

Baby gibbon monkeying around at the Zoo



Baby Buff-cheeked Gibbon – Edinburgh Zoo

A baby buff-cheeked gibbon is turning out to be quite a wee acrobat at Edinburgh Zoo.



Baby Buff-cheeked Gibbon – Edinburgh Zoo

He is now old enough to explore away from his mother and appears to love nothing more than swinging about his large enclosure, occasionally landing on a family member or two! Though he is a little bold, these death-defying stunts are all part of the learning process for gibbons, which spend most of their lives high up in the tree canopy.



Buff-cheeked Gibbons – Edinburgh Zoo

The Zoo is home to six buff-cheeked gibbons. Seventeen-year-old Lucy is the head of the troop; she arrived at the Zoo in September 2004 with her daughter Lea. Her partner Jon arrived six months later and they have had three offspring – seven-year-old Cheeky, three-year-old Lloyd and their newest bundle of joy. Our photographer John Preece went along today to see what he could see, through some pretty thick glass it has to be said.

Lorna Hughes, Team Leader for Primates and Hoofstock at Edinburgh Zoo, said:

“At the moment, the as yet unsexed baby is all limbs and it is extremely cute to watch him fly about the enclosure – his long, fluffy golden hair makes him very easy to spot. He’s

growing fast and fitting in really well with the troupe, though they do sometimes seem a little worn out by his excessive energy! Lucy is a wonderful mother and always takes great care of her young. We have a very lively troop here at Edinburgh Zoo and they all have very unique personalities.”



Baby Buff-cheeked Gibbon – Edinburgh Zoo

Baby gibbons of both sexes are born blonde to blend into their mother’s hair and later turn black. Males then remain black throughout their lives, with the distinguishing golden cheeks that give the species their name. Females, however, then turn back to blonde at sexual maturity, and only have a black cap of hair on the top of their heads.



Baby Buff-cheeked Gibbon – Edinburgh Zoo

Edinburgh Zoo is part of the European Endangered Species Breeding Programme (EEP) for buff-cheeked gibbons, which have seen their wild populations decimated by 50 per cent over the last 45 years. Native to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, habitat destruction and poaching are the biggest threat to this species. Captive breeding programmes such as the one at Edinburgh Zoo are an important step to safeguarding buff-cheeked gibbons from extinction.