

Physical Anthropology: The Evolving Human

Lesson 7 Primate Behavior

Program Description

This lesson tackles why we study the behavior of nonhuman primates and how their behavior patterns can be related to human behavior and evolution. Experts discuss their field study experiences and what they learned about the behavior of their subjects. Social structure and social organization are related to impact on reproductive success. The central mother-infant bond is explored, along with patterns of affiliative and aggressive behaviors in social groups. Nonhuman capacities for language and culture are also addressed in interesting ways.

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing all assignments in this lesson, the student should be able to:

1. Summarize the history of primate field studies and list some of the scientists who initiated pioneering research.
2. Define primate behavioral ecology and discuss how it is the current theoretical perspective in primate behavioral studies.
3. Describe the types of food primates eat and how species vary with regard to dietary preferences.
4. Define the types of primate social interactions and communication methods, including grooming, dominance, and affiliative and aggressive behaviors.
5. Differentiate between male and female reproductive strategies and their influence on sex-specific behaviors.
6. Discuss the importance of the mother-infant bond in contributing to the normal social and psychological development of primate infants.
7. Define language and describe the evolution of language and the results of ape-language experiments.
8. List the criteria for cultural acts in nonhuman species and discuss whether chimpanzees meet these criteria.
9. Contrast between group aggression and altruism/cooperation among chimpanzees.
From an anatomical and behavioral perspective, discuss how humans fit into the “biological continuum.”

Experts in Video	
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