

phase, privacy is sought and the subsequent patterns of behaviour are performed in isolation from other members of the species as far as is possible. With the pre-copulatory stage there is a striking increase in the adoption of a horizontal posture. Body-to-body contacts are increased in both force and duration. Low intensity side by-side postures repeatedly give way to high-intensity face-to-face contacts. These positions may be maintained for many minutes and even for several hours, during which vocal and visual signals become gradually less important and tactile signals increasingly frequent. These involve small movements and varying pressures from all parts of the body, but in particular from the fingers, hands, lips and tongue. Clothing is partially or totally removed and skin-to-skin tactile stimulation is increased over as wide an area as possible.

Mouth-to-mouth contacts reach their highest frequency and their longest duration during this phase, the pressure exerted by the lips varying from extreme

gentle.

to extreme violence. During the higher-intensity responses the lips are parted and the tongue is inserted into the partner's mouth. Active movements of the tongue are then used to stimulate the sensitive skin of the mouth interior. The lips and tongue are also applied to many other areas of the partner's body, especially the ear-lobes, the neck and the genitals. The male pays particular attention to the breasts and nipples of the female, and the lip and tongue contact here becomes extended into more elaborate licking and sucking. Once contacted, the partner's genitals may also become the target for repeated actions of this kind. When this occurs, the male concentrates largely on the female's clitoris, the female on the male's penis, although other areas are also involved in both cases.

In addition to kissing, licking and sucking, the mouth is also applied to various regions of the partner's body in a biting action of varying intensities. Typically this involves no more than soft nibbling of the skin, or gentle nipping, but it can sometimes develop into forceful or even painful biting.

Interspersed between bouts of oral stimulation of the partner's body, and frequently accompanying it, 47