Animal Dads

**Flamingo Fathers: Parent flamingos share all baby care. Dad even makes a milk-like fluid. Both build the nest, sit on the eggs, feed the chicks and protect the young. Flamingos live near tropical lakes. They get their bright pink color from the tiny plants and shellfish they eat. Flamingo parents, both mom and dad, feed their young a fluid they secrete from glands in their digestive system.**

**Siamang Gibbon Dads: Father Siamang gibbons help carry their babies, clean them, and watch over them with the mothers. This primate lives in the mountains of Southeast Asia. Gibbons swing from tree to tree through the forest. Families usually travel together. They don’t spend very much time on the ground. Gibbons eat mostly fruit and leaves, although sometimes they eat insects and birds’ eggs.**

**Gorilla Dads: The gorilla dad helps clean and hold young gorillas. He breaks up fights among the young and protects them. Many primates make good fathers. Primates are mammals that usually have hands and feet they can use to grasp things. Gorillas, humans and monkeys are types of primates. Gorillas are the largest apes. A gorilla dad can be up to 6 feet tall and weigh 500 ponds. Although gorillas are strong and powerful, they are also shy and gentle. They don’t hunt other animals. Although they are mostly vegetarians, they do eat insects. Each night they build a new nest in tree branches or on the ground. Gorillas are endangered. Experts believe there might be as few as 60,000 of all kinds of gorillas living in the wild. Because they are endangered, zoos play an important part in the survival of this species.**

**Golden Lion Tamarin Dads: Father tamarins carry their babies all over the forest. Babies grab onto their dad’s fur and ride on his back as he jumps from branch to branch. A father takes his baby to the mother when it is time to eat. When the baby is older, he helps feed it by mashing and softening its food. The tamarin dad climbs with his babies.**

**The golden lion tamarin is endangered. When the Brazilian forest it lives in is cut down, it loses its home.**

**Pygmy Marmoset Dads: The mother marmoset doesn’t have to worry about day care because dad takes over. Baby pygmy marmosets spend most of the day with him. They grab onto his back as he moves from branch to branch. Her takes them back to mom at mealtime. After they’ve eaten, they go back to dad. Pygmy marmosets are the smallest true monkeys in the world. They weigh less than half a pound and are only about 6 inches to 8 inches long (15 inches with their tails).**

**Ostrich Dads: Father ostrich is a real baby sitter. Mom sits on the eggs during the day, and dad has the night duty. When the chicks are in danger, the dad lets out a loud cry to scare away enemies. If this doesn’t work, both mom and dad might kick or chase away the enemies. The ostrich dad guards his nest of young hatchlings. In the wild, vultures, lions, jackals and humans are among the ostrich’s enemies.**

**Sea Horse Dads: A sea horse is a most unusual dad. He’s the one who is pregnant! The male has a pouch in his lower belly, or abdomen. The female lays her eggs in his pouch. The male then carries as many as 2,000 eggs in his pouch until they are ready to be born. This may take two to seven weeks.**

**Wolf Dads: Father wolves defend their cubs. They bring food to the cubs and even to their mom if she is unable to hunt. Adult wolves chew and swallow the meat. Then they throw up the partly digested food and feed this to their cubs. Wolves are the largest members of the dog family. They usually live in packs of about three to 20 members. Many wolves are threatened or endangered.**

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***(Betty Debnam, in the June 15, 2005 issue of the Rocky Mountain News)***