

# Primates of The Gambia

# WHAT ARE PRIMATES

PRIMATES are a group of mammals that look and act alike.

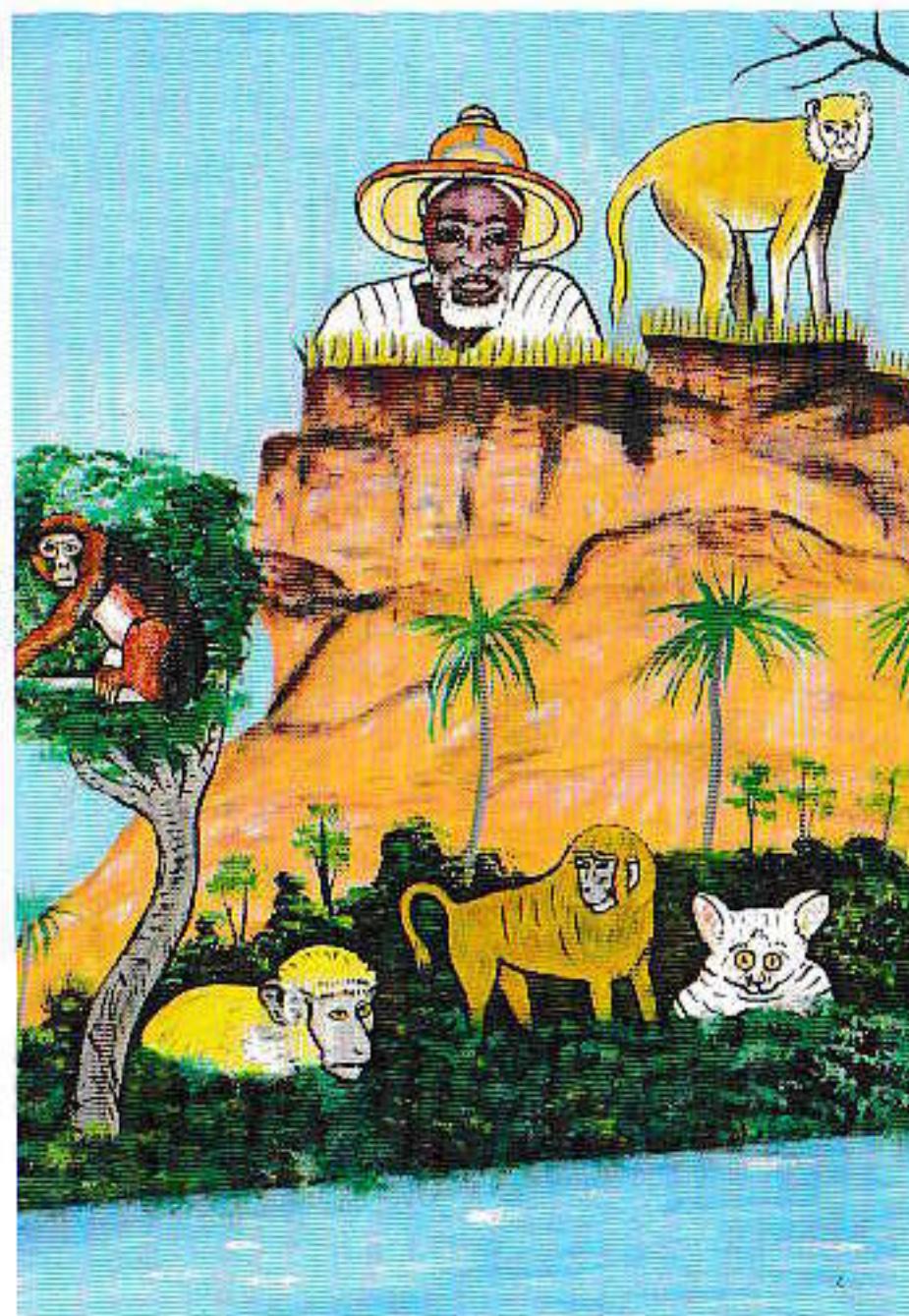
There are two major groups of primates:

PROSIMIANS are early or the first monkeys

SIMIANS are all monkeys, apes and humans

Primates come in many different sizes, shapes and colors. But most of them share the following traits:

- Most primates depend on forests for food, water and shelter.
- Most primates have 5 fingers that help their hands to grip branches and food.
- Most primates have a big toe and thumb to help them balance and grasp branches.
- Most primates have fingernails instead of claws to protect the tips of the fingers.
- Most primates have eyes that face forward.
- Most primates have larger brains in relation to their body size. This allows them to solve problems and use tools.
- Most primates live in groups rather than alone. They care deeply for their babies and have lifelong attachments with their families.
- Most primates are in danger of EXTINCTION: all of them except the human primate.





## GAMBIA IS OUR HOME TOO

There are more than 300 different kinds or SPECIES of primates already discovered. Scientists are still discovering new ones.

More than 70 different SPECIES live in Africa. Today The Gambia is the natural home to 5 species of primate.

- Galago or bushbaby
- Green monkey
- Patas monkey
- Red colobus monkey
- Guinea baboon

Two more primate species disappeared from The Gambia.

- Chimpanzee
- Campbell's monkey

The chimpanzee is thought to have disappeared more than 50 years ago. This species was reintroduced to The Gambia in 1979 at the River Gambia National Park. There are now more than 80 chimpanzees living in The Gambia. The Campbell's monkey was last seen in The Gambia roughly 25 years ago.



## Patas Monkey

*Erythrocebus patas*

I am the Patas monkey. I am a large monkey but not as large as a baboon. I weigh about 10 – 18 kilos.

My coat is reddish yellow on my back and lighter colored on my stomach. I have a gorgeous moustache which is why some people call me the moustache monkey. My ears have white tufts at the tips. I have a very trim body with long slender legs. My body is made for running and I am the fastest primate in the world. I sometimes travel as much as 12 kms a day!

I am a **TERRESTRIAL** primate. This means that I spend nearly all my time on the ground; except when I am sleeping at night or looking for predators in the day. My hair color blends well with the tall dry grass which helps me easily hide even where there are no trees.

I am a **TERRITORIAL** monkey. Though I like to hang out in large groups I only want to be with patas that I already know. I do not want to see other strange patas monkeys or any other monkey for that matter in my home area.

You can find me from Senegal to Ethiopia.

IUCN<sup>1</sup> classifies me as **LEAST CONCERN**.

<sup>1</sup> The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is an organization devoted to the protection of nature. The IUCN Redlist of Threatened Species uses 5 different categories to evaluate the level of threats to the survival of each living species of primate.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED, ENDANGERED, VULNERABLE, NOT THREATENED AND LEAST OF CONCERN



## Red Colobus Monkey

*Procolobus badius temmincki*

I am the red colobus monkey. I am a medium sized monkey weighing about 8 kilos.

I admit that I am a bit funny looking. My coat is mostly shades of red with a darker band of red down my back and a rust colored tail. My face can be dark or light but I usually have what looks like two big saucers around my eyes. I have a sloped back, a pot-belly and my head is a bit small for my body. Another strange thing about me is that my thumb is only a tiny bump. But my other four fingers are long and strong.

I am ARBOREAL meaning I spend most of my time in the trees. I am well known for my acrobatics because I take flying leaps from one far away branch to another. I eat leaves, fruits and flowers.

The size of group I live in varies. I can live in small groups of 15 or big groups of up to 100 individuals! We make lots of noise when we get together. I am a pretty friendly monkey. I make friends with other monkey species, especially my friend the green monkey. I am not too fond of chimpanzees because they like to hunt and eat me.

There are many kinds or subspecies of red colobus monkey. Mine is the one living the farthest west. I can be found from Senegal to Guinea.

IUCN classifies me as ENDANGERED.



## Guinea Baboon

*Papio papio*

I am the baboon. I am the largest of all monkeys. I weigh between 12 and 20 kilos.

I have a reddish brown colored coat of hair. My face is a bit long. Some people say I look and sound like a dog. In my family males are much bigger than females and males also have a thick mane like a lion.

I am TERRESTRIAL which means I spend most of my time on the ground. But I sleep high in trees or along the edges of high cliffs. I am usually found in woodland, savannah and gallery forests.

I am OMNIVOROUS which means I eat many different kinds of food. I eat fruits, grasses, seeds, roots, resin, insects, eggs and small animals. And I am sorry to say that sometimes I steal and eat crops.

I am really very social with other baboons and I love to hang out in large groups of 50 and even 100 individuals. If there is enough food around our groups can even be as large as 500 individuals!

There are several kinds or subspecies of baboons. My subspecies has the smallest range. You can find me from southern Mauritania and Mali to Guinea and north-western Sierra Leone.

IUCN has some concern about me. I am classified as NEAR THREATENED.



## Senegal Galago (Bushbaby)

*Galago senegalensis*

I am the Galago. You can call me bushbaby if you like. I am different from all the other monkeys in The Gambia. I belong to a group of primates called PROSIMIANS which means early or first primates. I am very small. I only weigh 250 grams. Most people don't even think of me as a primate. They think I am a squirrel.

My coat is brownish grey colored and my hair is lighter on my stomach. I am NOCTURNAL which means I am awake at night and I sleep in the daytime. I have enormous eyes to help me see in the dark. My nose is long and narrow and pointed at the end. My tail is long and curls at the bottom. I have long back legs and I love to jump.

I am also ARBOREAL meaning most of my time is in the trees. It is very rare to see me on the ground. I like to eat tree gum and insects the most but I also eat fruit and pollen of flowers.

One very interesting piece of information about me is that I build nests for sleeping. I get so tired of hearing how smart chimpanzees are because they make nests when I do the same thing and no one says a word about it.

You can find me from Senegal to Ghana.

IUCN classifies me as LEAST CONCERN.



## Chimpanzee

*Pan troglodytes verus*

Let me start by telling you that I am not a monkey. I am an ape. Apes and monkeys are different kinds of primates. Many centuries ago you and I had a common ancestor. And this is why scientists call us cousins.

I am large compared to monkeys. I can weigh as much as 50 kilos and I stand about 1.5 meters tall.

My hair is usually all black. I have no hair on my face. My skin color, like yours, can be pale, black or even freckled. My legs are shorter than yours but my arms are much longer. One of the sure signs that I am an ape is that I do not have a tail. This is a big difference between monkeys and apes. I have long hands and fingers with a short thumb. I usually walk on all fours but when necessary I can stand up and walk on my two feet like you.

I am an OMNIVORE. I eat fruits, leaves, flowers, insects and small animals. I usually travel on the ground but when eating or sleeping I am in the trees. I make a bed or nest from leaves and small branches every night.

I am very intelligent. I know how to make and use tools. I make fishing poles, hammers and even spears. I also teach my children how to use tools.

My kind or subspecies of chimpanzee can be found from Senegal to Nigeria.

IUCN classifies me as ENDANGERED.



## Green Monkey

*Chlorocebus sabaeus*

I am the green monkey. I am a medium size monkey. I weigh roughly 4 to 7 kilos.

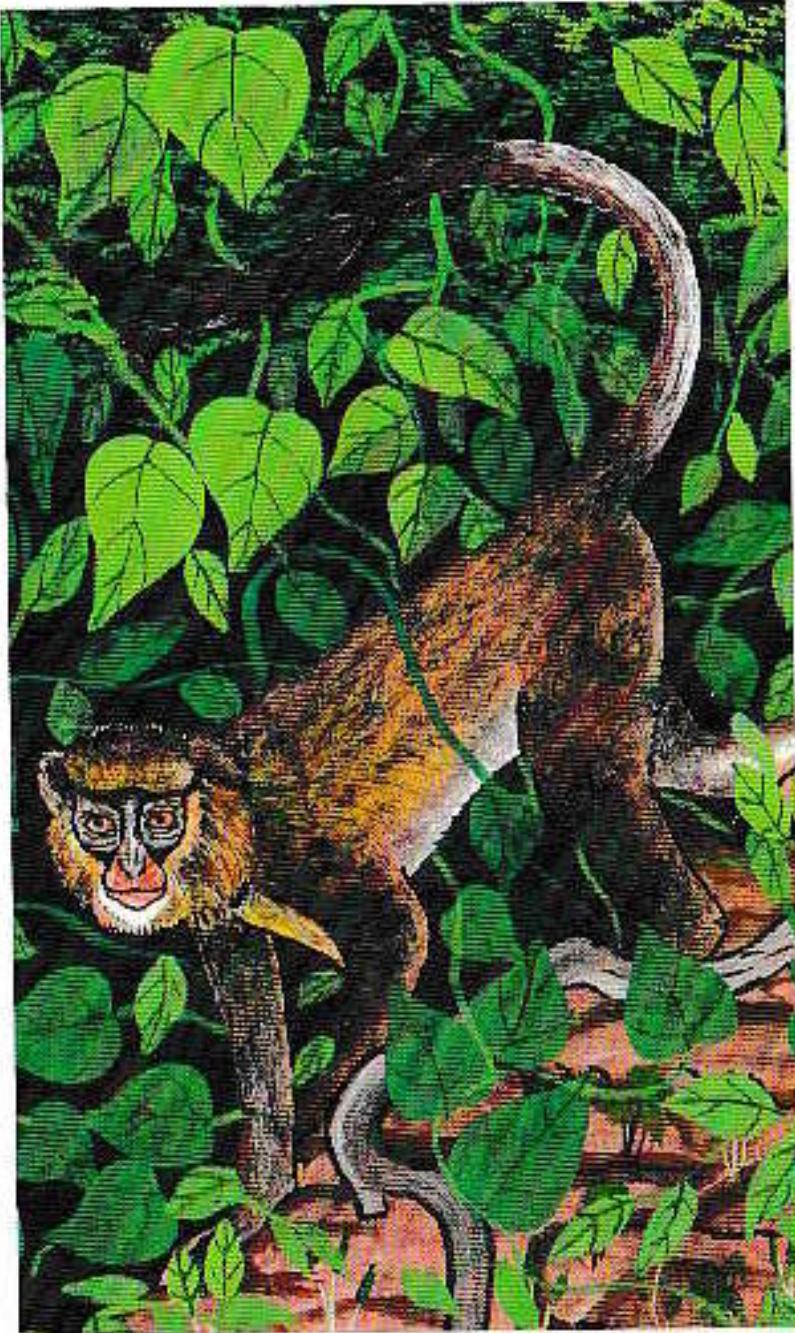
My coat of hair is short and a grizzled golden green color from my head to tail. My hair is a bit lighter on my stomach. I have no hair on my face. And my facial skin is like smooth black leather. I have a thin white band of hair across the top of my face and some matching sideburns that flip up and out rather than down. I think this gives me a rather dashing look don't you agree?

I am a very easy going monkey. I feel equally comfortable in trees and on the ground. I live happily in a wide range of habitats; I like savanna, woodland, gallery forests and I also like mangroves. I eat almost anything including fruits, leaves, seeds, baby birds and even seafood.

Scientists are very interested in my sophisticated way of communicating. I make 3 different calls of alarm; each one is for one specific kind of animal. Pretty smart don't you think?

I am pretty common as far as monkeys go. I can be found from Senegal to Ghana.

IUCN classifies me as LEAST CONCERN.



## Campbell's Monkey

*Cercopithecus campbelli campbelli*

I am the Campbells monkey. I am a medium size monkey. I weigh between 3 and 6 kilos.

My hair color can vary depending on where I am living but it us usually grayish brown to brownish yellow. My tail is quite long and sometimes I arch it rather elegantly over my back.

I think of myself as quite beautiful – especially my face. At first glance you may think I am wearing a mask because I have dark bands of color stretching from my face to my ears like the ties of a mask. I have big puffy balls of light colored hair on my cheeks with small cream colored ear tufts to match. I also have a gorgeous creamy colored bouffant hair piece on top of my head.

I eat mostly fruits but I also eat flowers and insects.

I spend more time in the trees than I do on the ground.

I am comfortable in many types of forest and terrains.

I am a very friendly monkey. I normally like to travel in groups of my own kind but I also hang out with other monkey species.

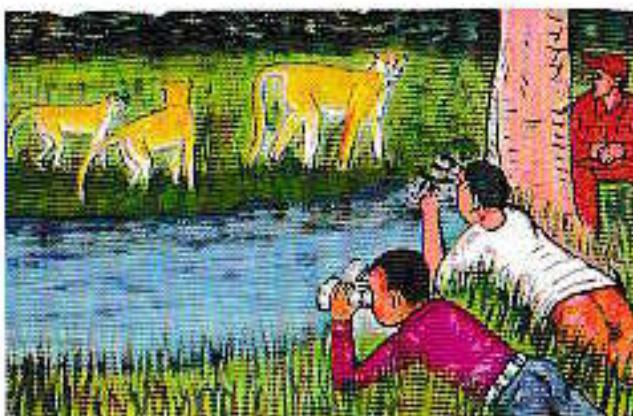
You can find me from Ivory Coast to Senegal and not so long ago even in The Gambia. The last time anyone saw me in The Gambia was about 25 years ago.

IUCN classifies me as LEAST CONCERN.

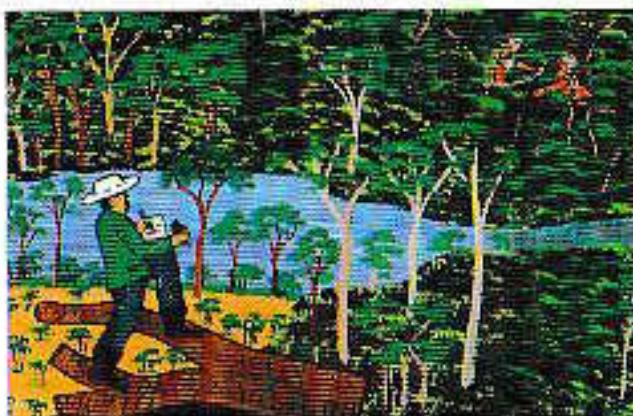


## WHY PRIMATES ARE IMPORTANT

Primates play an important role in the ecology of nature because they help plant trees. They are primarily fruit eaters and they also travel. This means they disperse seeds of the fruits they eat as they travel from one site to another. Primates are great cultivators.



Tourists want to see wildlife in their natural environment. Tourists are more attracted to watching primates than most other animals. This could be because they see so much of themselves in the behavior of the primates. Primates help generate revenue for The Gambia.



Many scientists study primates to learn more about human beings. Due to their similarity to humans, primates are an excellent model for the study of human evolution. Primates are a key that opens the door to our past.



## THREATS TO PRIMATES

Nearly one third of all primate species are threatened with EXTINCTION. This means if nothing is done soon we will disappear completely.... forever.... just like the dinosaurs.

One of our biggest problems is finding a place to live. You are rapidly destroying the forests that we depend on for food, water and shelter.



You cut down trees and clear entire forests for farming, building roads and for the construction of all types of housing. You rarely plant trees to replace what you take away.



You carelessly set fires that burn unsupervised destroying our home and killing us in the process.

Where can we live without the forest?



We do not have enough food to eat because you are cutting trees but also because you collect our wild fruits and sell them to your own people. We love and need the baboab but you take all of them before they are even ripe. And when you collect kaba you cut more trees to make the vines drop to the ground so it is easy for you to harvest. Where else can we get our food if it is not in the forest?

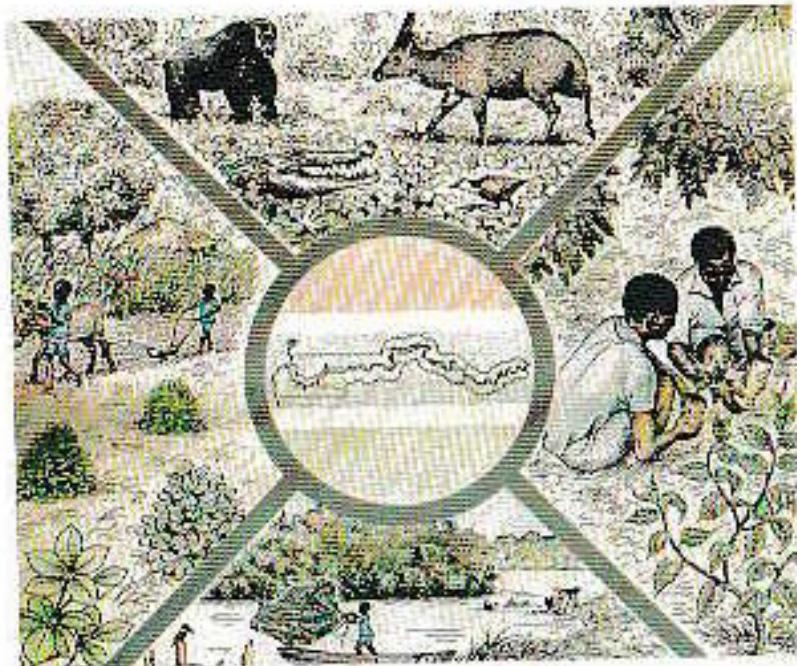
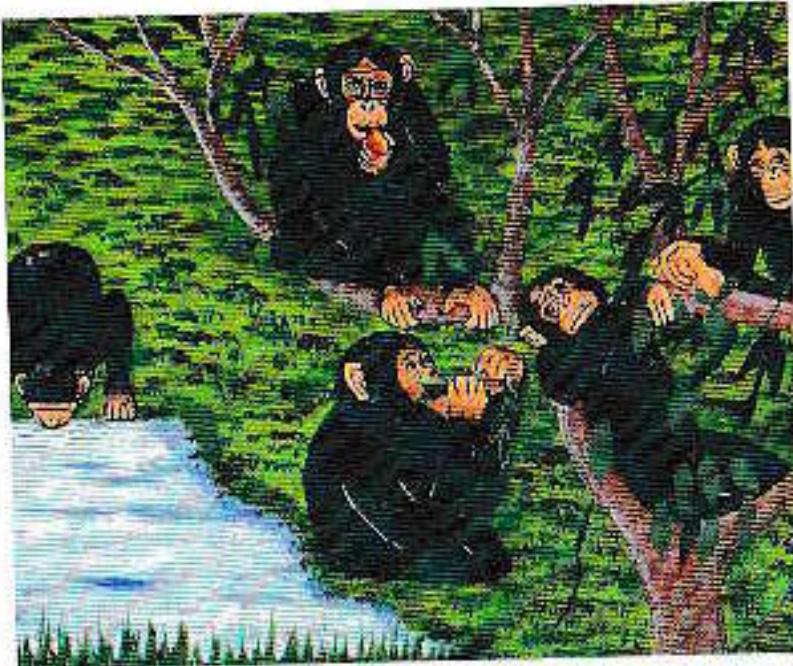


Even though it is against the law some people kill our mothers to steal our babies and keep them as pets or sell them to laboratories.



Some people are starting to hunt us for food. This has always been a taboo in The Gambia but with people who eat primates moving here from neighboring countries we are now a target.

With all due respect we are seeking assistance from you. We need your help.



## THE GAMBIA PROTECTS PRIMATES

The Gambia is known internationally for its progressive conservation laws for protecting wildlife.

- The Gambia's Biodiversity Act protects all primates from being hunted.
- The Gambia has 7 national parks and 66 forest parks where primates can live in safety.
- The Gambia has signed several conventions protecting primates including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

- The islands of the River Gambia National Park are home to the Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Project which supports more than 80 free ranging chimpanzees. This is the longest running chimpanzee sanctuary in Africa
- The Gambia Government has three departments that play a role in the protection of primates:

The Department of Forestry  
The Department of Parks and Wildlife Management  
The National Environment Agency

But this is not enough. The Gambia needs your help too. See what you can do on the next page.



Ecosystems Grants  
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# EGP

THE NETHERLANDS

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Illustrations : Lansana Camara (Jumeau)

Illustrations : Njogu Touray

Layout : Studio361 (The Gambia)

Author : Janis Carter

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