



Leaves rustle in the

forest. Tree branches break and fall to the ground. There is something moving over there in the dense jungle. Loud screeches echo through the dense growth. Then out of the thick vegetation climbs a white-faced Capuchin Monkey. Then another one and another one. They all stop for a moment to check out what is on the ground below before they scamper back into the depths of the forest.

The white-faced monkeys are versatile creatures, native to tropical rainforests of Central America and northern parts of South America. Unlike many wildlife species that live in the tropics, the white-faced monkeys are not dependent on one specific habitat and therefore are found in a wider geographical area. This is due to the wide range of plants and animals in their diet. They eat foods such as flowers, fruits, nuts, seeds and invertebrates. Sometimes even human type foods, if they get their hands on it. They are important to the rainforest ecosystems because of their role in dispersing seeds and pollen across a wide territory.

As long as there is a consistent water source for daily drinking, they will remain in that area. But that doesn't mean that they have to descend to the ground to find that water source. Ample water resources exist high in the forest captured by bromeliads and tree crevices.

The white-faced monkeys are one of four primate species in Costa Rica. They are the most common of the four species and the most likely to be seen during hikes through rainforests or walks along beaches whether you are on the Atlantic side or the Pacific side of the country.



During one of my excursions through the Cahuita National Park situated on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica, I encountered three separate white-faced monkey troops in different parts of the park.

The white-faced monkeys are considered to be the most intelligent of all monkey species. They possess an intelligence to make and use basic tools for weapons and for reaching food. With excellent motor movement skills, their human-like fingers are able to handle the smallest objects with ease such as nuts and seeds.

These monkeys are high energy, active animals climbing through the dense jungle from tree to tree searching and searching for something to eat. When they do climb down to ground level they continue to forage for ripened fruits, insects and nuts overturning every fallen leaf and branch.

They even search in travelers bags if they are given the opportunity.

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white-faced capuchin

by Cyril Brass

Any shiny or unknown object will get their attention. Unguarded backpacks, beach bags or picnic lunches will be quickly examined by these curious creatures. I watched one brave monkey unzipping a backpack while keeping his eye on the unsuspecting owner. Reaching in with his long arm and agile fingers, he made a quick attempt to grab something, anything. Once the owner noticed the thieving monkey, the four legged robber made a fast escape to a safe area high in a nearby tree.

This monkey species shows little fear around humans. Perhaps a cautious awareness of where the humans are around them. But given the opportunity, their curiosity overtakes them, to check out any unprotected object they have seen.

Even though they come to the ground to forage for food, the majority of the time they spend in the trees where they are most comfortable and protected. From sunrise to sunset, the white-faced monkeys are on the move traveling through the forest. While moving about they are continuously in visual contact and communicating with each other.

Without any hesitation they take spring-like jumps from tree to tree. One after another they leap over large gaps landing safely on what seems like the smallest of branches. They balance themselves so easily on each branch like a high wire tight rope walker. The white-faced monkeys bring lots of movement, energy and noise into the lush green vegetation which is mostly quiet and motionless.

The White-faced Capuchin Monkey . . . an inquisitive animal . . . a highly active primate . . . an intelligent monkey. **ca**

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