Squirrel Monkeys’ Habits of Cohabitation
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Background Biology

- Common squirrel monkeys, *Saimiri sciureus*, are a small New World monkey.
- Body length of 23-38 cm with a weight of up to 1.4 kg.²
- Faces are white while the rest of their body is yellow to a gray-green color.
- Live in South American rainforests. They live in the middle strata.²,³
- Gestate from 129 days to 226 days⁴,⁵
- Can’t digest vitamin D in D₂ form. They must ingest it in D₃ form.⁴
- They are insectivores and frugivores. However they will eat mollusks, small invertebrates and nuts.⁷,⁸
- They form small groups.⁶
- I will be conducting behavior research at the Buffalo Zoo and will investigate how the squirrel monkeys interact with each other in their shared enclosure.
- Females group up and they will ostracize males.⁹

Exhibit and Study Animals

- Exhibit houses two female and one male squirrel monkeys, and multiple brown Capuchin monkeys
- Exhibit is oblong simulated forest about 4m by 1m
- Ropes, a few trees and windows are accessible to monkeys
- Squirrel monkeys are only distinguishable by their genitalia and the male is noticeably larger

Behaviors Observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>As implied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locomotion</td>
<td>Moving from one place to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basking</td>
<td>Laying in the sun or standing in the window</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grooming</td>
<td>staying still while only itching or searching through the fur</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>physical contact e.g. jumping on, biting without vocalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Play with vocalizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonaggressive contact</td>
<td>Anytime they come within 0.3 meters of each other but don’t display aggression. Includes play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching</td>
<td>Turning head in an inquisitive manner while still or moving.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods

Research Question: Do the two female squirrel monkeys exhibit aggressive behavior in the presence of the male?

- Sampled all occurrences of aggressive and nonaggressive contact between the females when male is present and absent
- Focused on single female during ten minute interval
- All bouts of contact, aggressive and nonaggressive, were separated by more than five seconds
- Sampling was done in nine ten minute intervals over three days

Results

- No bouts of aggressive contact with the male
- Most contact behaviors were nonaggressive
- One bout of female-female aggression without the male on the first and second day

Conclusions

- No aggression was observed between the females while near the male
- These results in this captive group do agree with other data from wild populations⁶

Bibliography