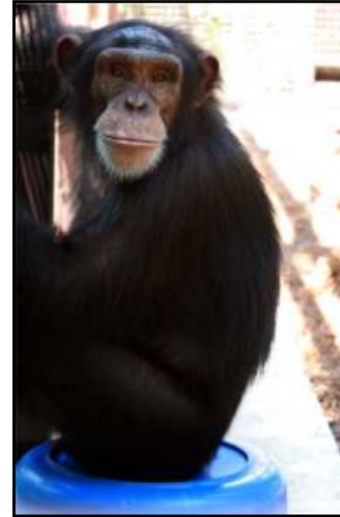


CHIMPANZEES

Chimpanzees are great apes that live in the tropical rain forests of Africa from Sudan and Tanzania in the East to Senegal and Angola in the West. Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest population, although chimpanzees have become extinct in some areas. They grow to reach heights of three to five feet, and weigh up to 120 to 200 pounds. They are predominantly black, sometimes with gray on their back after 20 years of age.

Distinctive habits and characteristics of chimpanzees include:

- Chimpanzees are the most social of all the apes and live in communities of between 15 and 120 individuals.
- Their communities are often split into a number of subgroups with a male as the leader of the group.
- Males seldom leave the community where they were born.
- Females often migrate to a new community during an adolescent estrus period.
- Chimpanzees travel mostly on the ground by knuckle walking.
- Chimpanzees groom each other daily, and this activity has an important social function of calming and comforting individuals and solidifying their bonds with each other.
- Mothers often travel alone with their offspring.
- Chimpanzees construct nests at night in which to sleep.
- Chimpanzee males in the wild cooperatively hunt for meat.
- Their diet is mainly fruits with regular amounts of insects, as well as birds and small mammals.
- Chimpanzees use tools to gain access to food, such as fishing for termites with sticks fashioned for the job and cracking open nuts with anvil-like rocks.
- Females in estrus have a prominent swelling of the pink perineal skin that lasts two to three weeks and occurs every four to six weeks.
- Females give birth every four to five years and their gestation period is eight to nine months.
- Chimpanzees have a long mother-infant dependency period. Infants will nurse on their mothers for five years and stay with their mothers several more years learning to care for younger siblings.
- The life span for chimpanzees is 40 to 50 years in the wild and over 50 to 60 years in captivity.



Chimpanzee Life Stages

- Infant: Birth-to-five years (nursed and carried by mother)
- Juvenile: Five-to-eight years (still with mother but independent of her for transport and milk)
- Early Adolescence: For females, eight-to-ten years and for males, eight-to-12 years
- Late Adolescence: For females, 11-to-14 years and for males, 13-to-15 years
- Maturity: 16-to-33 years
- Old Age: 33 years to death

Breeding

Chimpanzees breed all year round, whenever one of the females in the troop comes into season. Female chimpanzees have menstrual cycles very like humans and come into oestrus every 36 days, unless they are pregnant. They give birth about every three-four years, after a gestation period (time between fertilisation of the egg and birth of the baby) of 8 months. A female may be mated by all the males in a troop, regardless of their social standing, who show no sign of competition between themselves.

Usually only one baby is born - twins are rare. If it is the female's first baby, she often appears not to know quite what to do with it! However, by a combination of instinct, watching more experienced mothers with their babies, and learning, she soon starts to care for it. For the first 5 months of its life the baby chimpanzee is carried everywhere by its mother, and clings tightly to her fur. It begins to walk at about 6 months and weighs 9kg at a year old. The baby is dependent on its mother for at least two years, sometimes still riding on her back for periods at 4 years old. By this time, the mother will have another baby and the elder one has to fend for itself. It spends much of its time with chimpanzees of its own age and for the next 4 or 5 years learns where the best feeding places are and how to behave as a senior member of its troop.