

**HOW DO ADULT MALE CHIMPANZEES OF MAHALE ACQUIRE THE ALPHA STATUS?**

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Male chimpanzees compete for social status. However, few studies have addressed the question of how adult males acquire, retain, and lose the alpha position. This lack of research is surprising because the top rank appears to be the major target of male chimpanzees' social interactions. Here, we report the results of 40-year research on chimpanzees of the K and M groups at Mahale, Tanzania. An alpha male is defined as the male who never pant-grunts himself but receives the pant-grunting of all other chimpanzees belonging to the same unit group. We observed 10 alpha males, two of which became alpha twice in separate periods. The average age at which males of known birth year attained the alpha position was 20.7 (19–22; N=3). Males attained this position by fighting, without an ally, the current alpha (N=4), fighting with an accomplice (N=2), and not fighting but succeeding the current alpha due to his death (N=2). Alpha males lost their status at the presumed average age of 29 (21–43; N=9). Average tenure of alpha males was 5.7 years for the K group (3–10; N=3) and 5.3 years for the M group (1–15; N=6). Alpha males apparently held their positions by gymnastic displays, intimidating rivals who are forming anti-alpha coalitions, frequent pant-hooting, and grooming and sharing meat with selected males. Three options for a defeated alpha male will be reported by Inaba & Nishida in the poster session of this conference.

**Keywords:** Chimpanzee, Mahale Mountains, alpha male, tenure of alpha status