

Monkey (Animal)

Desmond Morris



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?Monkey explores our relationship throughout history with this most playful and familiar of creatures. As humans, we tend to see monkeys as trivial or comic creatures; indeed our dictionaries define 'monkeying' as tampering, interfering and playing mischievous, foolish tricks. Yet it is the very playfulness inherent in our ancient monkey ancestors that underlies our success as a species. Over millions of years, we evolved from those scampering, chattering, intelligent, treetop-living creatures. Their inborn urge to explore became the bedrock of our sophisticated innovations; their love of activity became our industrious pursuit of knowledge. We owe a great debt to our monkey ancestors.

Baboons were revered in the Egypt of the Pharaohs; monkey deities

feature prominently in the ancient religions of China and Japan; and in India some still afford sacred status to the langur monkey. Since Darwin our relationship with the monkey has changed, and in some sense become uneasier; our identification with their 'primitive' and sometimes destructive behaviours amplified by our knowledge of our own origins.

In Monkey Desmond Morris unpicks human attitudes to our mischievous cousins, and sets out to draw a true picture of these fascinating creatures and their continuing popularity in culture.



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