

Monkeys: The World's Smartest Animal?

Scientific studies show that the monkey is one of nature's most clever mammals and maybe humans have even evolved from them.

I, for one, totally agree. But maybe that's biased of me, since I am one.

Yeah, you heard that right. I'm a monkey. It's not everyday you have such an intelligent animal narrating your stories, is it?

Now, don't start thinking that I'm going to give you some educational lecture on my habitat and all that (although I *could* since I'm well informed on such topics), because, really, a monkey is no different than being a human.

So how would *you* like it, to be suddenly snared in one of those vile animal traps and encased in a negligible little glass case so people can gloat at you and make vulgar comments? Trust me, if on one strange day jungle animals managed to stuff one of *you* in a container, I won't be the one going, "*Adorable!* It just wet itself! Honey, take more pictures!"

I'm terribly sorry if I've just given a rude first impression, but for jungle dwellers, the closest thing to love we'll ever feel for you people is mere tolerance.

Back to the fact that monkeys are incredibly perspicacious. Didn't know what that meant, now, did you? That shows how smart I am. But of course, I don't mean to brag. You see, I can't help being smarter than you.

If Ma heard this, she'd be rolling her eyes (monkeys have attitude, you know) and calling me rude. But tell me, is it less rude to be dampening your child's spirits and making them a slave to etiquette?

Mothers. That's just how they are. One day, mine will come running to me, begging forgiveness for the way she treated her darling child prodigy.

Anyways, at the moment Ma was attending a Jungle Council meeting and Dad was out finding dinner. My brothers were throwing huge tree nuts at each other's skulls. The imbeciles. Sometimes I doubt that humans really evolved from *those* things. I decided to go find my friends before I lost any precious brain cells.

Climbing swiftly down our tree, I took in the scene around me.

It was a peaceful, sunny day. The sky was a deep, crystal clear blue that complimented the shining sun whose rays splashed onto the jungle floor, making bits of dirt and stone sparkle like jewels. Grass appeared greener and flower buds began to bloom, glimmering with little droplets of dew from last night's storm. The spring downpour had rejuvenated the world, making everything seem young and fresh.

Splat! A thick glob of spit rained down on me (landing squarely in my left eye, I might add), interrupting my interlude. I made an infuriated but dignified grunt. Shielding my face with my hands, I looked up and was about to give the revolting creature a piece of my mind about ejecting repugnant substances from the mouth until I saw that it was Reytimus, and stopped short. He was chewing leaves with pronounced enthusiasm.

Normally, nobody aggravates me and gets away with it, but this was a whole other story. Reytimus was an old giraffe, tall and mighty, not to mention wise, too. Everyone makes an effort to get on his good side because apparently, he knows all these

ancient remedies that cure the worst sicknesses. Personally, I didn't believe a word of that garbage, but I deeply respected him for another reason.

He had what I was chasing after. Anyone who could earn that much respect so easily, by talking all that mumbo-jumbo and handing out a couple of herbs, was someone I admired. I mean, if you really thought about it, he was practically a con artist! One day, everyone would bow down to me the way they're always sucking up to Reytimus.

My fingertips tingled and itched to pluck a leaf off a tree and chew it like Reytimus.

I know, I know, 'monkey see, monkey do'. You can stop smirking now.

Reytimus slowly bent his head down to my level. His deep brown eyes, which animals said had seen many, many things, peered into mine. He seemed to penetrate my thoughts.

"Young one," he began, "A pinch of the wrong spice will make a marvelous soup bitter; a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor." He looked down sadly at me. "Be careful with your knowledge."

I was bewildered, and let me tell you, that was not something I felt very often.

I thanked him for the interesting piece of information, then turned to leave. As I trudged through the foliage I began to feel surer that my theory of Reytimus spewing garbage, not wisdom, was true. I mean, knowledge was what made me superior from everyone else, and even though some animals said that I was getting big-headed about it. He, of all people, should know that. I scurried further away from him, hoping to finally escape the pity in his eyes that bore into my back.

Eventually I came into a clearing in the jungle in which my pals were playing dodge ball (not only a game for humans). Hollowed-out nut shells were being tossed about in the air.

I grimaced. I'd escaped my brothers, only to come to this?

At least there were more people around to show off my brain capacity to. Lots of animals needed to be educated in the required force to throw a nut, the chance it will land accurately and how the wind played a factor in the performance. I cheered up considerably. Pushing thoughts of Reytimus' 'warning' to the back of my mind, I joined the game.

Trouble struck when we noticed that half the balls were missing. Using my extra perceptive skills, I located them in a hole by the edge of the clearing. The ground sloped here, and the balls had rolled into a deep crevice.

"Now we'll have to call the game off," my best friend, Steve, grumbled.

"No, we don't," I replied matter-of-factly "All we have to do is fill the crevice with water from the river, and the hollowed nuts will float right up! It's a piece of cake!"

"You're a genius!" Steve exclaimed, in awe.

"I know," I answered. The solution was so simple that any buffoon would have gotten it. Well, maybe it only seemed that way to me because of my intelligence. Long after the balls were retrieved, compliments still showered down on me. I was a hero!

"You're practically glowing!" Steve said, as we walked home after the game.

"You were amazing, but don't let those compliments go to your head."

I just grinned.

The next day, as I was returning from gathering bananas and berries for dinner, I came across a wailing group of rabbits, all huddled together and frantically hopping about.

Naturally, I had to find out why. Curiosity is the birth of wisdom, you know.

“What’s the matter?” I inquired, “I’ll help. I can solve any problem.”

Hector, a rabbit who had been at the dodge ball game last night, visibly sighed with relief.

“Thank goodness you’re here! I saw what you did yesterday! Please fix this mess as well! One of my friends, Ross, has fallen into a fissure in the ground! It’s a very wide and deep hole which he can’t get out of!”

This was too easy for my advanced brain. Yesterday, I had retrieved nuts from a crevice by filling the hole with water. The nuts surfaced immediately. It only made sense to do the same again today, with the same situation. Why was everyone so helpless without me?

“Just fill the hole with water like yesterday and your friend will float up,” I said. “Get to work!”

The distraught bunnies began to grab any hollow object they could lay their hands on. Some grabbed their hats or watermelon shells, and some even got to work right away, using their paws.

“More!” I commanded, “This bunny will be out in no time!”

This motivated them to work harder. Soon, they were fervently hauling loads of water into the hole.

I heard some noises coming from the bottom of the fissure, something that sounded like a shout. I guessed the fallen bunny was getting impatient. That ticked me off

a little. We were all trying our best to save that kid, and he wasn't satisfied that we were doing it quickly enough?

"Everybody, Ross is shouting for more water, fast!" I relayed.

Soon, the water reached the top of the fissure, and there was Ross.

The bunnies cheered ecstatically. I just calmly told them that I *knew* it would work.

My glory didn't last long, though. My plan worked, all right. Ross had been carried up by the water and was now floating on it, but there was one tiny problem.

He was drowned.

How on earth could this have happened?! My plans were always fool-proof!

Well, I supposed that even geniuses have much to learn.