

Chimps plan for a good early breakfast

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This young male chimp climbing a fig tree risked travel in the dark when predators were active to obtain the more desired, less abundant figs for breakfast. Credit: Karline R. L. Janmaat/Max Planck Institute

New research by the University of California, Davis, shows that chimpanzees plan ahead, and sometimes take dangerous risks, to get to the best breakfast buffet early.

The study co-authored by Leo Polansky, an associate researcher in the UC Davis anthropology department, reveals that chimpanzees will find a place to sleep en route to breakfast sites and risk travel in the dark when predators are active to obtain more desired, less abundant fruits such as figs. The study is being published by the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"As humans we are familiar with the race against birds for our cherries, or against squirrels for our walnuts and pecans," Polansky said, "but this race is carried out amongst competitors of all kinds of species in locations all over the world."

The study provides evidence that chimpanzees flexibly plan their breakfast time, type and location after weighing multiple disparate pieces of information.

"Being able to reveal the role of environmental complexity in shaping cognitive-based behavior is especially exciting," Polansky said. "Long-term, detailed information from the field can reveal the value of high levels of cognition and behavioral flexibility for efficiently obtaining critical food resources in complex environments."

Researchers recorded when and where five adult female [chimpanzees](#) spent the night and acquired food for 275 days during three fruit-scarce periods. The research took place in the Taï National Park in Côte d'Ivoire, led by researchers of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, where Polansky was a postdoctoral researcher. His research interests are in both animal behavior and plant phenology.

More information: Wild chimpanzees plan their breakfast time, type, and location, Karline R. L. Janmaat, *PNAS*, [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1407524111](#)

Provided by UC Davis

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