

## Primateology

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### The study of primates

Primateology is the study of primates. It includes everything from genetics and physiology to behavior and learning.

#### Bonobos, Play & Humanity

Primates are an order that includes over 600 species and subspecies of prosimian, monkey, and ape. Although humans are primates, the study of primatology tends to focus on non-human animals. The primate species range from primitive species like the lemurs of Madagascar to very advanced species like gorillas, bonobos, and orangutans. Primates began as arboreal animals although many species have now moved from the trees to other environments.

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# Characteristic Features

- Grasping feet and hands
- Fingernails instead of claws
- Fingerprints
- Large brain size
- Visually oriented
- Less emphasis on smell as a sense
- Single births (twins do occur occasionally)
- Long life spans (many species live 40+ years)
- Long period of growth and development with a lot of parental care
- Tend to live in stable family groups

## Research

As humanity's closest living relatives, primates hold interest to scientists in many different disciplines. Behavior, learning and communication are areas of primate research that are fairly well known. Most will have heard of Koko <sup>[1]</sup>, the American Sign Language (ASL) using gorilla. Many will also have heard of the Great Ape Trust, also known as Bonobo Hope, which studies language and culture in bonobos. One resident of Bonobo Hope, Kanzi, has a vocabulary that includes hundreds of words and uses a lexigram connected to a computer to communicate with the scientists. A similar type of lexigram program has been used successfully to allow learning disabled children to communicate better. Both Bonobo Hope and Gorilla Foundation are located in the United States. Many studies have now demonstrated the learning and communication abilities in the great ape species including gorillas, bonobos, orangutans, and chimpanzees. However, research with primates both in artificial and natural situations faces many ethical <sup>[2]</sup> challenges.

Other recent discoveries include the ability to teach monkeys about money and baboons <sup>[3]</sup> about math. For a full list of current research in primatology, visit the National Primate Research Center Infonet <sup>[4]</sup>.

## Conservation

Another key area of primate research relates to conservation. Over half of all primates are currently considered endangered <sup>[5]</sup>. Many are at risk due to habitat destruction, political instability and crises in their homelands. All of the 103 species and subspecies of lemur are located on the island of Madagascar and 91% of them are considered endangered. There have been some conservation success stories and even discoveries of new species of primate.

Primatology is a fascinating field with many opportunities for study, regardless of what aspect of the biological sciences interests you – everything from the genetic level up to behavior and ecology is available to those who seek to become more involved with humanity's closest living relatives.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.explorables.com/primatology>

**Links**

- [1] <http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Koko-the-Gorilla-Gets-a-Makeover-196628391.html>
- [2] [http://www.academia.edu/310935/Field\\_primateology\\_of\\_today\\_Current\\_ethical\\_issues](http://www.academia.edu/310935/Field_primateology_of_today_Current_ethical_issues)
- [3] <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/05/130503132719.htm>
- [4] <http://pin.primate.wisc.edu/news/inthenews/>
- [5] [http://www.iucn.org/news\\_homepage/?11259/Primates-in-peril--conservationists-reveal-the-worlds-25-most-endangered-primates](http://www.iucn.org/news_homepage/?11259/Primates-in-peril--conservationists-reveal-the-worlds-25-most-endangered-primates)