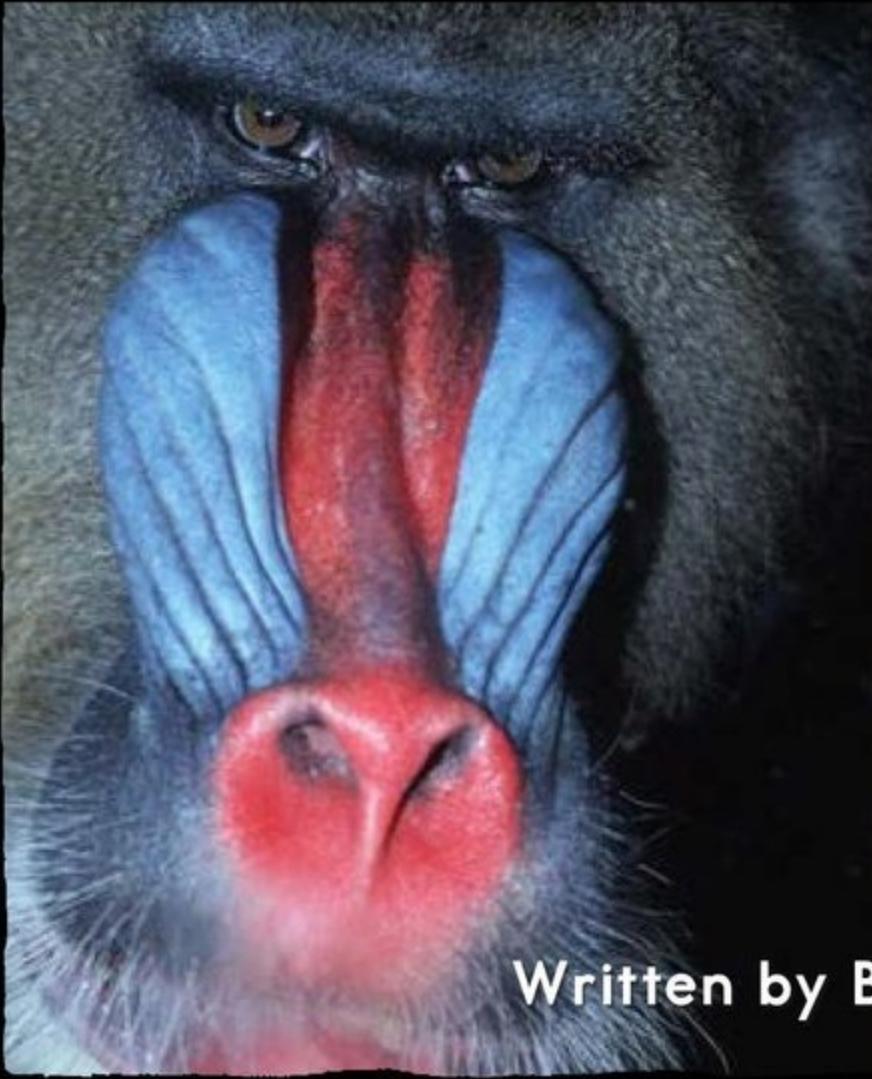


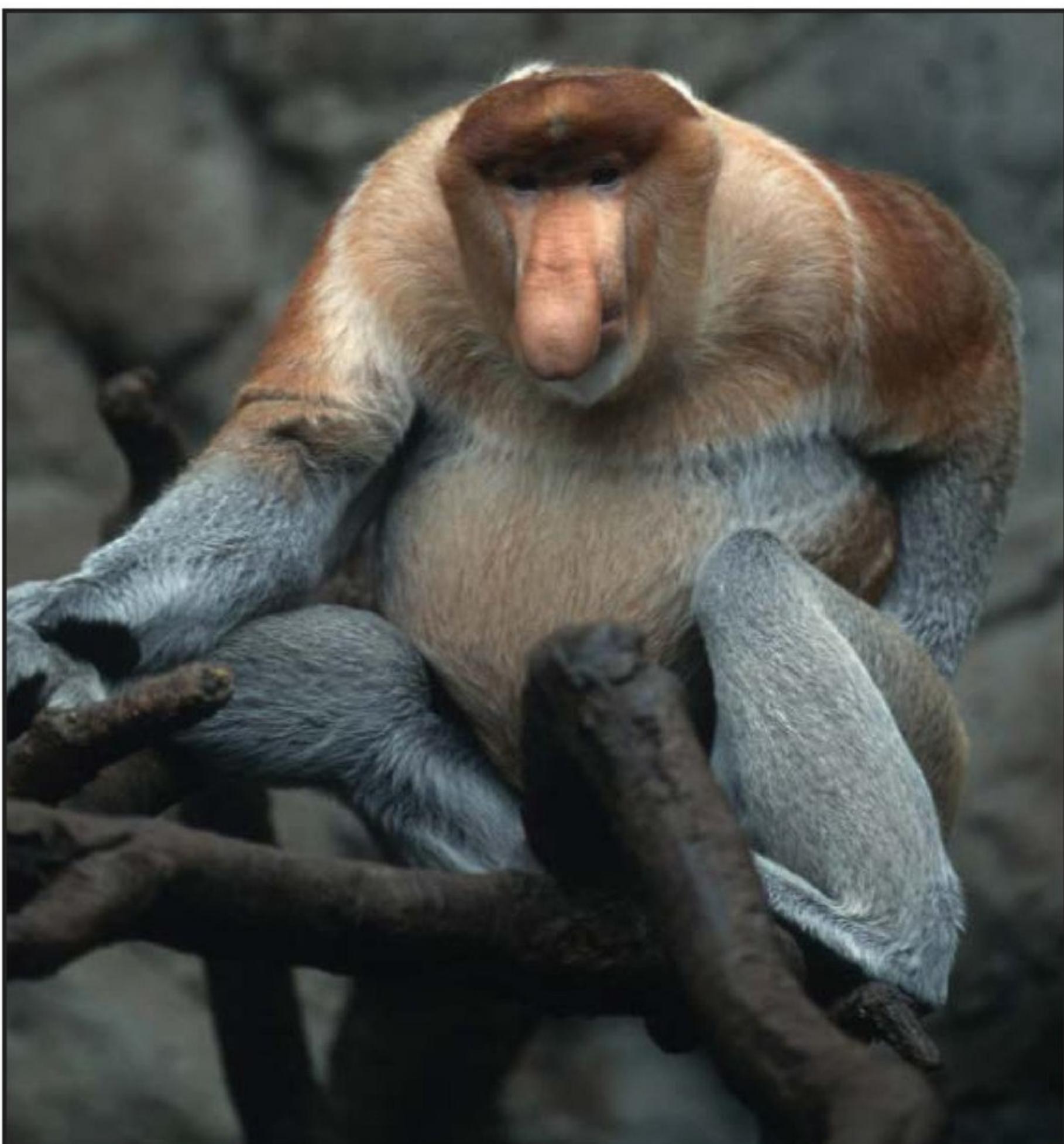
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# Monkey Business



Written by Brian Roberts

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Visitors at the Bronx Zoo watch a monkey.

## Introduction

Of all the creatures in the animal kingdom, humans most closely identify with monkeys. In fact, if someone says you're acting like a monkey, he or she is probably not too far off.

People often stand in front of a monkey exhibit at the zoo for much longer than they stand in front of other exhibits. They are fascinated by the antics of monkeys. They laugh at them and are entertained by them, perhaps because monkeys remind people so much of themselves.

## Primates

Monkeys belong to a group of mammals known as **primates**. There are two main groups of primates: **anthropoids** and **prosimians**. Anthropoids, which are the most familiar primates, include monkeys, apes, and humans. Prosimians are less well known. The most familiar prosimian is the lemur.



Ring-tailed lemurs are prosimians.

Primates are different from other mammals because they have fingers that are developed and a thumb that sits across from and bends toward the fingers. This thumb is called an **opposable thumb**. Opposable thumbs allow primates to hold tightly onto small things, giving them an advantage over other mammals. For example, many primates

spend most of their lives in trees. The thumb makes it possible for the primates to grasp branches and climb more easily.



Orangutans, which are great apes, have opposable thumbs.



Chimpanzees are some of the most intelligent apes.

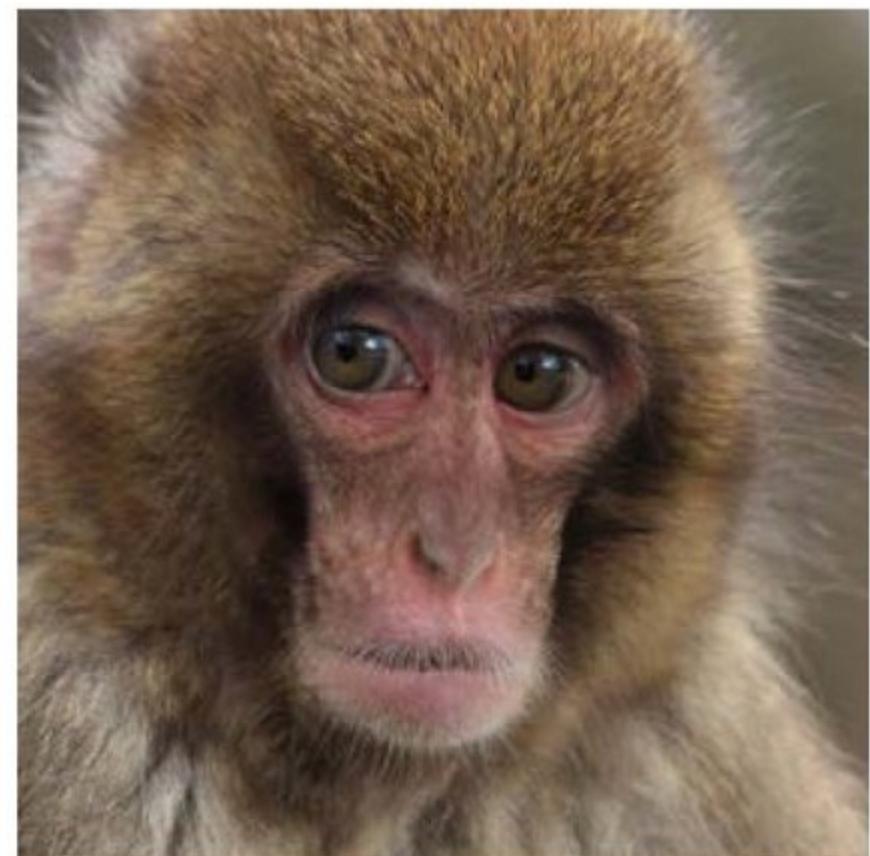
## **Monkeys Versus Apes**

Most people think that apes, such as gorillas, orangutans, and chimpanzees, are just big monkeys. But they are not monkeys—they are apes. Apes do not have tails, while most monkeys do, and apes are usually much more intelligent than monkeys. Apes are also larger than monkeys. Because most apes are heavier, they often scramble and climb along branches, while monkeys can swing and jump from branch to branch.

## New World and Old World Monkeys

Monkeys are divided into two groups based on where they live. One group is the **New World** monkeys, which live in Central and South America. Only monkeys, not apes or prosimians, live in the New World. The other group is **Old World** monkeys, which are found in Asia and Africa. Old World primates include apes and prosimians as well as monkeys.

Old and New World monkeys are different in four distinct ways. One way is their noses. The nostrils of New World monkeys are spread apart, but in Old World monkeys they are close together and point down, like human nostrils.



Note the nostrils of the golden lion tamarin (left), a New World monkey, and a Japanese macaque (right), an Old World monkey.

Another way they differ is that some New World monkeys can hold on to objects with their **prehensile** tails. Old World monkeys do not have this characteristic.



An adult spider monkey (above) uses its prehensile tail to grab a rope. Prehensile tails often have no hair, similar to a human palm.

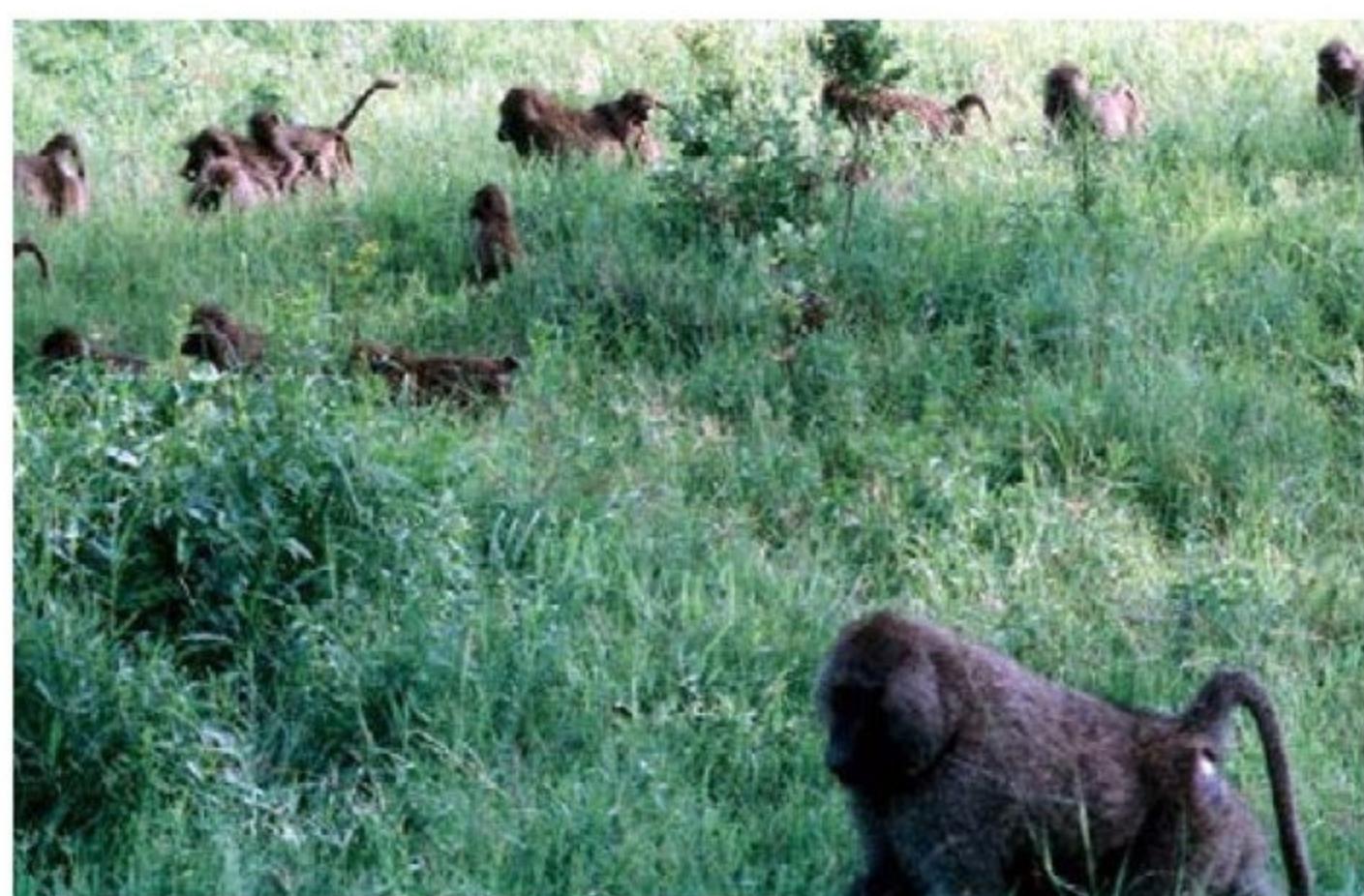
A third way these two groups differ is in the number of teeth they have. Most New World monkeys have 36 teeth, while most Old World monkeys have 32 teeth, just like humans.

The fourth way they differ has to do with where they spend their time. All New World monkeys live in trees, while many Old World monkeys spend much of their time on the ground.

## Monkeying Around

All monkeys live together with other monkeys of their type. A group of monkeys is called a **troop**. Most New World monkey troops consist of fewer than 24 monkeys. Old World troops, such as troops of baboons, can number well over 100 members. Some monkey troops have only one adult male with several females and their young. Others can have many adult males.

Monkeys that live on the ground have more closely knit groups. This is because there are more enemies on the ground, so the monkeys are more dependent on each other for protection. If threatened, the adults of the troop will join together to drive away the attacker.



A troop of  
baboons



A juvenile hamadryas baboon

Monkeys have long, strong arms and legs that help them leap and swing through the trees. For those that live on the ground, long, strong arms and legs help them run fast.

Monkeys also have fingers on their hands, as humans do, to help them grasp objects. Some Old World monkeys have opposable thumbs, which can be used to hold and work with small objects. Some New World monkeys have partially opposable thumbs, while others have no thumbs at all, just a fifth finger.

Monkeys have five toes on each foot. Some kinds of monkeys have a big toe that is opposable and serves as a thumb, allowing the monkey to grasp objects with its feet.



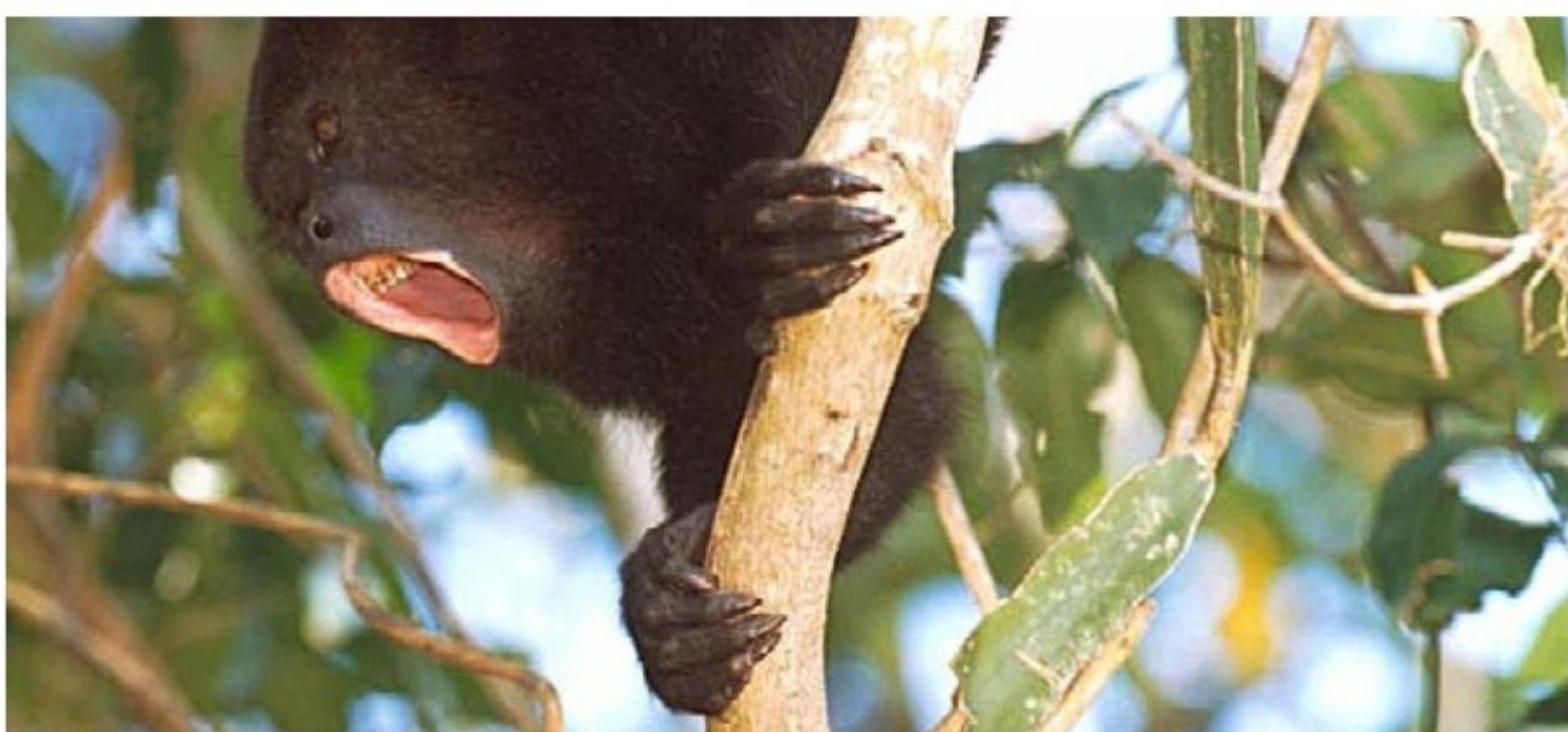
A young vervet monkey plays with its mother.

Young monkeys spend much of their waking time playing, as all kids do. Adult monkeys spend their days searching for and eating food, and grooming each other.

Monkeys eat just about anything. They eat plant parts, such as fruits, nuts, leaves, roots, and flowers. They also eat animals, such as insects, frogs, and birds. Baboons will even attack and eat small hoofed animals, such as baby antelope. Most monkeys also eat eggs.

Monkeys communicate with each other using their voices as well as body language. Some monkeys use threatening gestures such as staring, showing their teeth, and bobbing their heads back and forth. They often use their hands to communicate by beating on their chests or slapping the ground.

Monkeys use their voices to warn of danger or to signal when they have found a source of food. Some monkeys have even developed “words” for familiar things. For instance, instead of just a general alarm call, vervet (VUR-vit) monkeys have a special call for “snake,” one for “eagle,” and another for “leopard.” Howler monkeys keep other monkeys out of their territory by shouting and howling at them.



A black howler monkey shouts at an intruder.

## **Types of Monkeys**

There are more than 150 different kinds of monkeys. Some are very tiny, like the pygmy marmoset, which is only about as long as a new pencil, not including its tail. The largest monkey is the mandrill. If an adult mandrill stood up, it would be as tall as your kitchen counter.

### **New World Monkeys**



#### **Spider monkey**

A spider monkey uses its prehensile tail like an extra hand to hang from branches and to pick things up. Unlike most other monkeys, spider monkeys have no thumbs.

#### **Marmoset (MAR-mo-set)**

Marmosets are among the smallest monkeys. Most are less than 30 centimeters (1 ft) long. Instead of having nails on their fingers like most monkeys, they have claws.





Black howler monkey (above);  
golden lion tamarin (right)

## Howler monkey

Howlers are famous for their loud howl, which can be heard as far away as 3 kilometers (2 mi). They are the largest of the New World monkeys and have long tails and black faces that are bearded in adult howlers.

## Tamarin (TAM-ur-in)

Tamarins are small monkeys, usually about 30 centimeters (1 ft) long. Most of them are multicolored, and many have long hair on the tops of their heads. The golden lion tamarin has a mane that makes it look like a small lion.

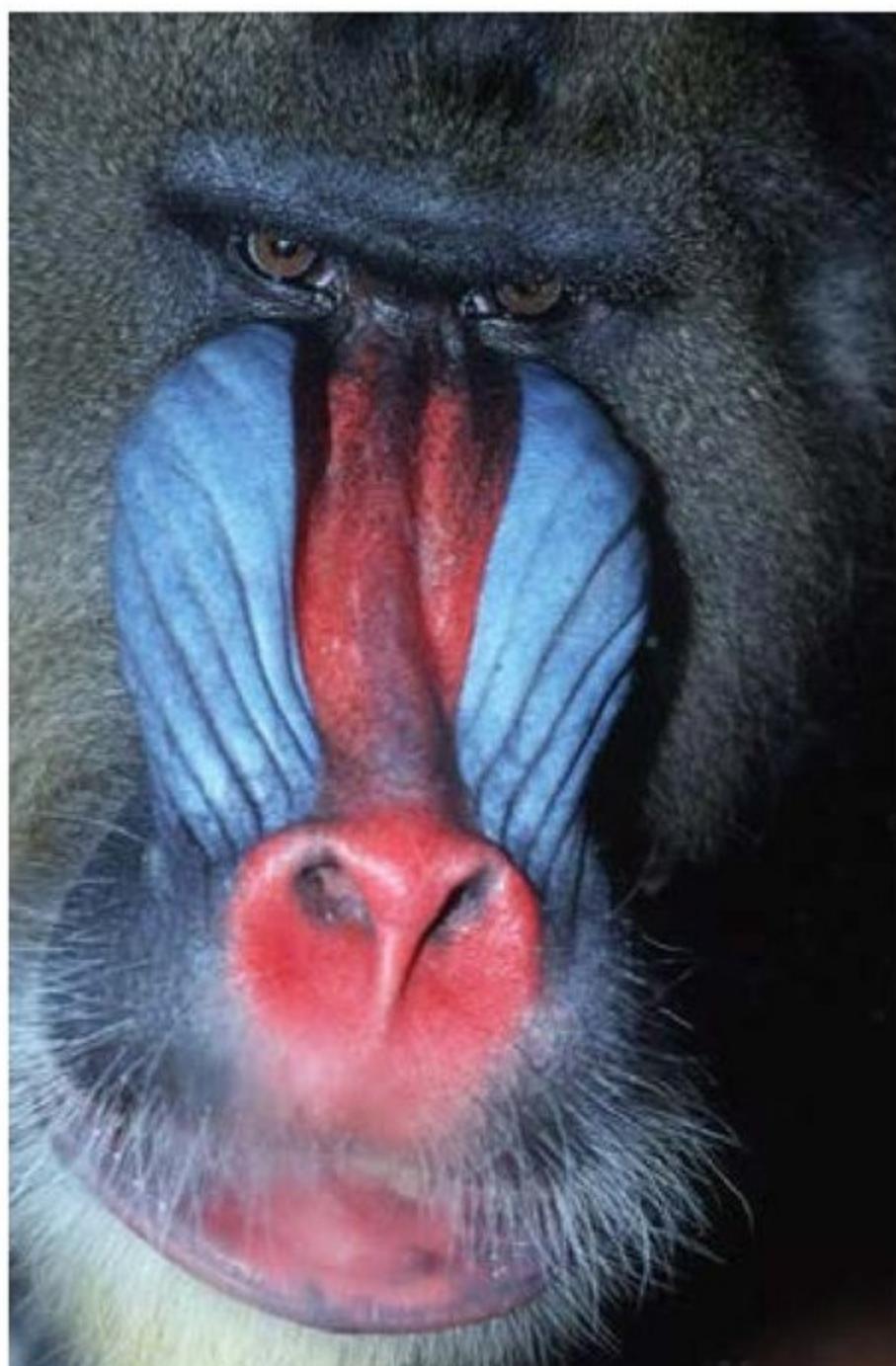
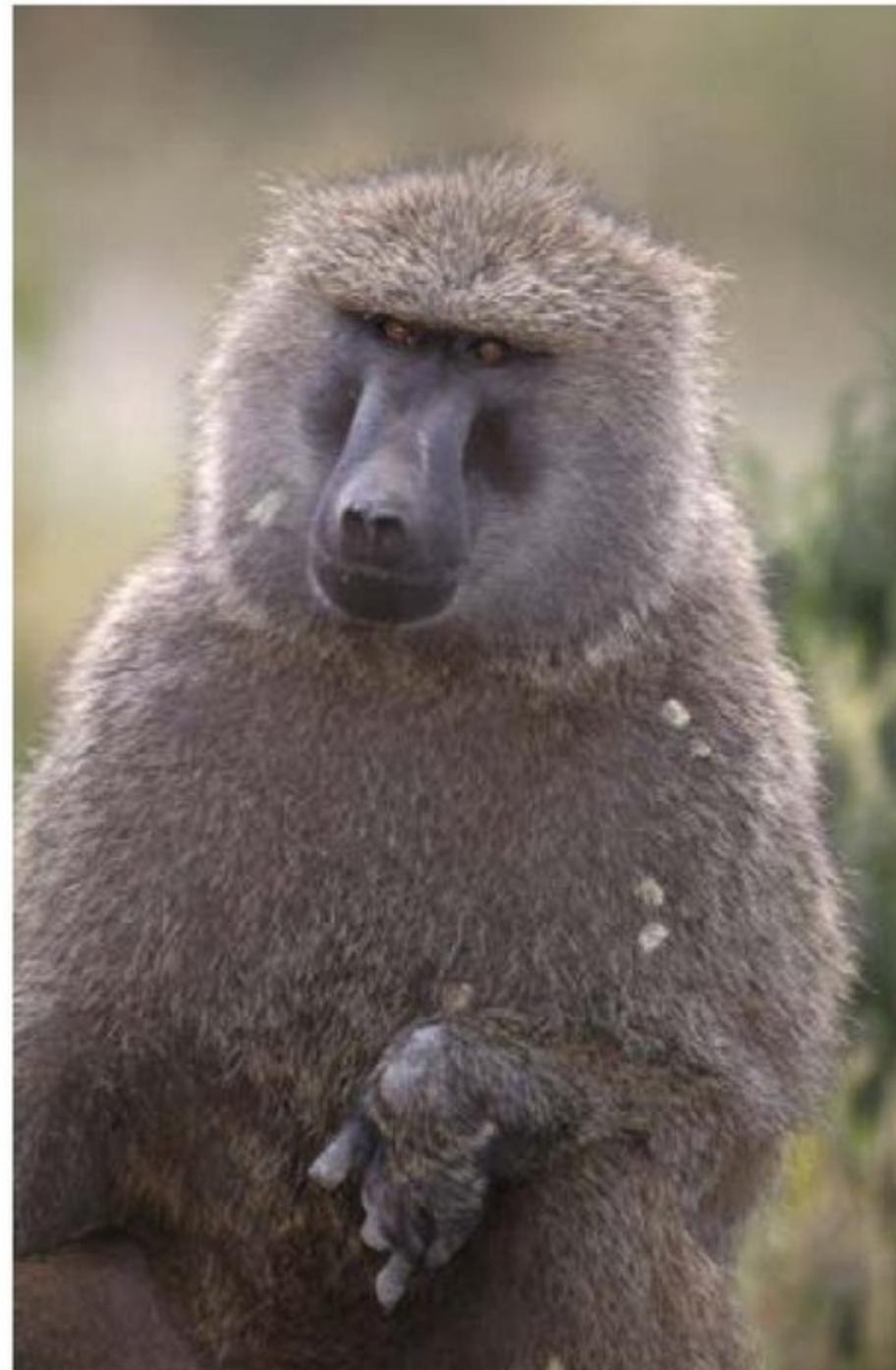
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<b>Monkey</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Life Span</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>Habitat</b>
Spider	New World	8–9.5 kg (17.6–21 lb)	33 years	fruit and nuts	Central American rainforest canopies
Marmoset	New World	300–500 g (10.6–17.6 oz)	12 years	fruit, sap, small animals, insects	rainforests in Brazil, Ecuador
Howler	New World	6.8 kg (15 lb)	20 years	flowers, fruit, leaves	South American rainforest
Tamarin	New World	410–560 g (14.5–19.8 oz)	15 years	fruit, small animals, insects	Brazil, 3–9 m above forest floor
Baboon	Old World	female 12 kg (26 lb) male 20 kg (45 lb)	37 years	fruit, plants, small animals, insects	forest floor, plains of central Africa
Mandrill	Old World	female 13.6 kg (30 lb) male 27 kg (60 lb)	46 years	fruit, nuts, small animals	tropical forest floor in Africa
Colobus	Old World	13.6 kg (30 lb)	29 years	fruit, leaves, flowers, buds	high elevations of African forests
Proboscis	Old World	8.2–23 kg (15–50 lb)	13.5 years	pedada leaves, vegetation	mangrove forests in Borneo

# Old World Monkeys

## Baboons

Baboons are large monkeys with long, sharp canine teeth. They spend most of their time living on the ground. Many types of baboons, as this olive baboon, live on the African plains.



## Mandrills

Mandrills, a kind of baboon, are the largest monkeys. Males are known for their colorful faces and rumps. They have blue cheeks and red noses, and their rumps match!



## **Colobus** (CALL-ah-bus)

Colobus monkeys are medium sized, reaching 45 to 75 centimeters (1.5–2.5 ft) in length. They are strong, with a stocky build. They can vary in color from all black to black and white to red and olive green.



## **Proboscis** (pruh-BOSS-kiss)

Proboscis monkeys get their name from their long noses (*proboscis* is the Latin word for nose), which the males use to call. They are large monkeys, from 70 to 100 centimeters (2–3 ft) long, not including their tails, and are very good swimmers.

## Monkey Babies

Most monkey females have just one baby at a time. After the baby is born, it depends on its mother for all of its food and care. Like all mammals, a baby monkey lives on its mother's milk. Depending on which kind of monkey, a baby may nurse for as little as two weeks or as long as two years.

A baby monkey clings to its mother's fur. A baby begins by clinging to her belly, and then as it gets older, it rides on her back. The baby clings until it is strong enough to travel safely on its own. In some species, such as marmosets, the male takes care of the young and carries it around all day. The male gives the young monkey to its mother when it is time to nurse.



A baby yellow baboon clings to its mother's back.



A chimpanzee named Ham gets ready for a trip into space, 1961.

## **Monkeys and Humans**

Monkeys and their relatives, the apes, have starred in movies and in circuses. They have appeared on many television shows, been the subjects of many books, and even rocketed into space.

Humans have used monkeys for medical research because of their similarity to humans. Many people object to using monkeys and other animals for research. But monkeys have allowed us to learn many things about new medicines without having to test them on humans.

In some cultures, monkey meat is considered a delicacy. Some people even eat monkey brains.

Many monkeys have been captured and placed in zoos and display cages around the world. Modern zoos have undergone efforts to place monkeys in environments that are similar to their natural habitats.



Ebony leaf monkeys in a naturalistic habitat at the Bronx Zoo



A Bolivian boy with his pet monkey

Many people around the world keep monkeys as pets. Because they are so intelligent and can use objects, many monkeys have been trained to help people who cannot move. They help paralyzed people do their jobs, cook food, and even brush their teeth.

Throughout the world, humans are threatening wild monkey populations by destroying their **habitats**. Hunters also threaten monkeys because many people like to eat monkey meat. Efforts are underway in many areas to help save monkey populations.

## Conclusion

Monkeys are everywhere. You may see monkeys as characters in cartoons or actors in movies. You can see monkeys at almost every zoo. You may even meet someone who has a pet monkey or a helper monkey. It's no wonder people love monkeys so much, because they are so much like humans.

Monkeys are intelligent primates that have opposable thumbs and can use objects and even use "words." But they are also very different from us. Unlike humans, monkeys come in many different species. In fact, there are more species of monkeys than any other primate. Monkeys are funny, smart, beautiful, and useful animals that we should protect and respect.



A tantalus monkey grooms, or cleans, another.

## **Glossary**

<b>anthropoids</b>	primates such as monkeys, apes, and humans (p. 5)
<b>habitats</b>	the land and environment in which an animal lives (p. 22)
<b>New World</b>	the continents of North America and South America (p. 8)
<b>Old World</b>	the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa (p. 8)
<b>opposable thumb</b>	a thumb that sits opposite and bends toward the other fingers (p. 6)
<b>prehensile</b>	a limb, like a foot or a tail, that can hold or pick up things like a hand can (p. 9)
<b>primates</b>	group of animals that includes monkeys, apes, humans, lemurs, and others (p. 5)
<b>prosimians</b>	a small group of primates that includes lemurs (p. 5)
<b>troop</b>	a group of the same species of monkey living together (p. 10)

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Cover (clockwise from top left): Japanese macaque, common marmoset, golden lion tamarin, mandrill

Back cover: A pair of rhesus monkeys in India

Title page: Proboscis monkey

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