

THE EARLIEST RECORD OF LEAF-CLIPPING BEHAVIOR IN WILD CHIMPANZEES?

G. Yamakoshi¹, K. Koops²

¹*Kyoto University, Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan*, ²*University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK*

Presenter's Email: yamakoshi@jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp

Leaf-clipping behavior is one of the major components of chimpanzee culture. Although this behavioral pattern is distinct, its function differs from site to site. For example, it serves as a courtship display in Mahale (Tanzania), as a part of drumming display in Tai (Côte d'Ivoire), and as an expression of frustration in Bossou (Guinea). This behavior was first observed by T. Nishida at Mahale National Park in 1975 (Nishida 1980) and has been documented in various other research sites including Bossou, Tai, Budongo (Uganda), and Kibale (Uganda). Leaf-clipping behavior was first observed in Bossou in 1976 at the very beginning of a long-term project and has since been shown to be customary behavior in the study community. During the 1960s, scientific missions sent to Bossou by the University of Amsterdam used 16-mm film to record chimpanzee behaviors under natural conditions. We recently digitized this visual material and started analyzing the filmed behaviors by matching filmed individuals with those on the list of existing individuals. We were also able to identify several cases of leaf-clipping behavior within the material filmed in 1969; this material must constitute the earliest record of this behavior.

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