex array of sounds and scents.

Reproduction: There's usually one and sometimes two breeding pairs in a group. Pregnancy lasts about 6 months. The rest of the group help raise the young. This group is primarily composed of multigenerational siblings while secondarily being populated by migratory adults. If the dominant female is removed, the next oldest female becomes fertile ([Histerman et al 1987](#)). If a subordinate female is removed and placed with an unrelated male, she becomes fertile ([Ziegler et al 1987](#)). These subordinate individuals, whether old or young, male or female, can leave in hopes of forming or joining a new group ([University of Wisconsin](#)).

Diet: Wild: Insects and fruits with the occasional lizard ([University of Wisconsin](#))

Zoo: Marmoset diet, apples, kale, mixed vegetables, grapes and berries

Conservation: As of 2008 it is considered critically endangered ([IUCN redlist](#)). More than three fourths of its original habitat have been cut down ([waza](#)). They are also being captured for the illegal pet trade.

FYI:

- In Colombia, if a child is being unruly or demanding, the parents will tell them not to be a tifi or a bichichi. Spanish names for the cotton top tamarin.
- Sample of calls are found here ([University of Wisconsin](#)).
- When a group of tamarins comes into contact with another group, instead of physically fighting they will show their rear ends as a territorial display ([Pittsburgh Zoo](#)).



Range & Habitat:

Dry deciduous and second growth forests. Live mostly in the understory



Lifespan: up to 24 years in captivity, 13 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations:

Communicate mostly by sound and smell ([Snowdon et al 1982](#))

IUCN Conservation Status:

Critically Endangered

