

## Buff-Cheeked Gibbon

*Nomascus gabriellae*



ANIMAL FACTS



### Physical Characteristics

- Physical description: Gibbons have small body size compared to the other great apes and is generally held in an upright position. They have extremely long arms and long legs. The hands are so elongated that they almost look hook-shaped. The thumbs on the hands are not elongated like they rest of the hand, and are not used for swinging and are used more for grooming behavior.
- Coloration: Male gibbons have small, light-buff cheek patches that extend to the bottom of the eye and black fur. Buff-Cheeked gibbon females have a black border on the ears and are generally brownish-yellow in color and can have a slight grayish tint to the darker hairs on the chest, on edges of fingers and toes, and on the outer forearm.
- Sexual dimorphism: The adult male gibbon is black and the adult female is tan, females are only slightly smaller than males.
- Other defining characteristics: All buff cheeked gibbons are born tan allowing the young to camouflage to their mother while being carried. Their coats change to black around their one-year mark to camouflage into the shadows of the canopy. When they reach sexual maturity (~8 years old) female gibbons return to tan, while males stay black.

### Size

- Length: 23.62 inches to 31.50 inches (60 to 80cm)
- Weight: Range: 15.42 to 24.23 lbs. (7 to 11kg) Average: 18.72 lbs. (8.5kg)

### Lifespan

- Wild: 30-50 years (with proper conditions)
- Zoos: up to 50 years

### Behaviors

- Activity Cycle: Diurnal
- Lifestyle: Arboreal species that generally avoids walking on the ground or swimming. Gibbons are known as the best brachiators in the world. Brachiation is a specialized form of arboreal locomotion in which movement is accomplished by swinging from one point to another by the arms. Gibbons swing below the branches suspended by their arms using their elongated fingers as hooks. This allows the gibbons to reach high speeds in the tree canopy and jumps of 10 meters or more. When moving on branches or on the ground, gibbons walk on two legs using their arms for balance.
- Vocalizations: Gibbons are famous for their calls. Gibbon groups produce loud songs in the early morning. Songs are used in defense of resources like territories, food trees, and mates. Mated pairs of buff-cheeked gibbons typically produce duet songs which consist of vocal interactions by both partners using sex-specific phrases. Other family members may participate in the song. Solo songs are typically produced by unmated buff-cheeked crested gibbons only. Visual communication signals, such as body postures and facial expressions, are also used by these primates.
- Social Structure: Buff-Cheeked Gibbons are very territorial and are only social with their family unit. Gibbon family units usually consist of a mated pair and dependent offspring. Average size is 3-5 individuals in a group.

## Diet

- Wild: Mostly frugivorous eating figs and other fruits in the tree tops. Gibbons are selective eaters and have been documented eating shoots, leaves, flowers, and occasionally insects.
- Zoo: The gibbons get fruit, vegetables, and greens, in addition to a couple differently formulated kinds of biscuits (similar to pet kibble). This includes banana, grape, tomato, cucumber, celery, corn, green pepper, squash, zucchini, carrot, sweet potato, beets, onion, turnip, parsnip, spinach, romaine, leaf lettuce, and kale.

## Reproduction

- Incubation/Gestation Period: 7 months
- Fledging/Parenting: Buff-cheeked gibbons have extensive parental investment by both parents. Females necessarily provide nutrition through nursing the young, but both parents may groom, carry, and protect the immature gibbons. The young stay with the parents for 6 to 8 years after birth. After this time, they move away to establish territories and families of their own.
- Clutch/Litter Size: 1 infant every 2 to 3 years
- Breeding Behaviors: The mating system of all gibbons is monogamy.

## Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Tropical rainforests, lowland forests
- Range: Southeastern Asia- southern Laos, eastern Cambodia and Vietnam

## Conservation

- IUCN Status: Endangered
- Contributing factors: Buff-Cheeked Gibbons main threat is habitat loss from development, logging, and palm oil agriculture. Poaching of females and infants for the pet trade and private collections and for bushmeat are also threats to gibbons.

## Classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Mammalia
- Order: Primates
- Family: Hylobatidae
- Genus: *Nomascus*
- Species: *Nomascus gabriellae*

## Interesting Facts

- Gibbons typically live in the upper levels of the trees where they have no natural predators except humans. In the lower stories of the forest, leopards, clouded leopards, and pythons may be potential predators.
- The appetite of buff-cheeked gibbons for fleshy fruits would suggest they have a significant role in the dispersal of seeds.

