**Other Common Names:** Anubis baboon

**Order:** Primate        **Family:** Cercopithecidae     **Genus & Species:** *Papio anubis*

**Status:** IUCN least concern. CITES Appendix II (international trade requires government approval).

**Range:** Throughout of central sub-Saharan Africa. Isolated populations occur within Sahara. Most broadly distributed baboon species.

**Habitat:** Savannah, grassland steppe, tropical rainforest, agricultural and human settlement areas from floors of steep valleys to altitudes of 2300 m (7500 ft).

**Description:** Greenish-gray coat; individual hairs are green-grey with rings of black and yellowish-brown giving the coat a multicolor appearance. Infants are born with black natal coat which changes to adult coloring as they age. Adult males have long hair forming a mane from the top of their heads through their shoulders and which gradually shortens down the back. Skin on face, ears, and ischial callosities (seat pads) is dark grey to black and covered with a very fine fur. Salt and pepper wreath of fur around face. Long, pointed muzzles. Tails are long, between 380-584 mm (1.25-2 feet) and are held up and away from the rump for about a quarter of the total length then drop suddenly, giving the appearance that the tail is broken. Like other members of this Family, olive baboons have cheek pouches, specialized sacs on the inside of their cheeks that can be used for storing food as they forage. Males and females are sexually dimorphic (males and females have different characteristics) with the males being about twice as large as females. Average height for males is 700 mm (2.3 feet) and females 600 mm (1.97 feet). Average weight for males is 24 kg (53 lbs.) and females 15 kg (32 lbs.).

**Activity:** Quadrupedal and mainly terrestrial. Highly social with complex multi-male, multi-female social structure. Troop size can range from 40-100 animals. Troop members travel, forage, and sleep together with 60% of time spent moving and foraging. In the morning, the troop socializes while youngsters play. The troop then spends the day moving and foraging; older juveniles lead, followed by females and young juveniles, older males, mothers and infants, young males bringing up the rear. During the heat of the day they rest, then move on to forage more. At the end of the day, they return to sleeping site and engage in social activities before sleeping. Movements of troop may be limited by availability of appropriate sleeping location. Because the troop beds down in trees, or on rocks/cliffs, activity of the troop must be coordinated so sleeping sites can be reached by nightfall.

Per troop, there are about 8 males with twice as many females and their young. Family groups of females form the core of the troop and will spend their whole lives with that troop. Female rank order is family-based; daughters inherit their mother’s rank. Female kinship forms the core and stability of baboon society; females do not emigrate from their natal groups so female kin have life-long relationships. The female dominance hierarchy is very stable over time and an individual female occupies a place in the dominance hierarchy immediately below her mother and her younger sisters.

Males emigrate to a troop from their natal troop usually before they reach their adult size. When settling into a new troop, males must establish themselves in the male hierarchy of that troop. This involves aggressive behavior between males with the “winner” of an encounter establishing dominance over the “loser”. Males do not maintain life-long social ties with their kin...
and may change troops several times over their lifetimes, usually every 5 years; this avoids incestual mating.

Troops are well protected by the cooperative defense of the adult males who will move towards the source of danger and demonstrate typical vigilant behavior. Should a sudden alarm send a troop racing for cover, the males and sometimes adult females will stay behind as a rear-guard. Very few large carnivores will try to penetrate a troop’s defenses.

Home ranges are between 390-2000 hectares (960-5000 acres). Daily range of a troop averages 5,000 m (3 miles).

Baboons communicate through vocalizations and facial expressions. Staring, raising eyebrows, and displaying canine teeth are aggressive displays. Vocals include:

- Two-phase bark or “wahoo” call: adult males direct toward feline predators or other males. It is also thought to communicate the presence of a male and his arousal.
- Grunting: made by males as a threat
- Roar: made by males during fights
- Grating roar: a deep resonating call given by dominant male after a fight and sometimes made by adult males when there is a night-time disturbance.
- Screeching: common during aggressive encounters and is made by any age or gender.
- Yakkling: made by sub-adult and adults when retreating from threatening animal and is often accompanied by a grimace of fear.
- Shriek bark: made by all except adult males to indicate alarm, especially due to sudden disturbances.
- Rhythmic grunting: produced by all except infants when they wish to signal reassurance to another animal.

Lip-smacking: used when one baboon likes another and wants to be friends. Sometimes accompanied by “social presenting” – a submissive display of the buttocks, indicating good intentions toward the recipient.

Tactile communication includes social grooming, social mounting as a reassurance or submissive behavior and a friendly nose-to-nose greeting.

**Longevity:** 25-30 years in natural environment, up to 40 years under human care.

**Wild Diet:** Omnivorous – fruits, tree gums, insects, eggs, seeds, flowers, grass, rhizomes, roots & tubers, small vertebrates, carrion. Will hunt as individuals or groups to capture animals as large as young gazelles; both males & females hunt. Can subsist on relatively low-quality diet and subsist on grasses for extended periods of tie allowing them to exploit dry terrestrial habitats such as deserts, semi-deserts, steppes & grasslands. Harvest fruit from at least 79 plant species.

**Zoo Diet:** Fed once in PM & once in AM to replicate feeding habits in the wild. Diet includes variations of the following: commercial primate or leafeater chow biscuits, canned primate diet, greens, whole fruits, whole or large veggies, banana, hardboiled egg, mixed nuts, crickets or mealworms, forage mix (peanuts in shell, banana chips, dried papaya, shredded coconut, raisins or dried cranberries, corn on cob, oats, sunflower seeds, dry pasta, sugar free cereal, pretzels, air-popped popcorn), vitamin supplement.
**Reproduction & Development.** Reproductive behavior is closely tied to social organization. Because they live in multi-male, multi-female troops, there is the potential for any male to mate with any female. This results in fierce competition between males for access to sexually receptive females. In general, a male’s ability to mate with a female and exclude other males from access to her is related to a male’s ability to compete with other males. Therefore, there is a correlation between male dominance rank within the troop and mating success. Larger, younger and stronger males have a distinct advantage. A troop is a large group of males and females of all ages. Males are in constant competition for females. A new male trying to join an established troop will form an alliance with a female to gain acceptance. Reproduction is non-seasonal and conceptions peak during rainy seasons which allow infants to be born during times of plentiful food supply.

Females in estrus reveal their condition with their swollen pink perineum (their buttocks). The present to the males with whom they wish to mate, generally seeking out the strong, well-established senior males and will choose several males over 15 to 20 days. While pregnant, female’s perineum turns dark red.

Known to interbreed with other species of baboon such as the Hamadryas baboon (P. hamadryas).

**Offspring & Parental Care:** Female gives birth to one young, rarely two, after 180 days gestation. Most parental behavior is performed by female including nursing, grooming and playing with offspring. There does not appear to be cooperative care of offspring among adult females although not uncommon for females other than the mother to groom an infant and sometimes providing allomaternal (group mothering) care to infant (nursing, protecting, carrying, playing, etc.). Mother supports newborn clinging at her breast with one arm. By 5 weeks, baby begins to ride on mother’s back. First solid food is taken at 5 months and is weaned and independent at 8 months. Babies move well at 1 month and can climb over logs and pick up objects with their hands at 2 months. At 4-5 months, spend time together and playing in small groups. Young depend on mother for food and transport for most of the first year. Male helps with rearing and grooming of youngsters and will defend his females when necessary. At 1 year, young are self-sufficient for food yet remain depending on mother for protection and guidance until about 2 years of age. Young are tolerated by all members of troop and, as they mature, young males are chased out of the family group. Males reach puberty at 6 years and attain adult weight at 7-10 years. During the transition from young to adult, the canines develop, and the mantle hair grows out fully. Females reach puberty at 6 years of age and reach adult weight at 7-8 years. Baboons that have access crops raised by humans reach puberty sooner suggesting that time of puberty is depending on nutrients available.

**Ecology & Adaptations:**
Known predators include cats (lions, leopards, servals), wild dogs, hyenas, crocodiles and chimpanzees and domestic dogs. Infants are vulnerable to raptors such as eagles.

Baboons likely play a role in aerating the soil through the digging of roots and tubers. Are seed dispersers of fruits and greens of their diet either passing through scat or attachment to fur.

**Conservation**
Baboons are particularly timid of humans and can attach and injure humans if provoked. In addition, they are known to raid crops. They suffer from loss of habitat due to agricultural expansion and they are subject to organized extermination when they turn to raiding crops. Where baboons live beside humans, there is conflict and at time populations of baboons have
been relocated to help farmers and save the baboons. Baboons are also hunted for food and sport.

**Comments:** There are 5 different species of baboons: chacma, yellow, Guinea, hamadryas and olive.

**References**