

What's all this then about monkeys peeling bananas better than humans?

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It has recently come to our attention that various loutish persons not affiliated with the prestigious Royal Society of Concerned British Scientists have widely and vociferously claimed, without proper authority, that humans most often peel their bananas in an “incorrect” fashion, that being from the stem to the bottom of the banana (consult Fig. 1 for the proper configuration of a banana). These same persons also assert that members of Higher Primates including the great and lesser apes, peel bananas in a so-stated “correct” manner, that being from the bottom to the stem. Thus, the recommendation from

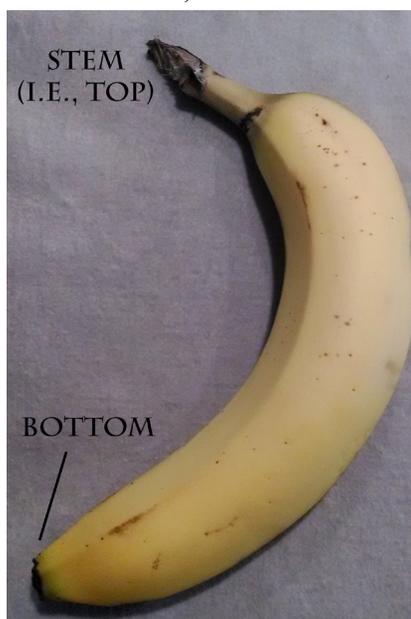


Figure 1. The gentleperson's proper configuration of a banana (*Musa* spp.). Banana provided by Her Majesty's Royal Botanical Gardens of the Royal Society, God Save the Queen, what, what.

said persons is that humans adopt this more primitive method of banana peeling.

It is the opinion of this Society that any solicitation for the approbation of simian techniques be properly based on sound, scientific researches. However, in our painstaking quest to find corroborative evidence for this claim, we have only to report that such “evidence” has come from sources of “low-culture” including the Youtube (e.g., [Antony W Shaw 2007](#); [Crazy Bananas 2009](#); [jcvanluyn 2010](#)), blogs (e.g., [Baker 2001](#); [Landsburg 2002](#); [Turley 2009](#)), chat forums (e.g., [peppercat et al. 2009](#); [blazeratman & theGreatone 2010](#)), and other such claptrap. Therefore, in keeping with our Great Society's founding Charters, we put it to ourselves to conduct our own experiments concerning the proper way to peel a banana.

Experiment I

It has been widely suggested that the simian's process of peeling a banana from the bottom to the stem (hereafter, the “monkey method”) is vastly superior to the traditional method, on account of the relative comfort and sense of efficiency one experiences whilst peeling a banana from the non-stem end. Thus, we feel it would be fair to say that if this monkey method is indeed correct, then a monkey would be able to peel many more bananas in a minute than a man.

To test this postulate, we placed one of our Society's very own members (the Honourable Sir Fitzgerald H.Q. Frittlewaithe) and the Society's official pet

monkey (Roger Poppybottom, Esq.) in a room filled with 50 ripe bananas. We allowed the two parties to acclimate to these surroundings for 5 minutes, during which we explained the rules and objective of the experiment to both parties, and then allowed each party to open as many bananas as possible for one minute.

The results were incontrovertibly in support of Sir Frittlewaithe's method. In the designated minute, Sir Frittlewaithe, using the traditional banana peeling method of course, was able to peel no fewer than 10 bananas, whilst Mr. R. Poppybottom peeled only one banana, which he then proceeded to eat. Based on these results, then, we must forthrightly conclude that the monkey method of peeling a banana is unequivocally less efficient than the traditional method.

Experiment II

It has also been suggested by the proponents of the monkey method that peeling a banana from the bottom reduces the amount of "long stringy things" that stick to the edible flesh of the banana (Landsburg 2002). First, the Society would like to point out that the correct nomenclature for "long stringy things" is "phloem bundles". Secondly, we at the Society view phloem bundles as nothing more than a trivial nuisance. However, as we hold ourselves to a more rigorous scientific standard than most, we conducted an additional experiment to dispel this potential advantage of the monkey method.

To begin, members of the Society¹ peeled 20 ripe bananas using the traditional method, and counted the number of phloem bundles adhered to the edible portion of the banana. Because we could not fathom the idea of Society members, or any of Her Majesty's loyal subjects, peeling a banana using the monkey method, we decided to let Mr. R. Poppybottom peel 20 bananas, this time preventing him from eating them.

We found the results to be quite inconclusive. The traditional method resulted in a grand total of 35 adhered phloem bundles, whilst Mr. R. Poppybottom produced nary a string. However, we believe that Mr. R. Poppybottom's results were most assuredly confounded by the fact that, having been raised by the Royal Society, Mr. R. Poppybottom labours to a preternatural standard of dining etiquette. He most cer-

¹ With the honourable exception of the Honourable Sir Fitzgerald, who was fatigued from Experiment I and had retired to the smoking room.

tainly peeled his bananas in such a way as to prevent the formation of strings that he would have assumed to be insulting to a gentleperson's sensibilities. We recommend that a future experiment be conducted during an interval when Mr. R. Poppybottom feels that he is not being watched.

Conclusions

Based on our extensive research, it is the opinion of this Royal Society that peeling a banana from the stem end is not only a perfectly acceptable way to peel a banana, but also vastly superior to the monkey method. It is the hope of this Society that our research finally puts to rest this silly notion that peeling a banana from the bottom is somehow better than peeling from the stem.

In truth, we're not entirely sure how this primate inclination came about. Have you ever witnessed a monkey peel a banana? It's truly quite disgusting, with their dirty feet holding the ends of the banana, and their grimy little teeth pulling apart the peel, and the way they eat chunks at a time, and don't even have the common courtesy to properly dispose of the peel. One would hope that this type of behaviour is beneath the human species. But, we suppose you never know, what with all these young people and Americans running about, thinking that they know what's best for everybody.

It is perfectly clear, at least to this Society, that the traditional method remains a splendid way to peel and enjoy a banana.

References

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