

Successful – Thanks to Mother

To mate successfully, bonobo males need high social ranking and help from their mothers



Success is sexy – this apparently applies not only to humans, but also to pygmy chimpanzees. Scientists working with Gottfried Hohmann from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig have found that the more often a bonobo male can mate with females, the higher his social status. But even less successful chimps can rack up some points with the ladies. The presence of their mothers helps bonobo males achieve better results in the mating stakes. As mature male bonobos remain with their group, mothers and sons are inseparable, even when the sons have reached adulthood. The high dominance status of the females helps their male offspring in conflicts with other males. However, they do not provide such help to unrelated males. In this way, the mothers increase the number of future grandchildren.

(PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY B: BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, September 1, 2010)

Behind every strong man there is a strong woman: Camillo is the highest-ranking bonobo male in the study group. He is often to be found near his mother.

Not Skill, but Luck

Sports betting is addictive

The announcement of the winning lottery numbers is preceded by a warning: “Gambling can be addictive.” Does that also apply to games of skill, such as sports betting? Indeed it does, say Emanuel Towfigh and Andreas Glöckner from the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods in Bonn. In fact, they say, they present an even greater risk than games of pure chance. In order to find out whether a gambler’s skill is a factor in betting successfully on sporting events, they asked over 200 people to bet on the outcome of soccer matches. Soccer aficionados calculated that they had a better chance of winning than was actually the case. The researchers in Bonn showed that people who were knowledgeable about soccer did only slightly better than those with no knowledge of the sport if they predicted the result no more than three days before the game. With a longer prediction horizon, the bet on the outcome of the match became a complete gamble. Precisely because skill plays some role, people overestimate their influence on the result. The more control players believe they have over the outcome of a game, the higher the potential for addiction. The scientists are therefore of the view that bookmakers should be subject to governmental regulation. (JURISTEN-ZEITUNG, November 8, 2010)



Because soccer fans in Germany frequently overestimate their ability to make accurate assessments, sports gambling can easily become addictive.

Jupiter from Another Galaxy

An exoplanet orbits an immigrant red giant

Astronomers have discovered the first exoplanet from another galaxy. The planet’s host star was part of a dwarf galaxy that was swallowed up by our galaxy billions of years ago and that expanded into a red giant at the end of its life. The exoplanet, named HIP 13044 b, has a minimum mass of 1.25 times the mass of Jupiter. The researchers from the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy suspect that the currently very small orbit of HIP 13044 b – it circles its sun in just 16.2 days at an average distance of 18 mil-

lion kilometers – was originally considerably larger; apparently it shifted toward its star during the red giant phase. Any planets that once orbited between HIP 13044 b and their star presumably also moved closer to their sun – and were consumed by it. The days of HIP 13044 b also appear to be numbered: in the next phase of its evolution, the star will expand so much that it will engulf this planet, too. A similar fate awaits the Earth and its sibling planets in a few billion years. (SCIENCE EXPRESS, November 18, 2010)