

# The Smallest of the Monkeys

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In a dense jungle down in the Amazon there are small squirrel like creatures scampering around in the trees, do you know what they are? They're the smallest of the New World monkeys – the marmosets and tamarins. These vocal monkeys are very intelligent and are known for their beauty. They're very fun and interesting to study.

These cute little monkeys live in South America and parts of Central America. They are arboreal so they need lots of trees to hide in and to get their food, which means they can only live in dense jungles. Since people are cutting down the rainforests the monkeys have nowhere to live and now 23% of the Callitrichidae group is vulnerable. It's sad how people will hurt animals and their homes for their own benefit.

These little monkeys range in sizes but not big sizes. From the smallest to the biggest it's the 40 cm. Pygmy Marmoset to the 75 cm. Golden Lion Tamarin. They're only the size of a kitten and the Pygmy Marmoset only weighs 100 grams. That's a little monkey.

The Callitrichidae group is not only known for their small size, but also their hair. Each monkey has tufts of hair or manes that make them unique. The Common Marmoset has white tufts of hair on its ears, the top of the Cotton-Top Tamarin's head is covered in white hair, and the Golden Lion Tamarin is named after its golden mane. These monkeys are beautiful.

The marmosets and tamarins live in territorial groups called troops. These troops have 5 or 6 monkeys in them. There is one dominant female within these troops. She is the only female allowed to have babies. Whenever another monkey troop comes into their territory they make a lot of noise to let them know they don't like to share.

Callitrichidae are special because all of the species, except for Goeldi's Monkey, give birth to twins 80% of the time. When the infants are born they are carried on their parents back. The males only give the babies to the mother to nurse. Sometimes the older siblings will play with the infants.

You may be surprised when you find out what they eat. They eat fruit, but they also eat small birds, insects, sap, and seeds. Marmosets have sharp canines designed for biting branches to get to the sap. Tamarins don't eat sap, so they don't have the big canines. If one bites you they can cause serious damage.

Callitrichidae have 27 species. If you want to include sub-species there are 60. In the 1990's 3 more were discovered. I think it's amazing that after all these years things are still being discovered. "Man cannot discover new oceans without losing sight of the shore."-Andre Gide

Marmosets and tamarins will hold grudges. If they don't like you they will attack. They will also attack intruders. When they feel threatened they will attack where they can inflict the most pain: eyes, ears, or fingertips.

You need to think hard before getting one of these monkeys. They can make good pets, but they can easily get angry or lonely. You have to spend a lot of time with it in order for it to make a good pet. The best Callitrichidae to keep as a pet is the Red Handed Tamarin. They're known for wanting to be around people. Marmosets and tamarins have been kept as pets since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. I think it would be fun to have one as a pet.

As I've said before marmosets and tamarins are very fun to study. They love to play, and when they're not, they're hunting for food or relaxing. I think they're really cute and extremely interesting.

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