

Whippoorwill E-Comment

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A T A R Z A N M Y T H

For years, I have heard stories about a colony of feral monkeys near Silver Springs, Florida. The water of all central Florida springs flows through a series of large interconnected underground cave system and bubbles up to the surface as crystal clear, natural springs at a number of locations, now designated as State Parks, or as commercially developed and privately owned tourist attraction sites. The aquifer is a massive marine Eocene limestone – some 60 million years old. Silver Springs is arguably the best known Florida spring. In the 1930's, its incredibly clear water attracted some Hollywood movie companies, and a lot of underwater swimming scenes were filmed there. The most notable was the 1939 *Tarzan Finds a Son* which featured an over-long scene of Tarzan and Jane and Boy frolicking in the clear water. There are reports that a total of six Tarzan movies were filmed there, and scenes from these shoots showed up as stock footage in a number of later Tarzan movies. The story I heard was that during the filming, a number of rhesus

monkeys brought in to be in the background to increase the number of animals forming a suitable African ambiance escaped, and soon established an independent breeding colony that has lasted until our time today.

It's a good story. I saw the film but there were no rhesus monkeys in any of the scenes. A bit of investigation revealed that the story is mythical, untrue. No monkeys escaped during the filming, and no such colony exists today. But there was a small population of monkeys that was intentionally released during the spring of 1938, by Colonel Tooey who operated a Jungle Cruise near the Salt River State Park.



Rhesus monkeys. The rH blood factor was first defined in the blood of this animal. About 85% of people are rH positive – which means they have the blood protein. Those without it are designated rH negative. J. Hill Hamon – kyhamon@aol.com