

Monkeys use trees to catapult themselves out of Japanese laboratory

Monkeys at a research institute in Japan have used the branches of trees to catapult themselves over an electric fence in order to escape.



The monkeys were lured back in with peanuts Photo: ALPHA PRESS

By Danielle Demetriou in Tokyo

6:00AM BST 07 Jul 2010

A group of 15 monkeys at Kyoto University's primate research institute in Aichi Prefecture, which are the focus of a string of high-profile scientific studies, escaped from their forest home which is encased by a 17ft high electric fence.

The monkeys made their bid for freedom by using tree branches to fling themselves one by one over the high voltage electric fence located nearly three metres away.

However, despite the intelligence shown in their great escape, the primates appeared unsure as to what to do with their newfound freedom: the monkeys remained by the gates of the research centre and were lured back into captivity by scientists armed with peanuts.

"It was an incredible escape and the first time something like this has ever happened," Hirohisa Hirai, the deputy head of the Primate Research Institute told the Daily Telegraph.

"We think that maybe there was some kind of dispute among the monkeys in the forest and so this group decided to leave.

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"Fortunately, they stayed by the fence after escaping as they probably wanted to stay near to the other monkeys so we managed to recapture them all.

"But we were extremely surprised by the intelligence and the power they used in order to escape."

Scientists have since cut the trees in order to prevent a repeat escape, Mr Hirai added.

The Kyoto institution is one of the world's leading primate research centres, with a series of internationally recognised studies exploring the social interaction, behaviour, biology and evolution of primates.

Around 80 Japanese monkeys currently live in the enclosed forest space within the confines of the institute from which the group of primates managed to escape.

(telegraph.co.uk)