



Gibbon

(*Hylobates spp.*)



Included Species

<i>Hylobates agilis</i>	Agile gibbon
<i>Hylobates gabriellae</i>	Buff-cheeked gibbon
<i>Hylobates hoolock</i>	Hoolock gibbon
<i>Hylobates lar</i>	Lar gibbon
<i>Hylobates leukogenys</i>	White-cheeked gibbon
<i>Hylobates moloch</i>	Javan gibbon
<i>Hylobates muelleri</i>	Grey gibbon
<i>Hylobates pileatus</i>	Pileated gibbon
<i>Hylobates syndactylus</i>	Siamang

Environment

Gibbons do best in temperatures ranging from 65 °F to 85 °F (18 °C to 30 °C). They should be provided with shelters maintained in this range when the ambient temperature is colder.

Diet

A variety of fruits and vegetables make up the base of the diet. Supplementation with commercial leaf eater primate biscuits provides a source of essential nutrients. Cooked chicken, egg, or cheese may be provided for extra protein.

Gibbons can be picky eaters and their digestive system can be sensitive to fruits with a high acid content (such

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Primate Group



Ape

Average lifespan	40 years
Adult body weight	13-20 lbs., 6-9 kg.
Natural weaning age	18-24 months
Age of sexual maturity	6-8 years
Social grouping	Family group
Brachiating species	

as tomatoes, grapes, pineapples, or citrus fruits). Large quantities of these fruits may cause diarrhea and illness.

Enclosure Design

Gibbons typically exhibit a highly specialized form of locomotion called brachiation, which means they use their arms to swing through the trees. Trees, ropes, and platforms can be used to create multiple arboreal pathways at different vertical levels to support this natural behavior. An ideal inter-structure distance for brachiation is about 2 meters.

A combination of flexible and rigid materials is best for climbing structures. Materials can include rope, bamboo, tree limbs, fire hoses, hammocks, and vegetation.

Gibbons prefer rest areas and platforms positioned above human head height.

They should always have access to shade and visual barriers.

Access to a nest box or night den with bedding material such as straw or shredded paper is recommended.

Enrichment Strategies

These highly intelligent species need variation and novelty to keep from getting bored.

Foraging

Distributing small food items throughout the enclosure is a good way to encourage exploration and exercise.

Puzzle feeders

Devices or materials that encourage the gibbons to pick a sticky substance (like peanut butter or honey) out of a small opening or drilled holes (in logs or solid produce) tend to be highly engaging.

Browse

Leaves, fruits, and flowers from local browse can further enhance the captive diet and be a source of enrichment.

Social Life

Gibbons are highly territorial. In the wild, territories are typically defended by loud morning songs to announce that the area is occupied and by actively chasing intruders out of the territory.



Lar gibbon proclaiming its territory with a morning song.

The loud, stereotyped song bouts not only serve to defend resources such as territories, food trees, and partners, but may also help to attract potential mates. Each species has specific characteristics to their songs.

Gibbons are typically monogamous and mate for life. Mated pairs of most species will produce duet songs which consist of coordinated vocal interactions by both partners using sex-specific calls.

Caring for Offspring

Gibbons give birth to single offspring.

Newborn gibbons are virtually hairless on their abdomen and must rely on their mothers for warmth.

Young gibbons will stay with their parents until they are past adolescence.

Offspring are typically forced out of their family group between 6 and 8 years of age. It is recommended to remove captive offspring from their family group at this time.

Compatible Species

In the wild, siamangs, pileated gibbons, agile gibbons, and lar gibbons have been found to peacefully coexist in overlapping territories. A successful same-sexed pairing of an adult female lar gibbon and an adult female grey gibbon has been reported. Successful cohousing of siamangs with orangutans are also reported.

Javan gibbons, on the other hand, are fairly incompatible with other species.

Common Health and/or Welfare Concerns

Infectious diarrhea

Diarrhea associated with bacterial pathogens, protozoal parasites, or parasitic worms is fairly common. Routine fecal surveillance is recommended.

Hepatitis B

A serological survey of 30 captive gibbons in 2000, revealed that nearly half were positive for at least one marker of ongoing or previous infection with hepatitis B virus. Infection in non-human primates may be asymptomatic or may result in signs of hepatitis including anorexia, lethargy, jaundice, and elevated liver enzymes detected on blood testing. Vaccination against hepatitis B is recommended.

Abnormal behaviors

Gibbons are very intelligent and will easily become bored and destructive if no enrichment or stimulation is provided.

Boredom can manifest itself either through increased lethargy and social withdrawal or the development of abnormal behaviors to compensate for the lack of stimulation. Behaviors such as rocking, stereotyped movements (repetitive pacing, running, jumping), coprophagy, regurgitation and reingestion, excessive grooming, and self-mutilation have been reported in these species. Gibbons are also known to destroy enclosure furnishings and vegetation if bored.

Questions

Please email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

Species Images and Characteristics



Agile gibbon
(*Hylobates agilis*)

May be black, brown, reddish brown, or light tan. Males have white cheeks.



Buff-cheeked gibbon
(*Hylobates gabriellae*)

Males are black with buff/tan patches on cheeks. Females are buff/tan with a black patch their head.



Hoolock gibbon
(*Hylobates hoolock*)

Males are black with white brows. Females are reddish brown with white markings encircling the face.



Lar gibbon
(*Hylobates lar*)

Coat color can vary from cream to brown to black and is not related to gender. All have a white facial ring and white hands and feet.



White-cheeked gibbon
(*Hylobates leukogenys*)

Males are black with white patches on cheeks. Females are buff/tan with a black patch on their head.



Javan gibbon
(*Hylobates moloch*)

Males and females are both silvery grey.



Grey gibbon
(*Hylobates muelleri*)

Can vary from brown to grey. Males have an incomplete facial ring of light grey to cream hair.



Pileated gibbon
(*Hylobates pileatus*)

Males are black with white fingers and toes. They also have a white facial ring. Females are silver buff with a black cap and chest.



Siamang
(*Hylobates syndactylus*)

Males and females are both black. A large throat sac enhances vocalizations. They are larger than other gibbons (25-33 lbs., 11-15 kg.)