



# Lemurs, Monkeys & Apes, Oh My!

## **Audience**

Activity is designed for ages 12 and up

## **Goal**

Students will be able to understand the differences between primate groups

## **Objective**

- To use critical thinking skills to identify different primate groups
- To learn what makes primates so unique.

## **Conservation Message**

Many of the world's primates live in habitats that are currently being threatened by human activities. Most of these species live in rainforests in Asia, South America and Africa, all these places share a similar threat; unsustainable agriculture and climate change. In the last 20 years, chimpanzee and ring-tailed lemur populations have declined by 90%. There are some easy things we can do to help these animals! Buying sustainable wood and paper products, recycling any items you can, spreading the word about the issues and supporting local zoos and aquariums.

## **Background Information**

There are over 300 species of primates. Primates are an extremely diverse group of animals and cover everything from marmosets to lorises to gorillas and chimpanzees. Many people believe that all primates are monkeys, however, this is incorrect. There are many differences between primate species. Primates are broken into prosimians (lemurs, tarsius, bushbabies and lorises), monkeys (Old and New World) and apes (gibbons, orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos).

Prosimians are primarily tree-dwellers. This group includes species such as lemurs, tarsius, bushbabies and lorises. They have longer snouts than other primates, a wet nose and a good sense of smell. They have smaller brains, large eyes that are adapted for night vision, and long tails that are not prehensile, meaning they are not able to grab onto items with their tails. Their tail is used for balance, like how a cat uses their tail. Some species have a very short tail. Prosimians actively scent-mark their territories

to warn other animals of their occupancy. The scent-marks are made with a strong-smelling fluid produced by special glands, or with urine or feces.

The Old World Monkeys can be found in Africa and Asia. Examples of this group include macaques, Mandrill, Baboon, Proboscis monkeys and Diana monkeys. They have downward facing nose and nostrils. Their sense of smell is weak. They are generally medium to large sized with opposable thumbs, meaning that the thumb can move freely and give a power/precision grip. They also have fingernails and toenails. The Old World Monkeys do not have a prehensile tail, meaning if they have a tail they are not able to grab onto items with their tails. Their tail is used for balance, like how a cat uses their tail. The males rarely help raise the babies. They are active during the day. Arms are typically equal or shorter in length than the legs.

The New World are found in Central and South America. Examples of this group include Common marmoset, Cotton-top tamarin, squirrel monkeys and howler monkeys. Some monkeys in this group have prehensile tails, meaning they can grab onto items with their tails. They are active during the day and have a weak sense of smell. Arms are equal or shorter in length than the legs. Most species in this group the thumb is in the same order as their other fingers, meaning their thumbs are not opposable and they do not have fingernails. They are typically small to medium sized.

Apes are much larger in size than prosimians or monkeys. This group includes species such as gibbons, orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos. They do not have tails and their arms are longer than their legs. All members of this group have opposable thumbs. Most apes lack hair on their face, do not have an elongated snout and have a weak sense of smell. This group is highly intelligent and most even use tools such as sticks to collect insects out of tree trunks or mounds, items to collect water and rocks as hammers. They also have tight knit social groups.

Now that you know the differences between primates let's put that knowledge to the test!

### **Materials Needed**

- Guess Which Primate Worksheet
- Pen and/or Pencil

### **Length of Activity**

20-30 minutes

### **Procedure**

- Read background information.

- Read each primate description on the worksheet.
- Write on the line if you think the description is describing a **prosimian** (lemurs, tarsius, bushbabies and lorises), **monkey** (new or old world), or **ape** (gibbons, orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos).
- You only need to guess the group of primate: prosimian, monkey or ape.
- Once worksheet is completed check your answer with the answer key.

# Guess Which Primate

## **Primate #1**

This primate has dark brown to black hair, stands around 3-4 feet tall. There is no hair on their faces and do not have a snout. Their social groups are very close, and they are able to use tools.

What primate? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Primate #2**

This primate is only found on Madagascar and uses scent marking to communicate with others. They have large eyes, a long snout and a long black and white tail used for balance.

What primate? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Primate #3**

This primate is small to medium sized and has a prehensile tail. They have a dry nose, are active during the day and a weak sense of smell.

What primate? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Primate #4**

This primate has long legs and arms of equal length. They do not have a prehensile tail, are active during the day, have opposable thumbs and fingernails.

What primate? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Primate #5**

This primate has large eyes to see better during the night. They have a short tail, a long snout and use scents to make their territories.

What primate? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Primate #6**

This primate has arms longer than their legs. They have reddish brown hair but no hair on their faces, they spend most of their time in trees but no tail.

What primate? \_\_\_\_\_

# Answer Key



## Primate #1



Ape - Chimpanzee

## Primate #2



Prosimian - Ring tailed lemur

## Primate #3



Monkey - Howler monkey

## Primate #4



Monkey - Diana Monkey

## Primate #5



Prosimian - Slow Lorises

## Primate #6



Ape - Orangutan

