


MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2000

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# Simian thieves steal state secrets, cheese

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NEW DELHI

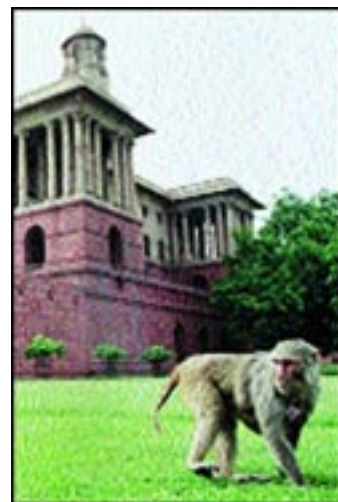
Knuckles scraping the ground, a gray-haired burglar cases the neighborhoods of Delhi. Just before sunup and just after sundown, he pops windows, wriggles under awnings, breaks into homes and offices, steals clothes, chews pencils and candles, opens drawers and refrigerators, finds the cheese you brought from Amsterdam - all the while having the greatest time, laughing at police and mocking his victims.

Want to catch him? Climb a tree.

India's simian thieves are the multiplying tribes of Delhi. Ten years ago the city wrung its hands when the hordes of rhesus monkeys reached 3,000. Now there are some 7,000 grinning infiltrators (nail those windows shut!). Almost half of them hang out, sometimes upside down, in the hallways, verandas, parking lots and parapets of the grand, British-built federal ministries here, especially the Home and Defense and Military Intelligence offices, where the signs say, "do not feed monkeys."

In 1998 a stack of classified documents was filched and later found scattered on the lawn with monkey prints. Senior officials now walk with nightstick-toting bodyguards after the larger males started showing up in elevators.

"All our ministries have monkeys, monkeys, and more monkeys," says Iqbal Malik, one of India's leading primatologists. "Monkeys like to live around VIPS. It's a phenomenon. But it is spreading to new areas."



**GOVERNMENT PROWLER:** Animals sneak into buildings.  
LYNSEY ADDARIO

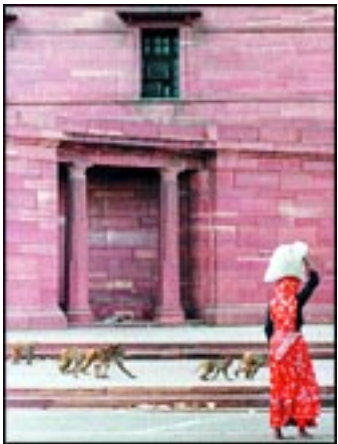
The little beasts are a growing problem not only in Indian urban areas, but in Hindu Nepal and Bali in Indonesia, where monkeys are viewed as gods. Sweet while they are babies, and naturally shy in the forest, the new generations of urban monkey toughs are fed by humans near temples and parks. In return, the emboldened simians twist TV antennas, bite a dozen people a day in Delhi, annoy and frighten children, and pets, and cows. This month a monkey launched a flowerpot off an upper terrace, killing a landlord. Still, Delhi employs only one monkey catcher, and he isn't eager to talk to the press.

"Without a workable monkey policy, the gods are becoming pests," says Dr. Malik, who feels that allowing the animals to dwell in cities is bad for people, and especially bad for the monkeys.

Malik has done field research for two decades on the rhesus, the species that populates the cities and jungles of north India. Malik is also the official conscience of the fitful efforts to remove monkeys from downtown Delhi in a humane manner. In India, rhesus stocks have increased from 300,000 to 500,000 in the 1990s; of these, about 60 percent now live among humans.

In Malik's view, the problem was exacerbated by monkey exports to the West during the first 70 years of the 20th century. Hundreds of thousands were sent live, often packed in small boxes, for experimentation in Europe and the US. Trappers and buyers sought young, or sub- adults, breaking up large colonies into smaller groups that expanded their living space into cities. In 1972, a wildlife preservation act made monkey exports illegal, though some smuggling persists.

Yet for a decade, Delhi has been unable to launch a relocation program. Red tape and funding are the main obstacles. A fight has also been waged against official efforts to capture monkeys with painful leg traps.



PIED PIPER? A woman walks near a government building in New Delhi as monkeys swarm around her. Monkey populations in Delhi have grown to about 7,000.

LYNSEY ADDARIO

Malik has appointed seven municipal employees to be trained to move the monkeys using walk-in traps or nets. And last year, Delhi officials spent tens of thousands of dollars on cages to start the project. When the cages proved too small, Malik protested and new cages were ordered.

Good relocation sites - places with food and water and lots of trees, and where monkeys used to live - are not easy to come by. Environmentalists in Malik's nongovernmental group, Vatavaran, are concerned about the city monkey population growing so quickly that Delhiites may one day react in anger, demanding that the animals be pushed out quickly and with no effort to keep current groups together.

Stories of clever monkeyshines and tricks are rife. In 1997, after a finance minister was attacked in a federal building, authorities installed a high-frequency noisemaker that drove the monkeys off for several months. Yet once the monkeys learned which machine made the sound, they destroyed it.

In Brindavan, a city of nearly a thousand Hindu temples and the site of a successful relocation program, monkeys worked with shopkeepers in a mutually advantageous scam. Hindu pilgrims would visit a tree-shaded area of the city.

Targeting pilgrims wearing eyeglasses, the monkeys swooped down with preternatural quickness and stole the glasses off the pilgrim heads - surely a spectacle of spectacles. Frustrated pilgrims were informed by sweet-shop owners that the glasses would be returned if they offered the monkeys a prasad, or sweet. The prasad would be placed on a bench, where the monkey would take the sweet, and return the specs.

The most significant attribute of the rhesus monkeys, says Malik, is the bond between mother and child. "I have never seen anything so strong as the attachment of the two." A mother will carry her baby everywhere for months after birth. Moreover, Malik has witnessed monkeys adopting babies that have lost their own parents.

Leadership dynamics are another aspect of monkeys that Malik says are unusual. Unlike many animal groupings, monkey leaders are rarely the most aggressive or powerful of the males, and leadership is not imposed from above. Rather, the leader emerges over time, and is usually a fairly reserved monkey - a male who makes the right decision at the right time.

"Monkeys fight, but they never kill each other," Malik says. "Plus, when a fight is over, it just stops. There is no recrimination, and the combatants don't seek revenge."

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# MONKEY TROUBLE

Produced By:	My Pet Productions
Released by:	New Line Cinema
Producer:	Ridley Scott and Mimi Polk
Stars:	Thora Birch, Harvey Keitel and Mimi Rogers
Directed by:	Franco Amurri
Screened:	February 22, 1994
Rating:	<a href="#">Acceptable</a>

Monkey Trouble is a family oriented comedy about Dodger, a Capuchin monkey who had once belonged to petty criminal, Shorty. Dodger has been trained to steal money, jewels, and everything else imaginable.

While performing yet another robbery in a suburban neighborhood, Dodger climbs into a window and meets a young girl, Eva Gregory. The two become inseparable as Eva hides Dodger in her room, lying to her parents who have forbidden her to keep any pets in the home as of her step-father is allergic to animals.

Meanwhile, Shorty is desperate to recapture the monkey so he can put him back to work in his crime ring. In the process of escaping from Shorty, Eva and Dodger both learn that crime and lying do not pay. They mend their ways and Dodger becomes a permanent member of the Gregory family.

As can be expected where a monkey is one of the main stars of the film, animal action is throughout. Actually, four different monkeys played the part of Dodger, each of them trained to perform different actions. Also, in addition to the trained monkeys who worked in the film, puppets and fake monkeys supplied by the special effects and prop departments were utilized to enhance the illusion of the monkey's on screen behavior.

American Humane was on the set throughout filming. Additionally, during a five month period prior to filming, AHA monitored training and preparation of the monkeys for certain tricks they had to master.

An opening scene establishes Dodger, the monkey, working a crowd with his owner, Shorty, at the beach. The monkey tips his hat, receives money, bows, jumps into a man's arms and back down. The crowd thinks Shorty and the monkey are doing the old organ grinder/monkey routine for loose change. They don't know that Dodger is really pick pocketing watches, jewelry, wallets, etc. for Shorty. The monkey does this routine several times with various people throughout the film. These are simple actions for the monkey, who was responding to visual cues from his trainer. In another such scene the monkey's tail explores a man's trouser pocket, hooking and removing his wallet. In this and other similar close ups, a fake tail is used.

There are many scenes of the monkey climbing up trees and performing different actions like chasing a squirrel, jumping down on people, jumping onto houses and buildings, and just hanging from branches and playing. These were easy for the monkey, as trees and heights are their natural habitat. For the scene with the squirrel, both monkey and squirrel were simply running to their respective cages, responding to the calls of their trainers. In a scene where the monkey jumps down on a female jogger, the jogger was one of the monkey's trainers. As for the many scenes involving roofs and ledges, these were shot in cuts, utilizing low level sets on a sound stage for the shots depicting the greatest heights.

In addition to pick-pocketing and climbing up trees and buildings, there are several other actions the monkey performs repeatedly throughout the movie. These include opening doors, sneaking around, hiding behind doors, under a bed and other places, opening drawers, searching for loot, examining loot and putting it in a cloth purse, getting into and out of Eva's back pack, jumping into Eva's arms and hugging her, as well as general running and scampering.

There is a scene where Dodger hangs by his tail, then swings upward to avoid being hit by a yogurt container, which splatters all over the window. This was shot in separate cuts, with no danger to the monkey. Next, Shorty cocks his foot to kick Dodger, missing him as the monkey dodges, just in time. Shorty then grabs him by the nape of the neck, shoving Dodger's face into a letter to read. This scene was shot in cuts. The actor does not really kick near the monkey. The neck grab is done with a fake monkey. The monkey's face is not really being pushed into the letter, but the letter is actually being moved toward the monkey's face.

Other actions in Shorty's mobile home include knocking two Scotch bottles to the floor, scribbling on a piece of paper with a pencil and stuffing the paper into an envelope, running out a door and into a back alley and darting under parked cars. The scenes were all shot in cuts. The monkeys were responding to cues from their trainers and were rewarded with food. In the alley with the parked cars and, indeed, in all other scenes in streets, the police blocked both ends from any traffic, insuring the monkey's safety.

After the monkey first escapes from Shorty, he darts out from behind trash cans and onto a bed of a truck, which then pulls away. He waves at the truck driver then jumps into a florist's truck while both trucks are waiting at a red light. When the florist's truck drives off and comes to another stop, Dodger jumps off and hides under a parked car. A dog on a leash sniffs around, then backs off. Dodger cautiously comes out and scampers up the nearest tree. These were filmed in cuts. The vehicles were not moving when the monkey was in the truck, and the monkey was not in the same scene with the dog, as they were filmed separately.

When Eva is initially shown on her way home, there are some mild scenes with dogs. Eva and her friends stop to look at puppies in a pet store window where she and a bulldog on a leash fawn over each other.

Scenes utilizing the fake monkey for simple action include Eva and Dodger riding a slide at a playground, Dodger's hand reaching out of Eva's knapsack to take a woman's coin purse, Dodger's tail pulling Eva's little brother, Jack, by the ankle, causing him to fall, and Dodger being pulled from under the bed by his ankles.


A scene where the monkey swings puppies in each hand was shot in cuts using the fake monkey and two puppies in halters. The puppies were comfortable and under no pressure. Another scene using a fake animal involves the real monkey with a fake snake. Eva uses it to scare Dodger into getting into the bathtub. Actually, the monkey was trained with the fake snake and was not afraid of it. He was merely responding to the trainer's cue.

In a chase scene involving Shorty, Dodger and Eva at the beach, Dodger hides under a box. When a dog pulls the box away, the monkey is gone. This was done in cuts. The dog and the monkey were not together. Next is a shot of a snake charmer with a ten foot Boa Constrictor. Again, the monkey was not present for this. Then, on the boardwalk, Dodger is on a bike and baby carrier. This was done in cuts using a fake monkey for most of the shots. For the quick cuts of the real monkey, the trainer ran alongside, off camera, for a few feet at a slow speed. Next, Dodger takes a wild ride on a kite. This scene was, again, shot in cuts using the fake monkey for the shots showing height and distance. For the close ups, the real monkey was secured to a kite, with a harness, which was held ten feet off the ground by reinforced steel cable. His trainer was right up there beside him and there was no danger. Another scene shot in cuts shows the monkey dropping from the kite onto the baby seat of Eva's bike. The fake monkey was used for this, with the trainer gently tossing the monkey approximately two feet or less, onto the moving bike, while running alongside, off camera. The same procedure was followed for a similar stunt with another rolling baby carrier in the chase scene.

In the scene where Shorty's mobile home crashes, the monkey is not in jeopardy. He was not involved in this stunt. Dodger then scrambles out of the skylight on the roof of the mobile home. He jumps into the cab of a truck in the next lane and then out of the other window of the truck. This scene was shot in cuts. The vehicles were not really moving in the scenes with the monkey. For a scene where Dodger fires a gun for Shorty, the scene was done in cuts, using the fake monkey's hands on the gun for the close up, and then the real monkey dropping the fake gun. The sound of gunfire was added later.

In one of the last scenes, a boy tries to lure Dodger away from Eva, using a lizard for bait. This was shot in cuts using both a real and a fake lizard. The real lizard and the monkey were never together.

Questions or Suggestions: [monkeytrouble@ahafilms.org](mailto:monkeytrouble@ahafilms.org)

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