

SEVERAL WAYS TO BE A SAVANNA CHIMPANZEE

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In arid environments, chimpanzees live at population densities more than an order of magnitude lower than at forested sites, in habitats often compared with those in which early australopithecines are thought to have lived. These and other aspects of their ecology make them important for those trying to understand the full range of African hominid adaptation and evolution. However, the simple comparison of savanna versus forest sites is misleading; sites with comparably arid climates can differ greatly in the distribution and types of resources, in ways that should influence their social structure and dietary adaptations (cf. Schoeninger et al. 1999, "Subsistence strategies of two 'savanna' chimpanzee populations: the stable isotope evidence."). We discuss recent surveys and remote sensing analyses of three Tanzanian savanna sites (Kasakati, Filabanga, and Ugalla) and compare our findings with descriptions of other arid chimpanzee environments: Mt. Assirik and Fongoli (Senegal), Bafing (Mali), Gashaka (Nigeria), Ishasha (DRC), and Semliki (Uganda). For example, while sites may be similar in terms of percentage evergreen forest, at some (e.g. Ishasha) such forest occurs in large swaths contiguous with permanent water while at others (e.g. Ugalla) it is widely scattered in thin ribbons and isolated patches, some with only seasonal water. We conclude that to understand how savanna and forest chimpanzees differ, we need to study all types of "savanna" sites.