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CAPUCHIN EVOLUTION: COMPARING BEHAVIOR, MORPHOLOGY & GENETICS ACROSS SPECIES

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Capuchin monkeys, genus *Cebus*, have fascinated researchers for their ecological and behavioral plasticity, social learning, tool-use, and destructive foraging skills. However, until recently, capuchin characteristics have not been evaluated in an evolutionary framework, because of a lack of understanding of the evolutionary relationships across species. Capuchins have frustrated morphologists because of the difficulty in classifying distinct populations or species, due to highly variable morphology within populations as a result of distinctive stages of maturation, sexual dimorphism, and individual variation. Recent genetic studies, building on morphological and geographical datasets, have begun to produce hypotheses about the phylogenetic relationships across the many capuchin species and shed light on both the early patterns of colonization of ecological zones and the present day distribution of capuchin species in Central and South America. In this symposium, we take a comparative approach to look at genetics, morphology and behavior across capuchin species, to understand more about capuchin evolutionary history and selection pressures on behavior and morphology across different ecological regions.

Keywords: *Cebus*, phylogenetics, morphology, behavior