

speaking they no longer represent the mainstream of evolution. Indeed, it may very well be that their unusual sexual behaviour has helped to turn them into biological failures as social groups.

Most of the detailed information we have available stems from a number of painstaking studies carried out in recent years in North America and based largely on that culture. Fortunately it is biologically a very large and successful culture and can, without undue fear of distortion, be taken as representative of the modern naked ape.

Sexual behaviour in our species goes through three characteristic phases: pair-formation, pre-copulatory activity, and copulation, usually but not always in that order. The pair-formation stage, usually referred to as courtship, is remarkably prolonged by animal standards, frequently lasting for weeks or even months. As with many other species it is characterised by tentative, ambivalent behaviour involving conflicts between fear, aggression and sexual attraction. The nervousness and hesitancy is slowly reduced if the mutual sexual signals are strong enough. These involve complex facial expressions, body postures and vocalisations. The latter involve the highly specialised and symbolised sound signals of speech, but equally importantly they present to the member of the opposite sex a distinctive vocalisation tone. A courting couple is often referred to as 'murmuring sweet nothings' and this phrase sums up clearly the significance of the tone of voice as opposed to what is being spoken.

After the initial stages of visual and vocal display, simple body contacts are made. These usually accompany locomotion, which is now considerably increased when the pair are together. Hand-to-hand and arm-to-arm contacts are followed by mouth-to-face and mouth-to-mouth ones. Mutual embracing occurs, both statically and during locomotion. Sudden spontaneous outbursts of running, chasing, jumping and dancing are commonly seen and juvenile play patterns may reappear.

Much of this pair-formation phase may take place in public, but when it passes over into the pre-copulatory 46