

Family: Callitrichidae

Marmosets and Tamarins

Habitat: Rainforests and deciduous forests

Rainforest Layer: Emergent, canopy and understory

Distribution: South and Central America

Diet: Mainly fruit, flowers, tree sap, leaves and insects

Longevity: About 10 years in the wild, up to 18 in captivity

Status: Some are common, others are critically endangered



Marmosets and Tamarins are some of the smallest monkeys. All marmosets and tamarins live in South and Central America and belong to the group of monkeys called 'New World Monkeys'. They are all members of the family Callitrichidae.

All callitrichids live in trees. They have gripping claws to help them climb. They also have long tails. They can't grab with these tails but instead use them for balance (like a squirrel). These tiny monkeys are very active, jumping around in the canopy layer of forests in search of food.



Callitrichids typically live in small, territorial groups. In these groups they work together to raise their young. Young ones will typically remain with their parent's group for a few years to help care for their younger siblings before finding a new group.

Marmosets and Tamarins are classified into different groups based on their teeth. Tamarins have very large front teeth, which help them gouge holes in trees to get out insects. Marmosets have smaller front teeth. They also have differences in behaviour. Marmosets are very territorial and will aggressively defend themselves. Tamarins are much more timid and typically hide when frightened or challenged.

Colchester Zoo has many different types of these tiny monkeys. Most of them are in the Rainforest Walkthrough, Worlds Apart Walkthrough or by Wilds of Asia. Some of the species housed at the zoo include: silvery marmoset, very small with goblin ears; Geoffroy's marmoset with a white face and black ear tufts; Goeldi's marmoset, covered in fluffy black fur; emperor tamarin with a long white moustache; pied tamarin with a distinct two-colour body; golden lion tamarin, bright orange and a large orange mane; and the golden-headed lion tamarin, black with a bright orange mane.