

I've seen a little monkey! ^[1]

Submitted on 19 June 2006 - 4:05pm

This article is reproduced by CienciaPR with permission from the original source.

Calificación:



Cited from [endi.com](#) ^[2] By Liz Yanira del Valle / Special El Nuevo Día It is a well known secret. It is not a joke, but related cybernetic jokes about the subject already exist. Of course, exactly what we needed in the Island of Enchantment: another invasion. I am talking about monkey sightings in the metropolitan area, something that has been reviewed even by the American press. Recently, people in the Island have had “close encounters” in different parts of the metropolitan area from Guaynabo City to Cataño. The last one was a sighting of a patas monkey in the Amelia neighborhood of Cataño. If you did not know it, let me inform you, because this monkey business has a long tail... Is “vox populi” that for years monkeys have been object of scientific research in several geographic points of the Island. In addition to the monkeys for research purposes, it is known that since the 60's the Island has another population of monkeys. They are the “wild” monkeys located in their majority in the southwest of Puerto Rico. How these monkeys got to form these free communities is matter of documentation and reason for debate between all the organizations related to the subject. According to Environmental Evaluation for the Project on the Control of the Population of Monkeys in Puerto Rico, prepared by the Department of Natural Resources (DRNA), these monkeys were brought to the Caribbean more than 300 years ago. Under the North American military government, during the 30's, macaques rhesus monkeys where introduced to the Island for study and scientific research. In 1938, Santiago Key, located to the south of Puerto Rico, received 400 monkeys from India. The National Institutes of the Health, which from 1887 administers things related to medical research in the United States, had responsibility on these studies. In 1956, the Laboratory of Perinatal Physiology continued its experiments with monkeys in Santiago Key. From 1961 to 1982 there was another population of primates in Parguera. From 1965 to 1971 the Island of Desecheo welcomed near 57 rhesus with research purposes aims. In 1970, the Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico

established the Primates Research Center of the Caribbean. Its headquarters are in the military base of Sabana Seca, along with other facilities located in Santiago Key and the Medical Sciences Campus. In these laboratories the presence of primates is completely lawful. Also, they are those populations that live in zoological or in seasonal shelters of the DRNA. In spite of this, the reasons for the monkey population to become so publicly evident are varied. They go from the escape of research monkeys, robbery of such; illegal traffic; laxness in the handling of the situation on behalf of responsible institutions, among many others. It does not matter the cause, the certain thing is that a loose monkey; gain for the unscrupulous. Doctor Janis González, specialist in primatology and assistant director of the Primate Center of the Caribbean and Puerto Rico, speculates that the distribution of monkeys through diverse points of the Island is due to the magnitude of the purchase and illegal sale of this species in the southwest. "I have seen the traps and know that there are people who will pay up to \$500 for one of these creatures", she added. The captain of the Watchmen Body of the DRNA, Enrique Rodríguez Picorelli, agrees with González in that the patas monkey seen in Cataño, is a case more related to the illegal traffic that operates in the southwest of the country. This monkey (*Erythrocebus* legs) is native of the west of Africa. It avoids living in the forests and inhabits the savannahs and semi-desertic zones. "We know cases of dealers that have been arrested, which had sold the animals for \$3,000", the captain expressed. It is obvious, that it is a lucrative business. Rodríguez Picorelli said that although astonishing, very peculiar arrests related to the subject occur very often. One of most impressive for the captain was one of an individual that transported a pair of little monkeys in the back part of its car. "The police noticed him, arrested the individual and it gave the babies to us. We are the legal authority that deals with this matter and we found them a home in a zoo in Miami", he told us. Doctor González stressed that having monkeys is a violation to Law 176, that prohibits the possession of monkeys as pets. "Certainly while they are babies or youngsters they are charming, but the panorama changes when they arrive adulthood, since they are not domestic animals and they can bite or scratch us. That's when the illegal owners free them and we get the situation of sightings in diverse points of the country", the doctor said. The complaint is well-known and protests of agriculturists of the southwest of the Island, who without wanting feed the monkeys, but lose their harvests. The debate is enthusiastic because there are citizens who defend the monkeys and they even formed an organization for them. The Society for Animal Protection has also come out in defense of the primates, but the DRNA remembers us that these animals threaten endemic species of the flora and local fauna. The Environmental Evaluation of the Project on the Control of the Population of Monkeys points out the attack of the monkeys on the mariquita, and endangered species. Personnel of the agency say that in the worst case scenario the next victim could be the Puerto Rican parrot. "We cannot allow that these monkeys arrive at the Central Mountain range, because that will complicated the problem and controlling it will become more difficult", added Jose Luis Chabert, director of the Department of Specialized Logistics of the DRNA. Rhesus' as well as patas are the kinds of monkeys that form these "wild" populations, that threatens continuing causing problems, clarified doctor González. They do not carry AIDS. In the case of rhesus, they could transmit hepatitis B virus. This virus is part of the animal's normal profile, but the virus can be transmitted when the animal bites or scratches a person. This virus is a zoonosis, defined by the World Health Organization as the diseases and infections that are naturally transmitted from the animal to man. Most of people who have died of rhesus monkey bite are scientists or employees of the research centers where these primates are. The main cause has been the encephalitis, a severe inflammation of the encephalic mass.

Links

[1] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/external-news/ive-seen-little-monkey> [2]
<http://www.endi.com/XStatic/endi/template/nota.aspx?n=14468>