



Siamang Ape

Kingdom: Animalia
 Phylum: Chordata
 Subphylum: Vertebrata
 Class: Mammalia
 Order: Primates
 Family: Hylobatidae
 Genus: *Symphalangus*
 Species: *syndactylus*



Photo courtesy of Brett Dupont

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The siamang ape is found throughout the Barisan Mountain of Sumatra (Indonesia) and in the mountains of the Malay Peninsula, south of the Perak River. They live in a mixture of tropical evergreen forest and deciduous (leaf shedding) trees and range from lowlands up to 5000 feet in elevation.
- **Exhibit Location:** Social Animals, Primate Park

Characteristics

- Height: 2-3 feet; Weight: 25-30 pounds; Length: 2-3 feet; arm length can be up to 2.5 times the body length.
- Siamangs are the largest of the "lesser apes" (family Hylobatidae which includes gibbons and siamangs). They have a thick, shaggy, black coat, long slender arms and a short-muzzled face that is nearly hairless. Thick skin pads on the hind quarters provide comfort when sleeping in a sitting position.
- Both sexes have long canine teeth, opposable thumbs (enable grasping of objects), a big toe that is deeply separated from the foot and 2nd and 3rd toes that are fused by a thin webbing of skin. This webbing is called syndactylous and the source for the species' name.
- Their most distinguishing characteristic is the enlarged throat sac that can be as big as a human's head. The throat sac is used to force air over their vocal chords, enabling them to produce more than one sound at a time.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild:** 25-30 years; **In Captivity:** 30-40 years

Behaviors

- Siamangs are strictly arboreal (tree dwellers), highly territorial, and primarily monogamous (having one mate at a time). A groups' home range is about 60 acres. Both male and female cooperatively maintain their territory by patrolling, calling and confronting.
- They live in family groups made up of parents and up to 4 offspring of different ages. The offspring usually leave the group at the age of 6-8 years.
- Brachiation (hand over hand swinging) is the chief mode of locomotion and allows them to move swiftly through the trees at up to 30 mph. They walk upright when on the ground or on branches that are too large to grasp.
- They wake at sunrise and perform their morning "concert," then set out to search for food, taking about 3-4 hours to eat their fill. They tend to rest more than 50% of their waking period (dawn to dusk).
- At night, the group enters the highest branches of a single tree to sleep.
- One of the most important social activities is grooming. Adults groom on an average of 15 minutes a day.
- They communicate vocally using their throat sac; this calling can be heard for up to 1.2 miles away. They also use tactile communication, facial expressions, body postures, and gestures to communicate.

- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** plastic canisters with food items inside, sheets, novel items such as stuffed animals, rearranging the exhibit ropes and trees.

Reproduction

- Females typically give birth to 1 young every 2 to 3 years. In the wild, the mating season is usually May thru July. The gestation period is about 230 days and births occur December thru February. Twins are very rare.
- The newborns are grey-pink with only meager hairs, but by 1 week of age the body is covered with hair except for the head. By the second week, the head has hair as well. After birth, all of the juvenile's time is spent clinging to the mother. After 2-3 months the amount of maternal carrying time decreases.
- The juvenile is weaned between 18-24 months. They do not consume solids until about 6 months of age. When the juvenile is 3-4 months old, the father begins to help with carrying duties. At about 1 year, the mother becomes intolerant of the juvenile and the father takes over the care. He returns the juvenile to the mother for nursing. By the age of 3, only occasional parental help in travel is offered.
- Offspring reach sexual maturity at about 8 years old and leave the group to form his/her own family.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** fruit, leaves, flowers, insects, birds, bird eggs
- **At the Zoo:** fruits, vegetables, monkey biscuits, canned primate diet

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** Endangered; **CITES Appendix I**
- The Siamang population in the wild has declined by at least 50% over the past 40 years due primarily to hunting for pet trade (mostly juveniles) and continued rates of habitat loss (expanding agriculture and road building). During the hunting for juveniles, the mother is so protective that she has to be killed so the young can be taken.
- The Siamang is part of AZA's Species Survival Plan. We can help by supporting conservation programs.
- **Predators:** humans, avian predators (a great risk to the young in particular), carnivores, snakes

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- The Siamang is the only species in the genus *Symphalangus*.
- Siamangs don't have a clavicle (collarbone) bone, which allows for 360° arm movement.
- They awake at dawn, and the family communally defecates (poops) shortly thereafter.
- During much of their feeding time they are suspended by one arm.
- A female rarely gives birth to more than 10 offspring in her lifetime.

Sources:

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