

# Journal review: "dim forest, bright chimps" essay sample



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## **Journal Review: “ Dim Forest, Bright Chimps” Essay Sample**

The article entitled “ Dim Forest, Bright Chimps” by Christophe Boesch and Hedwige Boesch-Ancher mann (1991: 72-75) shows that the use of crude tools and hunting strategies might have been the same between chimpanzees and our early ancestors. In 1979, a field team began a long-term study of the chimpanzees in the Tai National Park. The goal of studying these chimps was to help “ shed new light on prevailing theories of human evolution” (72). Anthropologists believe that some 1. 8 million years ago, hunting cooperatively and food sharing played an important role in developing our social system.

The first part of the article explains how the chimps use natural resources as tools. These tools include objects like branches, rocks, and heavy stones. These objects are used to crack open hard nuts, extract termites from their nests or even honey from a beehive. The chimps learn to use these tools with extreme precision, which make them more effective gatherers. The field team focused mainly on the chimps cracking nuts. This was important to the field crew because no primate had ever been observed using rocks as hammers. By following the chimps’ daily, the team found what tools the chimps were using and which kind of nuts they were eating. After examining the tools, the team found the tools to be very effective.

To prove this, the team would count how many strikes were required to crack a nut and the number of nuts that the chimp could open per minute. Some nuts proved to be more difficult to crack than others. This required the

chimps to use different size rocks depending on the toughness of the nut. The stones and blocks that were found by the team ranged anywhere from ten ounces to 45 pounds. As the chimps moved from tree to tree, these tools were left behind, so they could be used in the future. If the different size rocks were scattered around the tree, the chimps could somehow locate the appropriate rock based on memory. " These mental abilities in spatial representation compare with some of those of a nine-year-old human" (73).

The second part of the article describes the different hunting methods used by the Tai and Gombe chimpanzees. The two most common hunting methods observed were individual hunts and group hunts. The targets of these hunts were the red colobus monkeys. After following the chimpanzees on over 200 monkey hunts, the research team found that " success requires a minimum of three motivated hunters acting cooperatively" (74). The main reason group hunting proved to be more successful was because it allowed the chimps to surround the scattering monkeys. When the monkeys tried to switch trees, the chimps would close in and block all possible escape routes.

This technique disorganized the monkeys, but only worked if the chimps' movements were properly coordinated. According to the research team " Alone or in pairs, chimps succeed less than fifteen percent of the time, but when three or four act as a group, more than half the hunts result in a kill" (74). The Tai chimps were observed hunting in groups about nine out of ten times. This showed that they were well aware of their hunting odds.

However, the Gombe chimps were only seen group hunting about four out of ten times. Reasons for these differences are currently unknown, since there has been little research in Gombe.

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Another thing that was observed by both groups of chimpanzees was the sharing of food. After a successful hunt, many of the participants were given a portion of the remains. In some cases the dead monkey was also divided up and given to women, children, and beggars. If a juvenile monkey with little meat were captured, not all chimps would receive a share. The head chimpanzee would distribute the meat to the best hunters, and then to his favorite females/infants. Mothers were also seen sharing honey, ants, and bone marrow to their young. This was interesting to the field group because " food sharing, for a long time is said to be unique to humans" (74).

I found this article to be interesting. It was weird to read that the chimpanzees hunted both alone and in groups, which is similar to the way that humans hunt. I was unaware that chimpanzees were carnivores, let alone trained hunters. The chimpanzees proved to have a lot of intelligence when it came to hunting and gathering food. They have learned to adapt to their environment, which has lead to their survival. I believe that chimpanzees may have taught our early ancestors how to make tools, and hunt in the forest. It's weird to read how similar chimpanzees and humans actually are. I really enjoyed reading this article, and I found it to be most informative.

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Dubuque, Iowa: McGraw-Hill