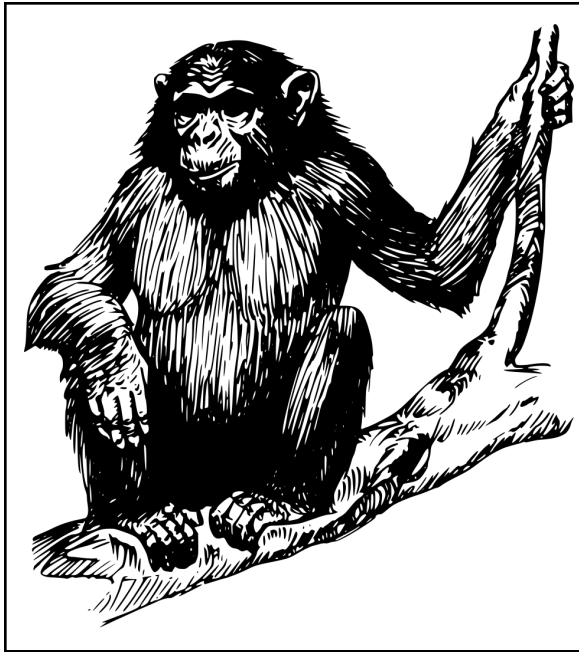


Watching Primates

Format: Online



Primates exhibit complex behavior that can be interpreted through careful observation.

Author: Dr. Keith Chan

Time needed: 45 minutes

Learning Objectives

- Understand ethology and its role in primatology
- Practice scientific observation of primate behavior
- Analyze findings and present them in an organized written report

Supplies Needed

- Internet connection
- Access to YouTube
- [Primate Observation Playlist](#)
- Worksheet (attached)

Readings

- Jaffe, Karin Enstam. 2019. Chapter 6: Primate Ecology and Behavior. *Explorations*.

Introduction

This assignment has three parts that follow the scientific method: 1. Prepare for the observation; 2. Observe primates in videos; 3. Report the findings.

Steps

1. Students should work individually but can compare their observations and findings at the conclusion of the assignment.
2. In class (or online), the instructor should go over Part 1 to make sure that students are adequately prepared to move to Part 2. Instructors and students may choose to brainstorm more behaviors to add to the ethogram.
3. Part 2 is intended for students to do on their own at home, although it can be adapted for an in-person lab.
4. Part 3 is also intended for homework as it involves independent report writing.
5. After the activity, the instructor can lead a discussion on what the students experienced and what they learned about primate behavior.

Review Questions

The activity gives students experience observing animal behavior and recording data scientifically. Here are some questions for discussion after the activity:

1. What were some behaviors that surprised the students?
2. What challenges arose during the observation?
3. Did all students observe the same things from the same video or did some students observe different things? Why would different observations occur?
4. What are some benefits and drawbacks of scan sampling versus focal sampling?

Adapting for Online Learning

If this is an in-person lab, rank how adaptable to online learning it is (mark in bold):

1 Not adaptable

2 Possible to adapt

3 Easy to adapt

If applicable, include suggestions for how to adapt this lab for online learning: Students could watch the videos and complete the observation tables online. Instructors could set up an online discussion for students to share their results and comment on their classmates' results.

Tips and Suggestions

Personalize this activity with your own recorded videos or use of a livestream.

References

Jaffe, Karin Enstam. 2019. "Chapter 6: Primate Ecology and Behavior." *Explorations: An Open Invitation to Biological Anthropology*, edited by Beth Shook, Katie Nelson, Kelsie Aguilera, and Lara Braff. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.
<http://explorations.americananthro.org/>

Image Attributions

SVG SILH. (n.d.). animal gorilla ape [Illustration]. Retrieved from
<https://svgsilh.com/image/37835.html>. Used under Creative Commons 0: Public Domain Dedication.

Watching Primates: Student Worksheet

Introduction

Legendary primatologist Jane Goodall revolutionized the study of chimpanzees during her fieldwork in Gombe, Tanzania. The behaviors she witnessed changed our perception of apes from instinct-driven creatures to tool-inventing beings.

In this activity you will learn about **ethology**, or how researchers turn observations of living things into scientific data, and then create a report of what you saw. While we cannot go to Gombe on short notice, we can watch uncut videos of zoo-dwelling primates online and apply scientific techniques to go beyond what a typical zoo visitor sees.

There are different ways to collect data on animal behavior. We will be practicing **scan sampling** whereby the observer records the behaviors of the group at set intervals. By contrast, **focal sampling** involves recording every action of one specific individual over a length of time.

Part 1: Preparation

Before watching primates, you have to prepare for what you expect to see in order to save time and effort later, when you are intently focused on your living subjects. First, pick one of the videos to observe from the [Primate Observation Playlist](#).

1. Which video and which primate will you observe (focus on *one* individual)?

Apply the scientific method and make a prediction about what you will see. Answer the following question:

2. Which behaviors do you think you will see when watching the primate for 15 minutes?

Now set up an **ethogram**, which is a table used to record animal behavior. You will use this table while observing the primate in order to reduce writing and produce a standardized data set of what you saw. Put short descriptions of behaviors in the left column. Some have been added for you, but you should add more based upon your general knowledge of primate behavior.

Primate Ethogram

Behavior	Time (0:30-7:30)														
	0:30	1:00	1:30	2:00	2:30	3:00	3:30	4:00	4:30	5:00	5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30
Out of View															
Standing															
Sitting															
Sleeping															
Eating															

Behavior	Time (8:00-15:00)														
	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00
Out of View															
Standing															
Sitting															
Sleeping															
Eating															

Part 2: Observation

Now it is time to use your ethogram to record primate behavior using the scan sampling method. Read these instructions in full before starting:

1. Play the video you chose in Part 1.
2. Using the video's timer or your own stopwatch app, keep track of the time.
3. Every 30 seconds, record the behaviors of the primates you see using the ethogram you set up in Part 1. Mark each square for each behavior you see at each time. If you are watching multiple primates, try to keep track of each one by using a short unique name for them.
4. End observation at 15 minutes.

Here is a sample table:

Behavior/Time	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00
Out of View			B, C	A, B	C
Sitting	A, B	A, B	A	C	B
Sleeping	C	C			A

A: Adult male, B: Adult female, C: Juvenile

Part 3: Analysis and Report

Your data set allows you to quantify how much time each primate spent with each activity. For each individual, calculate how many times they were seen performing each behavior by filling out this table (if you observed more than one individual, there are additional Time Budget tables in the “Additional Documents” section of this worksheet):

Time Budget for Individual:

Behavior/ Calculation	Boxes Seen	Total Visible Times	Boxes Seen/Total Visible Times
Out of View			Not calculated
Standing			
Sitting			
Sleeping			
Eating			

See this example based on the adult male in the example ethogram:

Time Budget for Individual: A: Adult Male

Behavior/Calculation	Boxes Seen	Total Visible Times	Boxes Seen/Total Visible Times *100
Out of View	1	4	Not calculated
Standing	3		75%
Sitting	1		25%

With your data set and time budget in hand, craft a report of what you saw. Follow these instructions to write an effective report that is at least 500 words, well organized, and clearly written to best communicate your message. Your report should include the following sections:

1. Introduction: Which primate(s) did you observe? Was the video a live stream, in person, or prerecorded? What did you expect to see? End this section with a short summary of what you actually saw and whether it matched what you expected.
2. Body Paragraph 1: Tell the reader in more detail what you saw. Start with a description of the scene and the individual primates. Then describe the actions you saw in order, from beginning to end, like it's a story with a lot of detail.
3. Body Paragraph 2: Present your analysis of time budgets. How much time did each individual spend with each behavior?
4. Conclusion: Summarize your paper for the reader. Briefly restate what primate(s) you observed, what you expected to see, and what you actually saw.

Additional Documents:

More Time Budget Tables

Time Budget for Individual:

Behavior/ Calculation	Boxes Seen	Total Visible Times	Boxes Seen/Total Visible Times *100
Out of View			Not calculated
Standing			
Sitting			
Sleeping			
Eating			

Time Budget for Individual:

Behavior/ Calculation	Boxes Seen	Total Visible Times	Boxes Seen/Total Visible Times *100
Out of View			Not calculated
Standing			
Sitting			
Sleeping			
Eating			