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THE BLACK AND WHITE COLOBUS MONKEY GREETES WITH A HUG



A black and white colobus monkey, also known as guereza colobus

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The black and white Colobus monkey is one of the exceptional species that catches everyone's eye because of its beauty. It is scientifically known as "Guereza or Abyssinian Colobus".

Unlike other primates, the species are adaptive to high densities, low land, medium altitude, montane, swamp, dry, gallery and disturbed forests.

In Uganda these monkeys can be sighted in Kibaale forest, south western Uganda.

Like its ordinary name, its pelage is black and white. It has long white hairs, extending from the shoulders to flanks and across the lower back. The lower brow, cheeks, chin and throat are white, thus forming a circumfacial ruff. The upper back, limbs, hands, feet and ventral are black. It has long black tail with white turf on the tip.

Both sexes are similar in colour, except a ring of white circling the ischial callosities (the area around the bottoms of the ape) is incomplete in males and complete in females. Infants are born with white pelage and pink skin, but start changing at about three months.

An adult male weighs about 14.5kg and a female 6.2kg. Guerezas embrace each other from the front or the back. The act is mainly common between adult females and the young. This is always a sign of greeting.

Dr. William Olupot, who works with Nature and Livelihood, a conservation organisation, said these monkeys prefer forest edge and appear absent in a distance of 2.8km into the forest.

According to the book, *Mammals of Africa*, Volume II (2013) on primates, the species are characterised by a big enlarged stomach in which microbial fermentation of food occurs. They feed on high-fibre food items, leaves and pulpy fruits.

Olupot says the species live in groups of one to two males and one to six females with their dependent offspring.

Females in captivity first give birth at between four to five years of age, after a gestation period of about 170 days in captivity. Gestation in the wild is about 152 days.

Research shows that Guerezas breed rapidly and seasonally because their digestion system releases them from the selective pressures imposed on other monkeys by seasonal food shortages.

Average adult female-to-male ratios in groups are 3:4:1:4 in Kibaale.

The males make loud roars to alert other members in case of any predator. They also cluster together on moonlit nights to avoid being detected easily.

They are mainly preyed on by African crown eagle, Robust chimpanzees and leopards. But they are also hunted by man for skins and meat. However, there are over seven sub species of Colobus monkeys, according to Groves, in the *Mammal Species of the World* (2005).