

ANIMALOLOGY: PRIMATE AND PIGEON BASICS

BY

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PRIMATES

Note: IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Classification is as follows:

- A. Not Evaluated (NE)
- B. Data Deficient (DD)
- C. Least Concern (LC)
- D. Near Threatened (NT)
- E. Vulnerable (VU)
- F. Endangered (EN)
- G. Critically Endangered (CR)
- H. Extinct in the Wild (EW)
- I. Extinct (EX) (Generally 50 Years or More)

Before describing the Great Apes, Lesser Apes, Monkeys and Pro-simians, I shall briefly discuss what a primate is.

Primates are members of the biological Order Primates. They

Include the Humans, Great Apes, Lesser Apes, Monkeys and Prosimians.

This book will not include humans hence the title 'Animalogy'.

Primates have 5 fingers (Pentadactyly). All Apes have opposable thumbs. Many New World Monkeys have opposable thumbs on their hands. Many species of primates also have opposable toes. Primates do not have paws; all primate species have hands. The sophistication of the grasping technique depends on the particular species.

Most primates have flat fingernails (excluding Marmosets and Tamarins).

Binocular stereoscopic vision allows Apes to rely more on vision than smell. Prosimians rely more on scent relative to vision in comparison to their more advanced relatives. Many species of diurnal primates have coloured vision.

Primates have long, flexible backbones, short flexible necks, possess a clavicle (collar bone) and have large complex brains for higher mental functioning.

There are no bald primate species. All are essentially covered with hair. The amount, thickness and colour of hair are variable, depending on species, age, gender and health. Serious illness or starvation can result in large patches of baldness on the body.

Vision in primates can be diurnal or nocturnal. A few species of primates are crepuscular (primarily active at dawn and/or dusk).

Some species are exclusively arboreal while others are predominately arboreal descending to the forest floor to catch prey or to pick up fallen fruit, to drink water or to travel. Some primate species are predominately or solely terrestrial.

Water is obtained by eating juicy fruits, cupping leaves in the canopy.

Primates have 3D vision. All apes and monkeys have mobile eyes. Some pro-simian species have fixed eyes. In the latter case, the eyes are basically too large for the sockets and appear too large in comparison to head size. These primates possess a special adaptation in their spinal cord enabling them to turn their heads a full 180 degrees, like owls, who by the way also have large and fixed eyes.

Primate locomotion can be quadrupedal, clinging and leaping, brachiating or brachiating and leaping. Bipedal travelling, if present in any primate species tends to be brief, often comical and will never be permanent due to physiological limitations in the food and spinal cord. Humans are the supreme bipedal species.

With forward-facing eyes and 3D vision is necessary for brachiating and leaping. In addition, these characteristics are needed by primates to catch prey. Diurnal primates tend to have the best colour vision.

Primates with the largest and most complex brains (excluding humans) are the Great Apes.

Opposable thumbs are used for grasping or grasp-like grip. This ability is used in tool making, and in the case of chimpanzees the ability to toss and throw. Tool making is not common amongst primate species.

Orang-utans have thumbs that are located further back in relation to the other fingers on their hands. In addition to this, they have unusually long fingers aiding in the clinging onto branches.

Great Apes lack tails. Tails in non-apes can be prehensile (hooking) and/or used for balance. Some primates have tails that are longer than their head and body. Yet others have studs or remnants of tails.

Primates have an incredible plethora of pelage colours, contours and sizes. The largest living Primate is the gorilla. The smallest is the Mouse Lemur.

Great Apes include Gorillas, Chimpanzees, Bonobos and Orang-utans. Gorillas, Chimpanzees and Bonobos inhabit parts of Africa. Orang-utans inhabit islands in Indonesia and Malaysia. Gibbons are Lesser Apes.

Apes tend to have few offspring and their child is longer than non-apes.

Gorillas, Chimpanzees and Bonobos spend much time on the forest floor (primarily terrestrial). Orang-utans appear quite clumsy when walking on the ground. Gibbons are incredible brachiators and spending almost all of their time in trees. Adult Gorillas, in particular males are too heavy to brachiate.

Possessing a highly developed brain, grasping hands, flat fingernails and well-designed fingerprints Great Apes are more advanced on the evolutionary scale than monkeys or Prosimians. They take more advantage of learned behaviour patterns for survival.

Whenever you come upon stats (example: 2:1:3:3) pertaining to dental formula, use the easy to remember acronym ICPM:

- Incisors
- Canines
- Premolars
- Molars

Regarding the above example written in parenthesis it is for one side of the jaw. Double the number and you get the total

for both sides of the jaw. If indicated in fraction form the lower jaw dental formula is written on the bottom row, the upper jaw on the upper row. If a fraction form is not used it can be indicated in chart form or in complete words describing which jaw the formula is for.

The first 'European sighting' of a gorilla in its native habitat was in the 5th Century B.C. by a Roman explorer.

Gorillas share 98.5 percent of our genetic material. Only Chimpanzees and Bonobos surpass gorillas in genetic similarity to us.

Full-grown male gorillas average 5.5 ft. but can reach 6 ft. in height. Weight can range between 400 to 500 lbs. depending on the sub-species. In extra-ordinary circumstances males can reach upwards of 600 lbs. Females reach 4.5 or taller and weigh 200 lbs. or more.

Gorillas are the largest and most powerful of the Great Apes. They are stocky, very muscular and have a sagittal crest on their head which helps give them very powerful jaw muscles for crushing plants.

Gorillas have 32 teeth, and their large menacing canines are primarily used as part of a threatening posture, but can be used in the uncommon fight; most of their aggression antics are for show. They are usually peaceful but will fight to protect their group. Gorillas are somewhat near-sighted.

Gorillas are herbivores that eat 50 lbs. of plant food daily. Much of their water needs are satisfied from consuming plants. They have also been observed practicing coprophagia (eating of feces).

Gorillas never eat all of the leaves from a plant. This behaviour allows the plant to more rapidly refurbish its losses. As a result, Gorillas must travel to pluck more leaves from more plants.

Silverbacks are entrusted in the defence of the group. In the process they acquire several females. Because of the constant moving the territorial instinct isn't strong. In fact, group territories often overlap those of others.

A group usually includes one Silverback, up to 5 adult females, a youth and up to a half a dozen youngsters.

Gorillas are knuckle walkers and have been observed using tools in the wild. They can be taught tool use in captivity.

Lifespan for Gorillas in the wild is 30 to 35 years. In captivity it may reach 50 years.

There are 2 species of Gorilla and each species contains 2 subspecies:

- Eastern Gorilla (Gorilla Berengei)
- Western Gorilla (Gorilla gorilla)

Mountain Gorillas (*Gorilla Berengei berengei*) is a sub-species of the Eastern Gorilla. They are larger than Western Gorillas.

Mountain Gorillas are the rarest of gorilla sub-species. They live in high altitudes not exceeding 14000 ft. Mountain Gorillas are robust and covered with long hair. Dangers include habitat destruction, low population, and slow reproduction (one birth after a 260 gestation period). Historically hunting of these Gorillas was a danger.

Mountain Gorillas eat leaves, shoots, thistles, nettles, stems, bark and bamboo. In necessity or to supplement the diet snails, insects and slugs are eaten.

There are 2 Mountain Gorilla populations at a total of 700 individuals. They live within 4 national parks including the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, South-Western Uganda containing 350 individuals; Volcanoes National Park, North-Western Rwanda; Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Uganda; Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mountain Gorillas live near densely populated human settlements (more than 400 per square kilometre). Mining, illegal hunting, bush-meat and acquisition of natural resources are dangers.

The horrific civil war during the 1990s between the Hutus and Tutsis resulted in a genocide campaign against the latter, resulting in the forceful migration of millions of refugees ever closer to Mountain gorilla habitat.

Park rangers and volunteers weren't safe. Starving refugees killed around 25 Mountain Gorillas.

In early 2007, several Virunga National Park workers were killed and injured by armed individuals, likely poachers.

The Kerisoke Research Center in Rwanda is the world's most prolific center for the study of and activism for the critically endangered Mountain Gorillas. The Karisoke Research Center has helped to bring forth world attention to the plight of the critically endangered Mountain Gorillas. It later became known as the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International.

The Kerisoke Research Center was founded by Dian Fossey, in September of 1967. It was located between Mount Karisimbi and Mount Kerisoke, hence its name Kerisoke. The work that was done for the Mountain Gorillas has not abated.

Gorillas have little to no immunity to some of the diseases that humans can carry. A single contamination can result in mass illness and even death in any sub-species of gorillas.

The Eastern Lowland Gorilla (*Gorilla Berengei Graueri*) is a sub-species of the Eastern Gorilla. It is robust, and has larger

canines and more muscle mass than its Western Lowland Gorilla counterpart.

There are 4000 to 5000 Eastern Lowland Gorillas. 25 individuals are housed in zoos.

Eastern Lowland Gorillas eat fruit, seeds, bamboo shoots, and when necessary insects. The Silverback is always the leader.

The Eastern Lowland Gorilla has a large head and a shiny dark face. Weight ranges from 450 to 550 lbs. and can reach 6 ft. in height. Its body and face are not as wide as the Mountain Gorilla's.

Dangers to the Eastern Lowland Gorilla include political instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mining, habitat loss, war and illegal hunting. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda resulted in the destruction of much of the habitat of this gorilla species. Refugees used more land for agriculture, wood and charcoal. In addition, gorillas became a source of food or profit. Baby gorillas were sold for a good price. The population of Eastern Lowland gorillas plummeted from 17000 to 4000 in a short period of time.

Government workers and volunteers were forced to flee for their lives because of the danger of the situation.

Western Lowland Gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) is a sub-species of the Western Gorilla; it is endangered.

Western Lowland Gorillas inhabit rainforests in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Angola. Although it is difficult to accurately assess their population, it is estimated to be 150000 to 200000.

Dangers to the Western Lowland Gorilla include deforestation, bush meat, illegal trade and sale of body-parts, hunting and disease.

The Western Lowland Gorilla has a short brownish-gray coat, a red or reddish crest, is 5.5 ft. tall and weighs 400 lbs. This gorilla has a prominent brow ridge and small ears.

Western Lowland Gorillas eat fruits, bark, rotten wood, leaves, small turtles, termites and ants.

The Cross River Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) is a sub-species of the Western Lowland Gorilla. There are only 250 to 300 left in the wild. This is the most endangered ape.

Cross River Gorillas inhabit the tropical and subtropical mountainous region bordering Nigeria and Cameroon. Hunting, habitat destruction and logging are still potential dangers.

The Cross River Gorilla has the smallest skull of the Great Apes. The molar and premolar teeth have the smallest surface area.

Scientific study of the Central Lowland Gorilla began in the early 20th century. It was thought to be extinct but was rediscovered in the 1980s.

In October 1902 Captain von Beringe spotted Mountain Gorillas during an expedition on the Virunga Volcanoes. He shot and killed 2 'specimens'. One of the gorillas was sent to the Zoological Museum in Berlin. Professor Paul Matschie declared the specimen a new species of gorilla.

The Bush Meat Trade is the capturing, slaughtering and selling of Gorillas, Chimpanzees and Bonobos. Monkeys and wildlife are also included however the aforementioned Great Apes are taking the biggest toll. The word 'Bush' is a description of the African forest.

Bush meat is easier to transport than identifiable items such as ivory. Methods of killing include shooting, trapping, hacking, beating, or capture and later slaughter.

Many of the ape killers are rag-tag soldiers. The logging industry is notorious for supporting these 'soldiers'. No wonder the bush meat trade rakes in over 2 billion dollars for those involved. The low-levels get scraps.

Bush meat is considered a luxury food item in fancy African restaurants located in or near affected areas. Bush meat plates are expensive, indeed. This is the foie gras of Africa.

Poor rural hungry Africans in or near the bush meat trade are involved in this lucrative business. They are desperate for money. Poor people in the affected areas also eat bush meat.

Eating infected bush meat can result in HIV/AIDS, Ebola and other dangerous diseases. Hunters, cooks and others touch and handle the meat. Shockingly, the work is usually done bare-handed. An estimated 8000 endangered Great Apes are killed annually in the bush meat trade.

Body-parts such as a gorilla hand can be sold as an ashtray.

The Great Ape entertainment industry is rife with animal cruelty, abuse, humiliation, and killing. Many baby apes are brutally snatched from their mothers in their natural habitats and then transported to the entertainment industry trainers. Babies are also snatched and sent to zoos.

Baby ape snatching often includes the killing of the mother, family and other members in the group. Men armed with machine guns, machetes, and other 'human weapons' do what they must to get the prize. Silverbacks and mothers often fight to the death.

The act, transport and new locale for the baby ape is very traumatic; transport involves being caged or boxed in, little or no food or water, little to no veterinary medical care, heat and no love. The destinations are usually far off.

Apes have been used in movies, television, circuses, casinos, bars, commercials and grand opening at malls, roadside menageries, fairs, psychological experiments, as test pilots and crash test dummies, astronauts, photo ops and surrogate family members. Photo ops using chimpanzees have virtually disappeared from Spain; at least for the time being.

Primate experimentation predominately includes Chimpanzees, Rhesus Macaques, Baboons and Marmosets. 60 to 70 thousand individuals are used in primate experiments every year in the United States and European Union combined. This statistic does not include repetitive experiments done on the same individual.

Experiments may include toxicology tests, chemical testing, neurological tests, infectious diseases tests, psychological tests, genetics tests, reproduction and xenotransplantation.

Many primates are specific purpose bred, meaning they are born and raised in the facility having never lived in their natural habitat or a normal life. Others are snatched from their habitats, purchased from zoos, circuses or roadside menageries, or animal trainers.

Regarding home living, performing or acting, young Chimpanzees are easier to handle when young, but as they grow older their incredible strength and wild nature becomes a serious problem.

Training of circus animals is often brutal. Regardless of training method, the animal's spirit must be broken. It must be forced to perform humiliating, unnatural and sometimes painful acts to be performed on cue.

What happens behind closed doors may include beatings, prodding, intimidation, poking and jabbing, whipping, tight collars, shackles (used primarily on elephants), shouting, fear and the deprivation of food and water. The animal trainer must be the 'emperor' in the relationship.

With excessive travel, training and hard work, there's also incredible boredom. When not performing or travelling animals must be caged, boxed in or shackled in trucks or trailers. Veterinary medical care costs money and this is why we often hear stories of circus animals being sick or dying prematurely.

When the animal becomes too old to perform it is conveniently discarded.

Adult Great Apes are incredibly powerful. They can destroy any man or woman quite quickly, if given the chance.

In February of 2009 a 200 pound chimpanzee former actor named Travis brutally mauled and almost killed a Stamford, Connecticut woman. Travis was on Xanax.

The victim, Charla Nash aged 55, lost chunks of her hands, had her face literally ripped off (lost her nose, jaw and both eyes) and suffered major head trauma. The psychological trauma

she endured is immeasurable. Thankfully, she recently received a face transplant.

In this incident, Charla Nash was visiting her friend Sandra Herold, who was Travis' owner. The attack appeared to be without provocation, it was a Blitzkrieg.

Travis was stabbed several times with a butcher knife but had to be shot by a police officer to be killed.

In March of 2005 another chimpanzee attack occurred at the Animal Haven Ranch, a private sanctuary located in the hills of eastern Kern County, California. LaDonna Davis 61 years-old had her thumb bitten off. Compared to her husband, she was lucky.

James Davis was brutally mauled by two chimpanzees, Ollie, 13 years-old, and Buddy 15 years-old. Davis lost all of his fingers, an eye, part of his nose and part of his buttocks, cheek and lips. In addition, one of his feet was mutilated and he received a heel bone injury.

Ironically, the Davis couple were celebrating their Chimpanzee's 39th birthday at a sanctuary. Moe had been sent to the sanctuary after biting a woman.

The Davis couple referred to Moe as their child. He was taught how to dress, shower and enjoyed watching television. When the attack occurred the Davis couple were getting ready to cut the birthday cake.

Four chimps were able to leave their cages. Two of the chimps charged their target, the Davis couple.

Chimpanzees in the wild are usually apprehensive of humans. Chimpanzees don't understand how powerful and dangerous they are until we bring them into our domain.

Chimps have been known to bite off fingers from behind cage bars. That's why anyone, especially a stranger should be very careful about inserting any part of his/her body within reach of a chimpanzee that's behind bars.

The entertainment industry dumps Chimpanzees between the age of 4 and 6 depending on the individual. This is the period of time of increased growth and strength.

Great apes have massive bone structure and musculature. In addition, they possess a strong muscle chemical.

There are reported cases of women being raped by orang-utans. A woman in her period is at greater risk. Some male orang-utans become sexually aroused by the 'woman scent'. A male orang-utan is strong enough to easily carry the woman with one hand and climb a tree, or to throw the woman on the ground, rip her clothing off and do his thing. Self-Defence for women is intended to ward off a human-male-attacker, not a powerful primate.

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