

Potoo

Potoos are a noisy, strange-looking bird, which can often be found in the canopy of the Amazon rainforest. There are several types of potoo, including the common potoo, the great potoo and the long-tailed potoo.

These birds are nocturnal so are mainly active at night. They spend their days perched upright on trees or branches. They make a distinctive squawking sound, which can sound quite haunting, and they are at their loudest at night. The common potoo's song has been described as sounding like the words, 'poor me, poor me, alone'.



Appearance

Potoos have huge, gaping mouths and large eyes. Their feathers are brown, grey and black, which is perfect for the bird to camouflage among tree trunks and bark. Often, potoos can be found perching vertically, blending into their surroundings with an appearance resembling a broken tree branch.

Diet

The potoo mostly eats bugs and insects, including grasshoppers, moths and beetles. They use their huge eyes for spotting flying insects in the dark and their wide mouth for capturing them and swallowing them whole.

Habitat

Potoos can be found in humid forests in Central and South America. They live in the high branches of trees, camouflaged among the tree bark.

Interesting Facts

- The potoo lays a single egg but generally does not build a nest for it. Instead, the egg is held in a nook or on a stump of a tree branch.
- Both the male and female potoos take turns to incubate the egg before it hatches.

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Sloth

Sloths are known for being particularly slow-moving creatures; all of their movements are careful and deliberate. They are mostly nocturnal and spend up to 90% of their time hanging upside down. Sloths have fairly poor vision and hearing so they rely on a strong sense of smell and touch.

Appearance

Species of sloths are divided into two families: two-toed sloths and three-toed sloths. Both of these species share similar appearance characteristics, including thick fur, rounded heads, flat snouts and stumpy tails. As they spend so much of their time hanging from branches, they have long curved claws to help with grip. Typically, they are between 60cm and 80cm in size, weighing anything between 2kg to 10kg.



As they move so little, they often have algae growing on their fur. Their fur provides the algae with a place to grow and the green colouring from the algae provides camouflage for the sloth. What's more, with insects feeding on the algae, it makes the sloth's whole body like a mini jungle habitat of its own!

Diet

Some sloth species eat nothing but leaves, while others also eat fruit, insects and even small lizards. No other mammal digests its food as slowly as the sloth. It can take up to a whole month to digest a single leaf. In fact, the slow movements of the sloth are mainly because of their leaf-based diet, which is low in energy and creates a slow metabolism.

Habitat

Sloths are mostly found in Central and South American rainforests and they mainly live among the branches of trees. They eat, sleep and even give birth while hanging from the branches.

Interesting Facts

- The sloth moves at an average speed of approximately two to four metres per minute.
- Sloths are surprisingly good swimmers and can swim about three or four times quicker than they can move on land. They are also able to hold their breath for long periods (even more than half an hour) while under water.

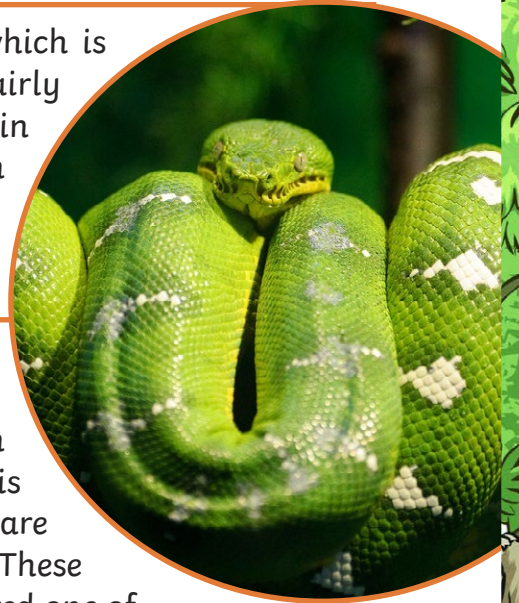
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Emerald Tree Boa

The emerald tree boa is a non-venomous snake, which is often found in the Amazon rainforest. They are fairly solitary animals and only descend to the ground in order to climb a different tree. However, they can move quite swiftly from tree to tree among the branches and foliage. As they are nocturnal, they are mostly active at night.

Appearance

The emerald tree boa is distinctively bright green in colour with a yellow underside. They have an irregular, zigzag pattern along their back, which is sometimes compared to a lightning bolt, and they are similar in appearance to the green tree python. These highly colourful traits mean they are often considered one of the most beautiful snakes in the world.



Adult emerald tree boas can grow to reach up to 2 metres in length and over 1kg in weight. They have vertical pupils – similar to that of cats – which help them to detect their prey's movement. They have a pair of long, sharp teeth, pointed backwards, and a forked tongue. Their heads are relatively large and flat.

Diet

They feed mostly on small mammals, such as rats, bats and possums. Younger snakes may also eat other reptiles and amphibians. They can be hunted themselves by birds of prey, such as the eagle.

Habitat

As indicated by their name, these snakes spend most of their time inhabiting trees. Their habitat is 'arboreal', which means 'related to or resembling trees'. They usually coil themselves around branches during the day and rest their head in the middle of the coil. They can often be found near rivers or swamps but are not dependent on open water.

Interesting Facts

- Emerald tree boas have a life expectancy of approximately 20 years in captivity or slightly less in the wild.
- They are not dangerous to humans and are therefore sometimes kept as pets.

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Red-Eyed Tree Frog

The red-eyed tree frog is just one of many species of frog that lives in the rainforest.

Appearance

As their name suggests, they are mainly known for their huge, bright red eyes. Many scientists believe that their red eyes work as a way of startling predators. When disturbed, they open their eyes and flash the distinctive colour, possibly taking other animals by surprise, to give themselves an opportunity to hop to safety.

The rest of their body is neon green in colour, with a hint of blue and yellow at the sides. They have specially adapted suction-cup toes which help them to cling on to tree branches and leaves.

The male frog is around two inches long, while the female is slightly bigger at up to three inches in length.

Diet

Red-eyed tree frogs are generally considered to be carnivores and mainly eat at night. Their most common prey includes moths, crickets, flies and grasshoppers but they have been known to eat most creatures that fit into their mouths. This could even include other smaller frogs! They hide under leaves and in other concealed spots to ambush their prey with long sticky tongues.

Habitat

They are commonly found in the tropical lowland rainforests or surrounding hills. They mostly inhabit areas close to rivers or ponds and are excellent swimmers. As they are also very capable climbers, they attach themselves to the underside of leaves. This is where they rest during the day as well as clinging to branches and trunks.

Interesting Facts

- Their average lifespan in the wild is around 5 years.
- Male frogs can quiver, and even shake the branch of the tree where they are residing, in order to attract the attention of the females. This is accompanied by a loud croaking in order to establish their territory.

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Scarlet Macaw

The scarlet macaw is one of several species of macaw. The macaws are distinguishable thanks to their differing colours of plumage. Other species include the blue-and-yellow macaw, the great green macaw and the red-fronted macaw. There are at least 17 known species altogether.

Most macaws are intelligent, social birds which often gather together in flocks of ten or more. They make a very loud, throaty squawking noise.



Appearance

Despite their name, scarlet macaws are multicoloured: predominantly red, yellow and blue. Their bodies are between 80cm and 90cm long; around half of this is made up of their long, pointed tail feathers. Their average weight is around 1kg and they have large, powerful beaks that can crack open nuts. They also use their dry, scaly tongue to eat.

Diet

They mostly eat fruit and seeds or nuts, but can also eat insects. During the day, they will fly huge distances to gather food to eat – when flying, they can reach speeds of up to 35 miles per hour! Some macaws have even been seen eating clay or soft soil from riverbanks.

Habitat

Flocks of macaws tend to sleep near each other in the trees at night. They thrive in the tropical, humid atmosphere of the rainforest and can usually be found in either the emergent or canopy layers of the forest.

Interesting Facts

- Macaws can live up to 40-50 years old.
- Scarlet macaws are now considered endangered, primarily due to their capture as exotic pets and to the increasing loss of their natural habitat.

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Jaguar

The elegant jaguar is a member of the wild cat family that can be found in the rainforest regions. It is the largest of all cats in the Americas and is the third largest in the world (behind the lion and the tiger). They are solitary creatures who tend to live and hunt alone. A male jaguar will aggressively protect its territory from other males.



Appearance

Jaguars are famous for their beautiful, spotted coats of fur. They can reach up to six feet in length, from their nose to the tip of their tail, and up to three feet tall at the shoulder. They have very powerful jaws and sharp teeth – strong enough to crack bones or pierce a turtle shell. Like most big cats, they can let out a loud and menacing roar.

Diet

Jaguars mostly hunt for prey at night. They are carnivores with a wide range of smaller animals as potential prey. This extensive list of possible meals includes squirrels, deer and monkeys. They are also known to eat birds and to snatch fish and turtles from the water.

Habitat

Jaguars are found in rainforests as well as grasslands and woodlands. They spend much of their time on the ground or the forest floor, using their soft padded paws to stalk quietly through the undergrowth. They are also capable of climbing trees either to hunt or to rest. Unlike many other big cats, jaguars are also known to enjoy being around water to hunt, bathe and play.

Interesting Facts

- Jaguars have no threat from any natural predators – except for humans. Many are shot and killed through fear. They are also hunted for their fur, although this trade has declined in modern times.

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