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Predation of a Frog by Introduced Tufted Capuchins, *Cebus apella*, in Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago

During an intensive study of the introduced tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*) in the Chaguaramas peninsula during March–November, 2010 (Narang *et al.* 2010), we observed the behaviour by which a capuchin monkey systematically ate a frog. We describe below, the observations of that predation event.

The Tufted Capuchin Monkey, *Cebus apella*, occurs throughout Amazonia and is consistently classified as an omnivore. Thus, while it is largely frugivorous and insectivorous, it is also known to eat buds, new shoots, pith, stems, seeds, flowers, nectar, arthropods, lizards, frogs, bird's eggs and snakes (Rylands 1987). They are very resourceful in their foraging methods and catching arboreal frogs from hollow bamboo internodes has been well documented (Izawa 1978).

While conducting the surveys on the *C. apella* population in the Chaguaramas peninsula (Narang *et al.* 2010), we observed a tufted capuchin juvenile carrying a dead frog of an unknown species. We initially observed the capuchin at a distance of around 10 m and slowly moved to about 5 m during the predation event. It appeared that the monkey had just taken the frog from the forest floor and was moving up into the bamboo, *Bambusa vulgaris* understory. This monkey remained in the bamboo at a height of approximately 3 m from the ground. The frog was not seen prior to the capture, so we are uncertain if it was killed by the capuchin or if it was already dead. The species of the frog was undetermined at the time of these observations and no sample of the frog was obtained as it was mostly consumed.

Upon finding a suitable bamboo limb for use as a surface, the capuchin was seen intensely examining the belly of the frog. After removing the skin of the frog's abdomen, the capuchin collected nearby wet bamboo leaves and used these to wipe the interior visceral cavity of the frog. We observed the capuchin spending approximately 8–10 minutes in the consumption of the internal organs and viscera of the frog.

During the consumption of the frog, a second capuchin monkey of similar size approached the first monkey from

behind. Although no begging behaviour was observed, this second monkey was clearly aware of the presence of the frog in the first monkey's possession. The proximity of the second monkey apparently caused the first monkey with the frog to make swift movements with the frog in its hands or mouth, and avoid the second monkey.

After consumption of the viscera and internal organs, the first monkey proceeded to consume the thigh and leg of the frog. We were not able to observe the complete consumption of the frog as the monkey moved into the higher canopy with the remains of the frog carcass.

With the recent documentation of *C. apella* as an introduced primate species in Trinidad (Narang *et al.* 2010), little is currently known of its diet in the forests of the Chaguaramas peninsula. Further research is required to understand the ecology of this introduced species, including their taxonomy, behaviour and diet. Such information is important for understanding and managing their potential impact on the two endemic primate subspecies in Trinidad, and the wider biota of this island.

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