



by Cyril Brass



With the start of each day, the sun rise brings activity to the tropical rainforests. I listen closely for the sounds of motion. My eyes scan the thick lush vegetation as I walk the trails deep in the Manuel Antonio National Park of Costa Rica.

In the distance I could hear the rustling of branches and chatter of monkeys. But which species? The cute tiny Squirrel Monkeys, I was hoping.

There are three species of monkey in this small protected area; Howler, White-faced Capuchin and Squirrel Monkeys. This is one of two locations in Costa Rica where it is possible to see the endangered Squirrel Monkey. The Grey Crowned subspecies is endemic to the Manuel Antonio region situated in the lush Pacific Coastal forests.

The inquisitive traveller is more likely to hear them before seeing them. They are highly vocal and social animals communicating with their group spread out on trees and vegetation. With a keen eye catching the movement amongst the foliage, you can spot these protected creatures.

I focus on the sounds in the distance and anticipate their direction of movement in order for me to take the correct trail to get the best view of these active primates. From dawn to dusk, the Squirrel Monkeys' day is full of movement throughout their natural habitat.

After a short hike along the groomed trail, I spotted one leaping from one branch to another, which seemed to be too great a distance for this tiny animal. Then another one sitting quietly perched on a broad leaf branch, grasping tightly with its nimble toes, munches on a sweet juicy flower. Traveling with speed and agility, they scamper across vines, branches, tree to tree constantly searching and foraging for food. I could see more movement in the lush vegetation further off the trail. The Squirrel Monkeys travel in mid-size groups, so when you see one or two, you are sure to see more near by.

Then I hear some rustling in the trees above. Looking up, I see a pair of dark eyes staring back at me. Curious yet



cautious, he watches the activity below. A sudden scream from one warns the rest of the group of potential danger close by. Changing his attention, his eyes and body position become alert and ready, reacting to his travel mates' warning call. A sharp shriek and off he went, soon to be hidden in the dense foliage.

As the Squirrel Monkeys are territorial, part of their natural habitat which they move throughout frequently is within the park boundaries and part is outside the protected region. So it is possible to see these precious creatures in the trees and vegetation along the beach or near the hotels and restaurants.

While traveling to the Central Pacific region of Costa Rica, on each trip I have made a point of photographing these special animals in the Manuel Antonio National Park and surrounding area.

However the territory of these critically endangered animals continues to shrink due to deforestation and loss of natural habitat. This particular subspecies of the Squirrel Monkey is the most threatened monkey in Costa Rica and there is no where else in the world to see and enjoy them. As foreign travelers we must do our part so that endangered wildlife do not become extinct. [ca](#)



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