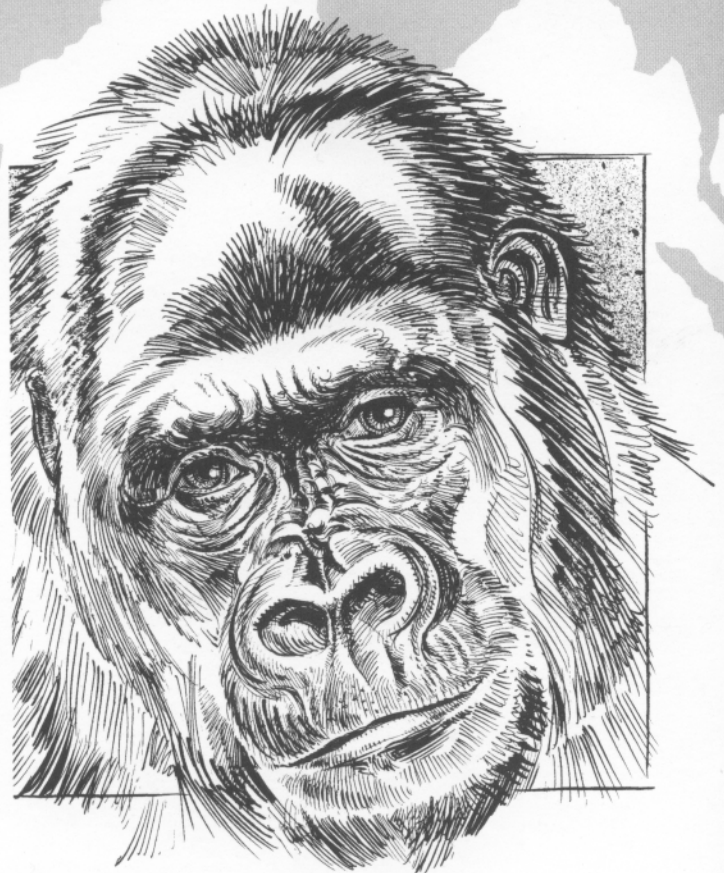




THE APES
CHALLENGES FOR THE
21ST CENTURY
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BROOKFIELD ZOO

Captive Breeding Strategies Used for Gibbons at the International Center for Gibbon Studies (ICGS)

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Abstract: I describe here aspects of gibbon (*Hylobates*) husbandry that have been developed during the past 25 years at ICGS. These techniques are based on knowledge of wild gibbon behavior, adapted for the captive setting. Gibbons are extremely territorial and in nature live in widely separated family groups. Captive gibbons should be housed in large, naturalistic enclosures, ideally a minimum of 75 m apart from other gibbons. Closer enclosures can stress gibbons and may reduce reproductive success. For example, close neighbors may spend hours looking at and threatening each other, which may cause sickness or displacement of aggression to offspring. Gibbons that are easily intimidated should not be housed with aggressive conspecifics. A submissive gibbon should be familiar with its surroundings before a conspecific enters the enclosure, and a slow introduction is preferred. Newly introduced gibbons should have separate feeding areas. If one or both of the gibbons are aggressive, the use of three connecting enclosures is recommended so that they have visual contact before they are housed together. If the pair proves to be incompatible, they should be separated and housed with another conspecific. When gibbons are first introduced, either the male or female may be more dominant. Only one adult female should be housed with an adult male. Newly introduced pairs may copulate frequently. Older males may lose sexual interest, and adult offspring may eventually try to copulate with their parents. A male that did not witness the birth and care of a sibling may become aggressive to his own offspring. Such males should be housed with dominant females who are able to prevent infanticide.