

AGENDA

NOW TRENDING IN HEALTH AND FITNESS

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THE NEXT
BIG THING

TRAIN LIKE A BEAST

Forget caveman workouts: you can build functional, flexible muscle and primal fitness with bodyweight system Animal Flow



WE DON'T KNOW WHAT ANIMAL THIS IS, BUT IT LOOKS COOL

WORDS: JAMIE MILLAR | PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILIP HAYNES | STYLING AND GROOMING: MBK USING KIEHL'S GROOMING PRODUCTS

If you're at all sceptical about moves with names like 'travelling ape', just try it before you scoff. "It's surprising how difficult this stuff is," says Mike Fitch, Animal Flow creator, PT and all-round bodyweight training don. (It's him in the pictures.) "You take these really big, strong guys, get them on the floor and they struggle – it's pretty humbling for them."

If you haven't heard of the latest primal fitness trend to come out of the States, Animal Flow is a hybrid that takes in gymnastics, parkour, capoeira, and even breakdancing. What makes it so hard is also what makes it so effective. "Using all of your limbs at the same time through multiple planes of motion, as they were intended, has a carry-over to power, strength, endurance and fat loss. Even if you simply want to improve your ability to lift weights, this will do it." Not that you'll want to: Fitch hasn't lifted anything other than his own body for more than two years, having become disillusioned with getting "jacked" (not to mention injured). "I've never looked or felt better. You never forget your first handstand press-up, your first flag. These are benchmarks as a bodyweight athlete – and as a human being." Consider this your induction into the jungle gym.

LEG BUSTER

Animal Flow isn't your typical cardio workout – but using all of your muscles at once, legs included, requires a lot of oxygen

HIPSTER FIT

Moves such as the crab reach dynamically stretch your hips, which are often overlooked and overtight, causing knee and ankle problems

TRUNK SHOW

You know about core stability – but Animal Flow also protects the integrity of your shoulders, hips, back and shoulder blades

WRIST WATCH

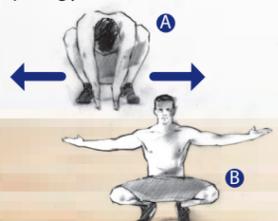
Protect your wrists with these two warm-ups: roll them, fingers clasped, then press the backs of your hands together, fingers down

BE AN ANIMAL IN THE GYM

Depending on how hard you want to work, you can use Animal Flow as a high-intensity workout, dynamic warm-up or active recovery. You can also slot individual moves into other circuits to see huge improvements in strength, not to mention shoulder and arm muscle.

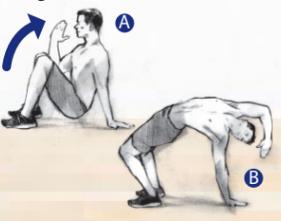
01 APE REACH

10 reps, holding for 2-5sec
To combat monkey-at-typewriter hunch, squat down, arms forward (A). Sit upon your heels, open your knees and stretch out your arms, pulling your shoulders back (B).



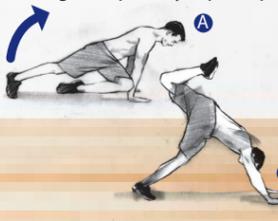
02 CRAB REACH

Work up to 10 reps on each arm
Assume the crab position: feet flat, chest up and knees bent (A). Push your hips up as high as you can, reaching one arm over to hit those neglected back muscles (B).



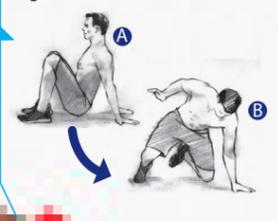
03 SCORPION REACH

5 reps each leg
This one may sting. In a press-up position with your legs bent, bring one knee under your body (A). Kick your heel up and over (B), rotating through the spine as you push up.



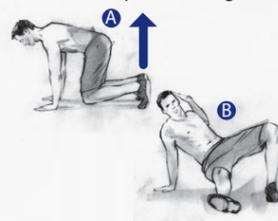
04 UNDERSWITCH

30sec intervals, work up to 1min
From crab position (A), lift your right hand and right foot an inch. Rotate over the lifted leg (B) until you land on all fours. Lift the same leg and hand to return to the start.



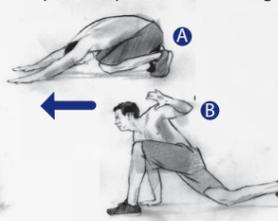
05 SIDE KICKTHROUGH

30sec intervals, work up to 1min
This beast of a cardio move mauls your abs. On all fours (A), lift your right leg and left hand. Rotate your leg beneath you and kick it out (B). Return and repeat to the right.



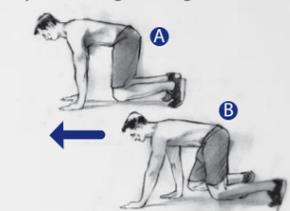
06 FRONT STEP

10-15 each leg
Squat, arms stretched in front of you, and push your hips back (A). Now spring forward, bringing your left foot in front of your hand. (B) Hop back; repeat on the other leg.



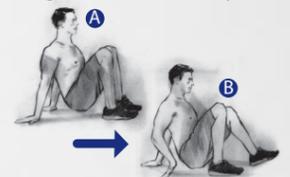
07 FORWARD-TRAVELLING BEAST

30sec intervals, work up to 1min
On all fours (A), step off with your right foot and left arm (B) – crawl, keeping your knees off the ground. The full-body demands will have you howling and dog-tired.



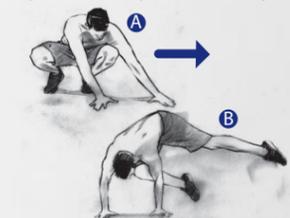
08 FORWARD-TRAVELLING CRAB

30sec intervals, work up to 1min
From the crab (A), step off with your left foot and right arm (B), switching sides and keeping your hips in line with the floor. Remember to go forward, not sideways.



09 LATERAL-TRAVELLING APE

10 reps or alternate for 1min
Place your hands to the side of your feet (A), lift your hips and kick your leg out to the side, landing with the other leg (B). Alternate sides to gorilla-pound your entire body.



GO WITH THE FLOW

Animal Flow moves are used in seamless combos, so you're constantly moving and working. Below is an example routine, but once you've mastered it you can build your own or freestyle. NB classes last an hour...

- Forward-travelling beast (5 steps each side)
- Side kickthrough (5 each side)
- Front step (5 each side)
- Lateral-travelling ape (5 each side)
- Forward-travelling crab (5 steps each side)
- Underswitch (4 full rounds each way)

GYM KIT: WHAT SEPARATES MAN FROM BEAST

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