

# Lessons in Squirrel Monkey Introductions (The trouble with the Kongs)

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In February 2013, we began introducing a male squirrel monkey, Bobby, to our group of 7 females (5 wild caught females and 2 hybrid daughters who had been spayed). An antagonistic scenario evolved resulting in a two month period of trials, observation & communication.



The most important tool in making this SSP recommendation work was identifying each of our female squirrel monkeys. This enabled us to log daily interactions quickly and accurately. Daily groupings varied providing us with the following information. We found the instigators of aggression were Spock & Big Kong, a mother/daughter duo who would relentlessly attack Bobby when they were together. In the absence of her daughter, Spock was amicable with the whole group. When Big Kong was present in any combination, she would chase and vocalize until others joined in, and Bobby was chased out of the exhibit. We all agreed that the Big Kong sister was the issue, and we proposed the hybrid sisters be paired with two surplus Bolivian squirrel monkeys, one of which was their father, Kong Sr. The moment the Kong sisters were removed the remaining group of 1.5 were successfully housed together. The Kong sisters were then introduced to the surplus monkeys with immediate success and shipped to a new zoo two weeks later. After all of the "Trouble with the Kongs" 2 groups of 1.5 & 1.3 monkeys emerged and at present 2 very pregnant females.

## Questions for discussion:

- role of dominance hierarchies: did the Kong sisters feel they were slipping in hierarchy after the arrival of Bobby?
- family bonds: were the moms protecting their daughters? were the daughters protecting their mothers?
- reproductive state: did the lack of hormones in the hybrids cause the hostility?
- history: wild caught vs. captive born individuals
- size: the hybrids were larger in size
- food aggression
- routine: nightly separation and reintroduction?



**Bobby:** -SSP recommended male  
-never showed aggression towards females, always the victim.  
-sometime his mating rituals and displays initiated aggression from females



**Scarface:**  
-wild caught, 1<sup>st</sup> successful match with Bobby  
-spent the most overnights with Bobby & visibly pregnant at present



**Freckles:**  
-wild caught, least dominant in group  
-had been the victim of aggression in the past & during this introduction



**Spock:**  
-wild caught, mother of hybrid  
-compliant to Bobby's advance in the absence of her daughter  
-now the most dominant female in the group



**The Pretty One:**  
-wild caught, mother of smaller hybrid  
-generally accepting of Bobby & his advances  
-visibly pregnant at present



**The Other One:**  
-wild caught  
-generally accepting of Bobby



**Big Kong:**  
-captive born daughter of Spock & Kong  
-primary aggressor from the start, largest in size  
-her presence initiated an aggressive response from the whole group especially her mother and sister  
-Bobby very fearful of her  
-removed from the group & placed with Kong and Trouble



**Little Kong:**  
-daughter of The Pretty One & Kong  
-aggressive in the presence of her sister  
- removed from the group & placed with Kong and Trouble



**Kong & Trouble:**  
-both born at our zoo in 1997  
-previous introductions to the wild caught group resulted in offspring but unmanageable aggression -2 separate groups were the end result



Photos: Darlene Stack