

Sneaky monkey 'hook-ups' give peek into primate cognition

Just how much monkey business is there in monkey sex? In groups with alpha males, monkeys lower on the totem pole may have to sneak around to mate. How well they conceal their activities can shed light on the cognitive powers of primates.

Macaques are monkeys that live in troops with complex social hierarchies. High-ranking males may have dibs on mating with all the females in the group. But females give non-alpha males a chance too, and some studies have found that these hookups happen more often when the alphas are out of sight.

Researchers have defined three levels of “tactical deception” animals can employ. At the simplest level, an animal uses the same behaviors that it would normally, but in a context that leaves another animal out of the loop. (And it does this deliberately, not accidentally.) To reach the next level of deceptiveness, an animal has to understand another animal's visual perspective: if I'm behind this bush, that gorilla can't see me! And at the third level, animals actually try to manipulate each other's knowledge.

Led by Utrecht University scientist Anne Overduin-de Vries, a team of researchers decided to test macaques in a certain sneaky scenario. Namely, sex.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Monkeys Try to Hide Illicit Hookups](#)