STUDY OF THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PYGMY HIPPOPOTAMUS (*CHOEROPSIS LIBERIENSIS*) IN SEMI-NATURAL CONDITIONS, CHIANG MAI ZOO

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Abstract

The study of the behavior of the pygmy hippopotamus (Choeropsis liberiensis) in semi-natural conditions, Chiang Mai Zoo. The subject was one adult female observed using the focal sampling method over a period of 4 months, from December 2025 to March 2026. Behavioral observations were recorded every 5 minutes from 08:30 a.m. to 04:30 p.m. The behavior was recorded in both qualitative and quantitative data terms. The results showed that sleeping was the most frequently observed behavior (65.44%), followed by resting in water (13.49%), feeding (9.59%), walking behavior (8.85%), exploratory and vigilance behaviors (2.00%), and excretion behavior (0.63%). The pygmy hippopotamus exhibited predominantly sleeping behavior during the morning hours, while feeding occurred intermittently throughout the day and was associated with the timing and quantity of food provided by zookeepers.

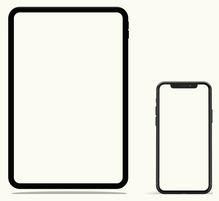
Introduction

The pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) is a forest-dwelling member of the hippopotamus family native to West Africa. It is currently classified as Endangered (EN) on the IUCN Red List due to hunting and habitat loss. This elusive, mostly nocturnal species rests during the day and forages at night. Unlike its more social relative, the common hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), it usually lives alone or in pairs. This study reports the behavior and activity budget of a female pygmy hippopotamus at Chiang Mai Zoo to provide information that may help improve captive management.

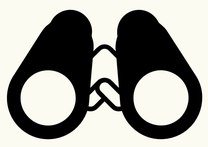
Objective

To study the behavior of the pygmy hippopotamus in semi-natural conditions at Chiang Mai Zoo.

Materials and Methods



iPad and smartphone



Binoculars



MacBook



Stopwatch

Date : Species :

Site : Observer :

Time	Location	Activity	Food type	WAL	Note

WAL = Where does animal live

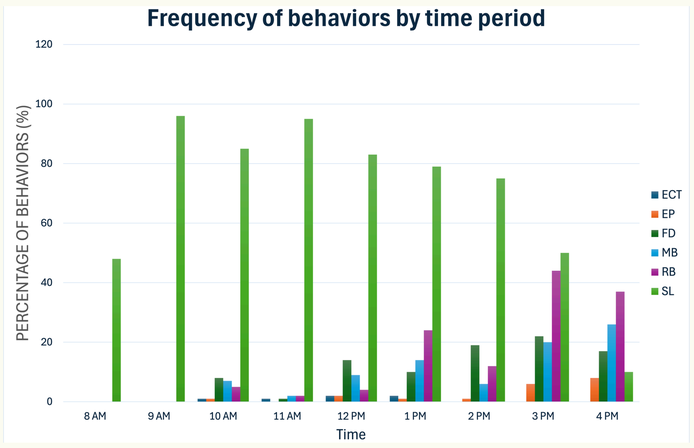
Behavior recording table

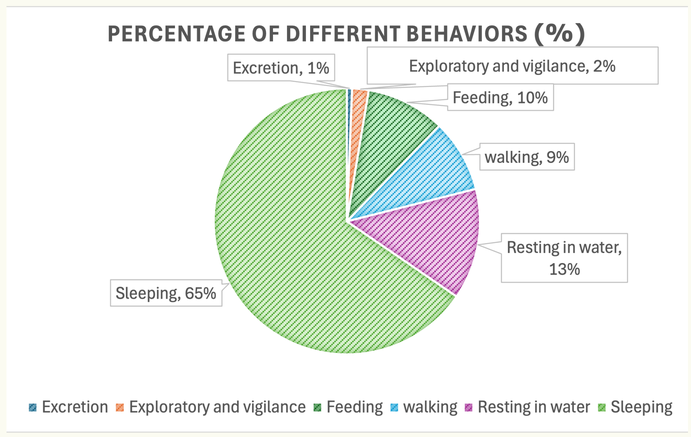
Observe the behavior of the pygmy-hippopotamus using binoculars.

Record behavioral patterns on an iPad every 5 minutes

Analyze data using the PivotTable feature in Microsoft Excel

Results and Discussion





The results showed that sleeping was the most frequently observed behavior (65.44%), consistent with the natural behavior of pygmy hippopotamuses. This species is mostly nocturnal, resting during the day and becoming more active at night (San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, 2021). Resting in water was the second most common behavior (13.49%), likely related to thermoregulation. Feeding, walking, and exploratory behaviors occurred less frequently and were likely influenced by the zoo feeding schedule.

ECT= Excretion, EP = Exploration and vigilance behaviors, FD = Feeding, MB = Walking, RB = Resting in the water, SL = Sleeping



Sleeping



Resting in the water



Feeding



Walking



Exploratory and vigilance behaviors

Conclusion

From a study of the behavior of the pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*), the results showed that sleeping behavior was recorded most frequently (65.44%), with resting in water (13.49%), feeding (9.59%), walking (8.85%), exploratory and vigilance behaviors (2.00%), and excretion behavior (0.63%).

Acknowledgement

I would like to thanks the zookeeper of Chiang Mai Zoo for their generous cooperation and assistance during the study

References

- Toronto Zoo. (n.d.). Pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*). https://www.torontozoo.com/animals/Pygmy%20hippopotamus
- San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Library. (2021). Pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*). https://ielc.libguides.com/sdzg/factsheets/pygmyhippopotamus