

Emperor Tamarin

(*Saguinus imperator*)

Kingdom: *Animalia*

Phylum: *Chordata*

Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Primates*

Family: *Cebidae*



DESCRIPTION: The “Emperors” are mainly gray on their bodies, with a mixture of fine yellow hair on their backs and a rusty-red scattering of color on their breast. They also have a silvery brown crown, black hands and feet, and a reddish white moustache that hangs down to its chest in two strands. Like most tamarins, this species has claws on all of its fingers and toes except the great toe, which has a nail. Emperor tamarins are active by day and are very graceful, friendly, and playful monkeys. They are “leapers” in their motor behavior and move through trees with rather quick, jerky movements.

RANGE/HABITAT: *Saguinus imperator* is found in various forms of light, dry-bottom to densely grown Amazonian forest margins in seasonally inundated regions. Their territories are between 75-100 acres and also span open woodlands and secondary growth. This species is arboreal, spending most of its time in trees, usually below 80-95 feet elevation.

COURTSHIP/GESTATION/BIRTH: The estrus cycle of the Emperor Tamarin is about 15 days, and the female mates with all the males of the group. The gestation period lasts from 140-145 days, after which 1-2 young are born. The father usually helps with the baby’s birth, receiving it at the end of parturition and washing it. A newborn Emperor is completely helpless, weighs approximately 1.2 oz, and has a coat of short hair. A mother feeds her baby every 2-3 hours. The babies ride on the backs of their parents for 6-7 weeks, and at around 2-3 months of age they go through a weaning period. Most of these tamarins become sexually mature around 16-20 months of age. The life span of this species is 10-20 years.

DIET: Their diet consists mainly of fruits, insects, and tree sap. It feeds on fruit, flowers, and nectar of different species of trees, usually those with small crowns. Emperor tamarins get most of the protein in their diet through

eating invertebrates such as locusts, beetles, butterflies, spiders, and ants. The tree sap is an additional source of valuable carbohydrates and minerals. Emperor tamarins have also been known to eat smaller vertebrates such as lizards, tree frogs, and bird eggs.

STATUS: Special concern. *Saguinas imperator* is considered endangered or threatened in Brazil and Peru, but in other areas of their terrestrial biome, the IUCN classifies their status as indeterminate. The clearing of forest habitat by humans is the main reason they are in danger.

FACTOIDS: This species also displays a need for tenderness, as in captivity they love to be stroked by hand and will actually lay on their backs in hopes of extra petting attention. Emperor tamarins were named after the Emperor of Germany, Emperor Wilhelm II. Taxidermists liked to play with these monkeys and twist up their moustaches to look like the Emperor. Swiss Zoologist Goeldi gave the species the name of “emperor” as a joke, but the name stuck and was soon given the Latin name of “*Saguinas imperator*”.