



An Illustrated Guide  
to the World of

# Primates Keys

Eva Horská



Most apes and monkeys practise one discipline to a high level. Some are great sprinters but can't swim or jump. Quite simply, each species masters the skills it needs to survive in its given environment. In so doing, it achieves amazing results beyond the abilities of humans.

The human is the only primate who exercises for fun or because he enjoys competition. Although he is versatile in his abilities and can manage most things, in most sporting disciplines he is no match for his animal relations.

# MONKEY



## LONG JUMP

Popular discipline with monkeys, in which the indri is the most stylish jumper. Like humans, it springs from the hind legs only and holds its body upright in the jump. In the treetops it can jump distances of up to 10 metres.

## AERIAL ACROBATICS

Gymnastics is a favourite sport for apes and monkeys of all kinds. Gibbons in particular are amazing aerial acrobats. They fly through the air at speeds of up to 55 km/h, covering great distances as they do so. They use their long, strong arms rather than their legs to swing from branch to branch. Experts refer to this form of locomotion as brachiation.

## SWIMMING

The crab-eating macaque lives on densely wooded riverbanks. It uses the water to fish in, and sometimes as a means of escape from its predators.

## SPRINTING

The home of the patas monkey contains very few trees, which explains why it spends most of its time on the ground. When running, it reaches speeds of up to 55 km/h.

## WEIGHTLIFTING WITH A STONE

The black-striped capuchin likes the hardest nuts in the jungles of South America. It places a nut on an elevated root, picks up the heaviest stone it can find, raises it above its head, and brings it down on the nut, so cracking open the shell.

# OLYMP

# PICS



# MONKEY MYTHOLOGY

People have told stories about monkeys since time immemorial. Monkeys were reimagined as heroes and villains; in some religions, they still have a role to play today. In medieval churches, images of monkeys were often associated with the devil, whereas in the Hinduism and Buddhism of Asia monkeys are wise and brave.

## LEGENDARY GIANTS

Ancient legends from various parts of the world tell of giant primates hiding in otherwise uninhabited mountains and forests. It is said the Yeti and the Yeren make occasional appearances in the Himalayas and China respectively, while Native Americans speak of the Sasquatch and Australians tell of the Yowie. It is also said that in the mountains of China a human woman would sometimes give birth to a large, hairy baby. The scientific field of cryptozoology gathers testimonies of sightings of these strange creatures. Do such giant primates still live today? In size and appearance, the creatures described sound like Gigantopithecus, a primate three metres tall known to us from its skeleton; it became extinct more than 100,000 years ago.

## EGYPTIAN SCRIBE

At sunrise, hamadryas baboons shout at each other as if calling congregants to the mosque. Add to this their impressive grey cloak and their regal bearing and we can see how the baboon came to be worshipped as a deity in ancient Egypt. A hamadryas baboon with a crescent moon on its head was a representation of Thoth, ancient Egyptian god of the moon. A protector of scholars, Thoth is credited with the invention of writing. As an expert on hieroglyphics, he was an all-powerful god because he knew the creative substance of language. The Egyptians kept baboons in temples; when a baboon died, they had its body mummified.

## SACRED MONKEY

Sacred langurs are worshipped in India, too. Temples, pavilions and basins of sacred water provide them with refuge, as do swimming pools, where they are fed and cared for. As people treat them kindly, the langurs lose their natural shyness. They walk confidently in the big-city streets; even when they enter the fields, people are not allowed to interfere with them. Indian legend tells of how the sacred langur got its black paws and faces. One of its kind wished to steal mango fruit from the garden of a giant in Sri Lanka and take it to the people of Bengal. Although the giant grabbed the monkey's tail, the monkey escaped with his life. His face and hands were burned in the struggle, however, and his descendants still bear the marks.

## MONKEY TEMPLE

Hanuman is a god with a monkey's head in India's Hindu religion. He is worshipped as a symbol of physical strength, perseverance and devotion. The figure of Hanuman teaches us about the unlimited power that lies within us. In the Ramayana epic, Hanuman the monkey king fights against demons and is said to have covered the distance from India to Sri Lanka in a single step. Temples to Hanuman are among the most visited in India. Once a year – when the Chaitra moon is full – Hindus celebrate Hanuman and commemorate his birth. They sing a song about him and proclaim "Bajrangbali Ki Jai", meaning "Victory to thy thunderbolt strength".



# An Encyclopaedia of Apes and Monkeys



Distribution of species in the wild



Size in relation to a human adult 180 cm tall

3

Degree of threat „RED LIST“:

1 = Least Concern

2 = Near Threatened

3 = Vulnerable

4 = Endangered

5 = Critically Endangered

6 = Extinct in the Wild, Extinct

„Nature is not a place to visit,  
it is a HOME.“

Gary Snyder, The Practice of the Wild



# Lemuria: an island ruled by lemurs

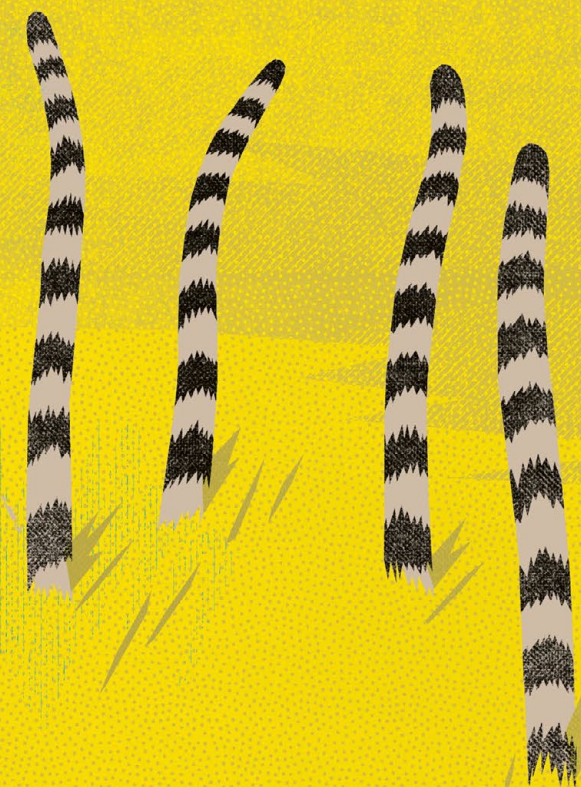
## VON DER DECKEN'S SIFAKA

Sifakas are skilled climbers. Every day they reach the juiciest leaves by scaling a treacherous labyrinthine path in the rock. Tireless aerial acrobats who stand upright in the trees, they jump distances of up to 10 metres, sometimes turning 180 degrees in mid-air. They move about on the ground in kangaroo-like jumps. Sifakas often hum quietly to themselves. When they are frightened, they will sound a "sheef-auk" alarm. This characteristic cry is aimed at birds of prey and meant as a warning to at-risk members of their own group. When all members of a group produce this loud, hissing call, the predator will get cold feet and turn tail.



Madagascar might easily be known as Lemuria. Indeed, all the world's hundred or so lemur species are endemic to this island in the Indian Ocean. Nowhere else do they live in the wild. Regrettably, this earthly paradise is being damaged by human activity. Before humans came to the island, it was home to 16 more lemur species than is the case now, including the sloth lemur (the largest). Today, the lemurs of the forests of Madagascar number only one tenth of their former population, making most lemurs endangered species.

The word 'lemur' comes from the Latin *lemures* – the name given to ghosts that weep and wail in the night. There is no denying that the lemur is one of the loudest primates, and that lemurs communicate using sounds unpleasant to the human ear. What's more, nocturnal lemur species have eyes that glow in the dark. Otherwise, these creatures are quite cute and likeable.



## RING-TAILED LEMUR

When they are running in a group in tall grass, all we see are the black-and-white tips of their erect tails. When lemur enemies or rivals meet, they push their tail out in front and rub it with their paws, so releasing secretions from the scent glands. They then wave the tail at the adversary, to make it clear who is the boss. If this does not have the desired effect, a fight between the two follows, in which they raise themselves on their hind legs, run at each other, spring into the air, all the while trying to catch the other with their claws or teeth. As one jump follows another, the dancing animals look as though they have springs in place of their hind legs. Female ring-tailed lemurs are always ready for the fight. If a female lemur finds a good place to sleep that already has a (male) occupant, she will evict him without hesitation. Females also rob males of the best morsels of food; sometimes they slap or even bite them.

"AYE AYE"

"Uh-oh"



## AYE-AYE

It looks more like a huge nocturnal squirrel than a monkey or a lemur. At the time of its first description in 1782, it represented such a mixture of anatomical qualities that scientists struggled to classify it. Because of its strong teeth, for a while it was thought to be a rodent. Even though scientists eventually concluded that it was a lemur, they thought it best to give it its own biological family. Its scarcity is partly due to human superstition: some people believe that if they see an aye-aye and fail to kill it, one of their fellow villagers will die. The indigenous name 'aye-aye' is given by its characteristic call. As there are no woodpeckers in Madagascar, wood-destroying insects have few natural enemies there. Such insects provide the aye-aye with the perfect diet. It uses its long index finger to harvest fat larvae from wood. Its chisel-shaped teeth get under the thick shell of a coconut with ease; then it picks out the flesh with its thin middle finger.





# Long-nosed monkeys



"Look at that belly-flop!"

"Watch out, or you'll end up as a snack."

## PROBOSCIS MONKEY

The male proboscis monkey is easily identified by his overhanging, cucumber-shaped nose. He takes great pride in it: the larger it is, the more females he will attract to his harem. Scientists believe that the large nose serves to amplify sounds made by this primate to show his dominance.

The proboscis monkey is endemic to the Indonesian island of Borneo. It inhabits mangroves and lowland forests around large rivers, in areas that spend much of the year underwater. It is such a strong swimmer that it can cross a wide river with ease. Its abilities as a diver are more remarkable still. Its hind paws have partially developed interdigital webbing.

A proboscis monkey belly-flops into the water, hitting the surface with maximum force. Its old enemy the crocodile may be lying in wait: the splash is designed to distract him, so that his prospective 'lunch' will reach the far bank before he knows what is happening.

The female proboscis monkey has a much smaller nose than her mate, and it is turned upwards. The female is half the size of the male.

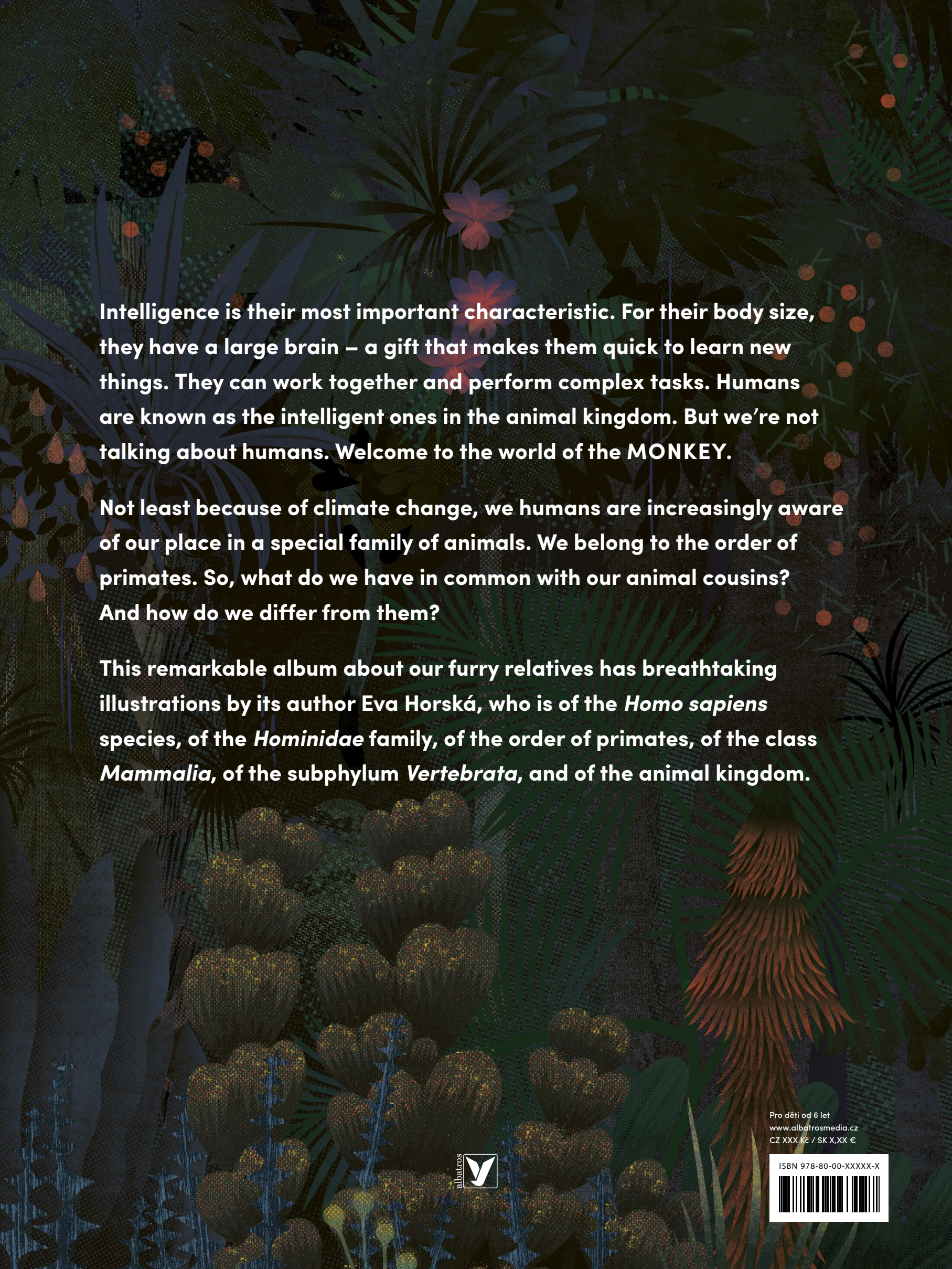


Proboscis monkeys are herbivores. Their diet consists mostly of mangrove leaves and other riparian plants. They do not compete for food with other monkeys in their vicinity. As their leaf diet is low in nutrients, they must eat a lot. As a result, they spend much of the day feeding.

Although mangroves resemble a tangle of shrubs in muddy water, they are one of the most useful ecosystems in the world. They grow in brackish waters, often by inlets of the sea, where fresh- and saltwater come together.

Floodplain and mangrove cover are the fastest declining environments in Borneo today, as they are giving way to new shrimp farms, fish nurseries and palm-oil refineries. We don't find proboscis monkeys at rescue stations, however: because of their special diet and propensity for stress and disease, they cannot endure long in the care of humans. Our only means of conserving this long-nosed species is environmental protection.





Intelligence is their most important characteristic. For their body size, they have a large brain – a gift that makes them quick to learn new things. They can work together and perform complex tasks. Humans are known as the intelligent ones in the animal kingdom. But we're not talking about humans. Welcome to the world of the MONKEY.

Not least because of climate change, we humans are increasingly aware of our place in a special family of animals. We belong to the order of primates. So, what do we have in common with our animal cousins? And how do we differ from them?

This remarkable album about our furry relatives has breathtaking illustrations by its author Eva Horská, who is of the *Homo sapiens* species, of the *Hominidae* family, of the order of primates, of the class *Mammalia*, of the subphylum *Vertebrata*, and of the animal kingdom.



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