

**CAPUCHINS IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL CAATINGA: LIMITS OF OCCURRENCE, AREA OF USE, AND DIET**

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Capuchin monkeys are occupying Caatinga areas in northeastern Brazil, representing the extreme dry and hot environment of this genus distribution. We surveyed a total of 17 Caatinga areas during a 36 months period (Jan 2007 to Dec 2009). Groups of *Cebus libidinosus* were found in nine areas and one group of *C. flavius* (or hybrid) in one. This is the northeastern most limit of *C. flavius*, a species typical from Atlantic forest, and an indication that Caatinga formed during Pleistocene after retraction of Amazonian forest. Two areas were intensively studied during 12 months (Jan to Dec 2009): 225,40 hectares of arboreal Caatinga (trees of 6m high) and 361,18 hectares of arbustive Caatinga (trees up to 3m high) both with deciduous leaves. Animals were not habituated but *ad libitum* encounters indicate that groups' size did not differ between areas (mean = 20 animals). Large number of nut cracking tool use sites were found in both areas (up to 613 in a single month), and four different nuts at different maturation stages are cracked. Total exploration areas were larger at arbustive (163,58ha) than at arboreal Caatinga (42,89ha). Our data confirm *Cebus* dietary and behavioral flexibility, and environmental differences account for differences found in frequency of tool use.

Keywords: Capuchin, *Cebus*, Caatinga, Foraging, Tool use