

Trap-breaking chimpanzees found in Guinea

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Wild chimpanzees capable of passing on knowledge of how to detect and destroy traps have been found in the West African nation of Guinea.

Japanese researcher Gaku Ohashi surveyed a group of more than 10 chimpanzees near the village of Bossou over 15 months between 2002 and 2004.

Ohashi, a researcher at Kyoto University's Primate Research Institute, began the project after learning that 30 years of research discovered no chimpanzees in the area had ever been seriously injured by traps, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported Friday.

In one case, when a trap made with sticks and wires used to catch large rats was found, two male chimpanzees of the group would avoid the trap, vigorously shake it and try to destroy it.

Three other males also tried to shake the trap.

Tetsuro Matsuzawa, a professor at the Primate Research Institute, said the Bossou chimpanzees were highly intelligent and used many tools, including stones for opening nuts.

"They probably also have the ability to spot danger," he said.

Chimpanzees injured by traps have become a serious problem in Africa in recent years. In 2002, a long-term study found 32 of 422 chimpanzees in 10 areas had been injured by traps.

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