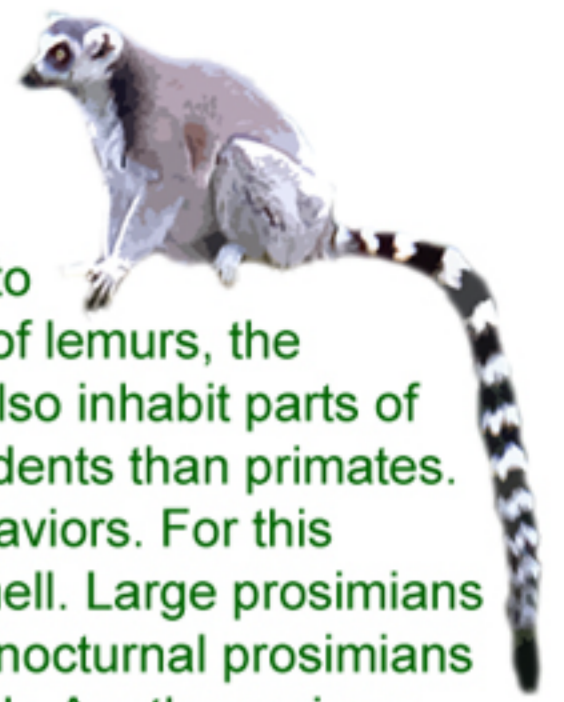


THE 4 GROUPS OF PRIMATES



PROSIMIANS:

Prosimians are the most primitive of primates and the evolutionary predecessors to monkeys, apes and humans. This suborder of primates includes several species of lemurs, the aye-aye and galago. They are the only primates native to Madagascar and they also inhabit parts of Southeast Asia. Prosimians vary greatly from other primates, looking more like rodents than primates. They are the only primates to rely primarily on smell to find prey and in social behaviors. For this reason prosimians have long muzzles with wet noses to enhance the sense of smell. Large prosimians like some lemurs are active during the day while smaller ones are nocturnal. The nocturnal prosimians have large eyes and well developed ears for detecting their environment in the dark. Another unique feature of the prosimians is that they have a "toilet claw," which is a claw on the second digit of the foot, helpful in keeping their fur in good condition.



MONKEYS:

Monkeys are the descendants of prosimians in the evolutionary chain and inhabit Central and South America, Africa and Asia. They are all distinguished by their forward facing eyes, grasping hands and highly developed brains. They are separated into two groups: the New World and Old World monkeys. New World monkeys include capuchin, spider and howler monkeys, while Old World monkeys include colobus monkeys, macaques and baboons. New World monkeys have a broader nose, a prehensile tail and spend the majority of their time in trees. Old World monkeys have narrow noses, non-prehensile tails and spend some of their time on the ground. Some monkeys also have opposable thumbs and opposable big toes. Monkeys are not only good climbers they are also intelligent. They can store information, know basic math concepts and socially communicate.

APES:

Apes are large, highly intelligent primates that have descended from Old World monkeys. They do not have tails and their arms are usually larger than their legs. Fur covers their body, but their face, and a few other areas, are bare skin to allow for facial expressions. Apes live in tropical woodlands and forests of Africa and Asia. They are separated into two groups: lesser apes and great apes. Gibbons are part of the lesser apes and are similar to monkeys in that they are very agile and spend all of their lives in the forest canopy. Great apes, including orangutans, gorillas and two types of chimpanzees, are larger and less agile than the lesser apes. Great apes have well-developed brains and are among the most intelligent of all animals. They are excellent at problem solving and expressing emotions.



HUMANS:

Humans are part of the family Hominidae, the great apes. What separates us from other great apes is that we are bipedal, meaning we travel upright on two feet. We also have a highly developed brain capable of abstract reasoning, language, introspection and empathy. It has been estimated that the human lineage diverged from that of chimpanzees about five million years ago, and from gorillas about eight million years ago. Human evolution is characterized by a number of important physiological trends, including the expansion of the brain cavity and brain itself, which is typically 1,400 cm³ in volume, over twice that of a chimpanzee or gorilla. Other significant evolutionary changes included a reduction of the canine tooth and the descent of the larynx and hyoid bone, making speech possible.

