

Chimps' secondary tool use studied

Wild chimpanzees' minds work like those of human children in learning to use some kinds of tools, a Japanese researcher said Monday.

Associate Professor Tetsuro Matsuzawa of Kyoto University said he reported his findings Sunday at a meeting of the Japan Primate Society in Kyoto, in a paper titled "Cognitive Development in Stone Tool Use in Wild Chimpanzees."

With videocameras in place for 40 days in January and February, Matsuzawa said, a

group of researchers scattered oil palm seeds and three stones to observe how 18 chimpanzees would crack the seeds to eat them. Then they compared that with the way in which 20 local children tackled the same task in the project near Bossou in Guinea, in western Africa.

He said that at age 3, both chimpanzees and children placed the seeds on one stone and hammered them open with another.

At an age of more than 6,

both placed the seeds on one stone, steadied that base with another stone and cracked the seeds with a third stone, Matsuzawa said.

He described the second stone as a "secondary tool," or a tool for using a tool.

It has been known for a long time that chimpanzees in Tanzania and other East African nations use leaves and twigs as tools to drink water and fish out termites, but it had not been known that chimpanzees use secondary stone tools.