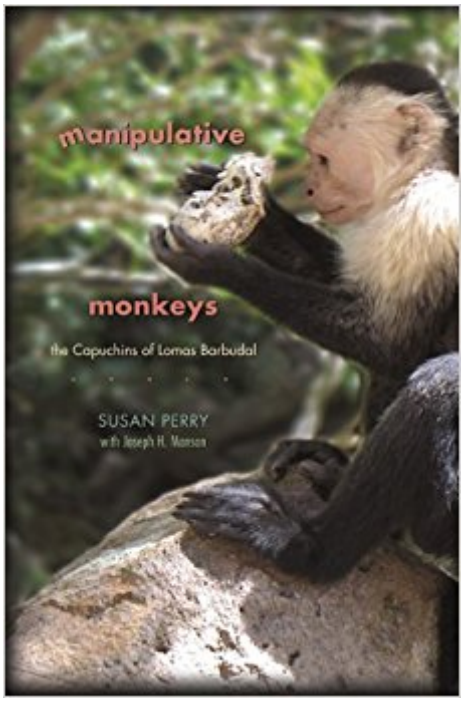
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Manipulative Monkeys: The Capuchins Of Lomas Barbudal



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Synopsis

With their tonsured heads, white faces, and striking cowls, the monkeys might vaguely resemble the Capuchin monks for whom they were named. How they act is something else entirely. They climb onto each other's shoulders four deep to frighten enemies. They test friendship by sticking their fingers up one another's noses. They often nurse--but sometimes kill--each other's offspring. They use sex as a means of communicating. And they negotiate a remarkably intricate network of alliances, simian politics, and social intrigue. Not monkish, perhaps, but as we see in this downright ethnographic account of the capuchins of Lomas Barbudal, their world is as complex, ritualistic, and structured as any society. Manipulative Monkeys takes us into a Costa Rican forest teeming with simian drama, where since 1990 primatologists Susan Perry and Joseph H. Manson have followed the lives of four generations of capuchins. What the authors describe is behavior as entertaining--and occasionally as alarming--as it is recognizable: the competition and cooperation, the jockeying for position and status, the peaceful years under an alpha male devolving into bloody chaos, and the complex traditions passed from one generation to the next. Interspersed with their observations of the monkeys' lives are the authors' colorful tales of the challenges of tropical fieldwork--a mixture so rich that by the book's end we know what it is to be a wild capuchin monkey or a field primatologist. And we are left with a clear sense of the importance of these endangered monkeys for understanding human behavioral evolution.

Book Information

Hardcover: 368 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press; 1St Edition edition (February 28, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674026640

ISBN-13: 978-0674026643

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 6.4 x 1.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #796,927 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 inÃ Â Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Antigua #110 inÃ Â Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Apes & Monkeys #115 inÃ Â Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Primatology

Customer Reviews

Capuchins are no regular monkeys. They have huge brains, and seem about as smart and 'cultured' as any ape. I know of no better guides to their social life than Susan Perry and Joe Manson, who have devoted their lives to studying these often overlooked creatures in the jungles of Costa Rica. The result is an account that is bound to fascinate and surprise, because the behavior of wild capuchins exceeds our wildest imagination. --Frans de Waal, author of Our Inner ApeSusan Perry and Joseph H. MansonÃ¢â ¬Ëœs book reveals capuchins as having social lives as rich and as complex as those...of humans...PerryÃ¢â ¬Ëœs book, with her husband and research partner, is far more than just stories about monkeysÃ¢â ¬â„¢ social lives. It offers fascinating biology from Costa RicaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s tropical forests, including the small, somewhat ugly, Machiavellian capuchin monkeys. They act as the focus for a discourse that ranges over Ã¢â ¬Å“big questionsÃ¢â ¬Â•: why evolve large brains and intelligence; how do youngsters learn group-typical behavior; why does lethal aggression occur? These questions are embedded in the human drama of fieldwork; snakes, bugs of all kinds, plants with deadly toxicity, ill-fated collaborations, deep friendships and human poachers...We desperately need such studies to be sustained. LetÃ¢â ¬â„¢s hope this fascinating book will go some way towards achieving this aim. --Phyllis C. Lee (Times Higher Education Supplement 2008-06-12)

Ã Â»Â¿Susan Perry is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles.Joseph H. Manson is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Readers will likely agree with Susan Perry that capuchins are the most intelligent and fascinating of the New World monkeys. This fine book, in the tradition of Jane Goodall's "In the Shadow of Man" (1971), mixes rich descriptions of the personal lives of primates (in Goodall's case, chimpanzees) and of the primatologists. Perry and her husband, Joe Manson, and their coworkers, during nearly two decades of on-going study at a site in Costa Rica, rise at 3 AM to follow the capuchins, machete-cutting through the entangling forest, suffering ticks, wasps, snakes, fungal infections, frequent hospital visits, and maniac drivers when back on the road. For my own brief "study" of capuchins, I sat at a comfortable restaurant and bar on the beach near Manuel Antonio National Park, cold drink in hand, watching these little animals in the surrounding trees, but that hardly counts as primatology. Like Goodall and subsequent primatologists whom she inspired, Perry offers anthropocentric interpretations of her subjects' behaviors, less objective that one would find in a research journal but certainly permissible in this accessible account, which is further enlivened by

the author's wit and her obvious love for the arduous work. I suspect that many young readers will contact Susan Perry about signing on for a year as research assistant. I know one who has already.

This book is one of the best to understand what it takes to be a field biologist--an often overlooked detail. But most importantly, I found the topic to be akin to a novel, though it is clearly simply the reduction of many years of hard work into a few hours' worth of reading. Each monkey has a personality that the authors were able to capture and present in such a pleasant way that one could feel attached to some monkeys and clearly dislike the personalities of others. What captured me the most, and what most literature does not talk about, is that monkeys' social structure is a baseline that several modern human social structures are built upon. Their hierarchical nature is akin to the type of fiefdoms that can be found today in many developing nations (and in some extremely rich and famous nations of the world that need not be mentioned in specific). Though the authors do not suggest that monkeys are able to foresee and be goal-oriented, as these are thought to be exclusively human traits, I argue that some of the monkey behaviors portrayed in this book provide a hint otherwise. As a Neuroeconomist, I enjoy learning about the decision-making processes of non-human primates and other non-human animals. This book is exemplary in its deliverance and is very entertaining to read. I highly recommend it at all levels.

Was very informative about the research work being done by Susan Perry and her team. I was so impressed by the hard work and research being generated from this group for so long. We need more researchers like Susan. Thank you!

Well writen and interesting. Good insight into ecololgical/ethological research.

Anybody who wants a taste of the life of a field anthropologist studying primates, and/or who is captivated by the soap opera dynamics of our second cousins should enjoy this book. The vivid descriptions of capuchin behavior left me seeing primate antics everywhere in the human world. A fun but serious read.

This book gives you and amazing and in depth look into the lives of these highly social, complex monkeys. Primatology has often been dominated by studies on apes, but the Lomas Barbudal project has brought us leaps closer to understanding primate behavior by dedicating decades of intense research to this species of new world monkey. Reading about some of the daily family,

political, and terretorial dramas of the white-faced capuchins, you cannot help but see just how similar they are to us. These are some remarkable and intelligent capuchins just bursting with personality. They are problem-solvers, drama queens, pranksters, lovers and fighters. I highly recommend this book to any primatologist or person interested in social behavior!!! This book has some wonderful photos and gives you glimpses into what it is like to be a primatologist in the field. It is a great resource!!!

This book not only introduced me to the amazing life of these wonderful monkeys but it also reads like a novel. One of my favorite books of the decade.

While from a purely academic standpoint this book is informative, interesting, and overall excellently written, it has a far greater purpose than simply to satisfy idle curiosity. Monkeys and apes exist as one of the greatest threats to mankind. I submit as evidence the multiple cases of chimps just flipping out and going bananas on their owners, often biting off noses, fingers, and testes, or even killing their comparatively helpless victims. A 90 pound chimp is more than a match for most fully grown men. Capuchins, while seemingly innocuous due to their diminutive stature and "cute" appearance, are possibly the worst of the bunch. Disturbingly self-aware, capuchins (as described in this book) are probably the most intelligent of the new world monkeys, possessing exceptionally large brains for their body size (second only to humans). In addition, Michelle Press does an excellent job of describing some of the more frightening actions of these simian killing machines, including forming totem poles of up to four monkeys piled on top of each other as they converge on their doomed prey. I encourage anyone at all concerned about the growing threat of capuchin dominance to read this book in order to stem the tide of the marmoset menace. The next person they go ape on could be you.

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