

ABNORMAL COLORATION IN CHIMPANZEES

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In *Oryx*, V, 3, 1959, p. 114, Stott and Selsor mention some observations on chimpanzees with brown fur. Two refer to juveniles, one of which was permanently and the other temporarily ill. These cases might possibly suggest a correlation between brownish colour and bad health, though the authors do not so infer.

It may therefore be worth mentioning three cases of brown or brownish chimpanzees which appear to be in perfect health. One of them is a 32 years old male in Leopoldville Zoo. Its colour varies from dark brown to yellow-brown, the latter being most pronounced on the lower half of the back. It has many greyish white hairs also, as is usually found in old chimpanzees. The other two cases concern chimpanzees in the wild, which I was able to observe regularly from hides during a field study made under the auspices of the Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo et du Ruanda-Urundi. Both were apparently very old individuals, judging from the large amount of greyish or white hairs, particularly on the head and back, and from their sophisticated behaviour. In both the main coloration was of a dark brown type, tending to a lighter brown on the back, but in the one it was particularly the head which was the most brownish part whereas in the other one the posterior part of the trunk as well as the legs were more and lighter brown. There was no orange hue. The first was the mother of one child, the other the mother of two children of different ages. For the rest it is difficult exactly to describe the colour since the white hairs resulting from old age tend often to be longer than the pigmented hairs, which causes the colour to change according to the direction of the sunlight. A very greyish male with a "silver" back which I could regularly observe too and which looked to be the oldest of the population showed no brownish fur at all. So from all evidence together it would seem that a brown or brownish coloration in chimpanzees has nothing to do with either age or health condition.

If any reader of this *Journal* has further data on this subject in chimpanzees of known age I would be very grateful for the information.

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