Brown mouse lemur *(Microcebus rufus)*
Photo N. Rowe

Primate Conservation Inc. UPDATE

2005

Director's Report

Hurricanes, mudslides, tsunamis, global climate change, continuing human population growth, wars for resources and unscrupulous politicians are all in the news these days. These are difficult times for people who care about the environment and hope the other 99.999% of the life that inhabits this planet will still be here 50 years from now. Your commitment to help the causes you care about has never been more important. Writing letters and checks to support these causes is often all we can do to, but these are important acts. They give us and others some hope and enable others to do the work we couldn't accomplish alone.

Primate Conservation Inc was founded to help enable the next generation of primate conservationists and researchers to get into the field to study and protect the least known and most endangered primates. With your help PCI has given small grants to over 240 projects in 27 habitat countries.

The following three reports are examples of the research projects which were funded in the last couple of years. I hope the reader will appreciate some of the extraordinary field work that is being accomplished that is helping us understand how many primates there are and how they live in their natural habitat and what they need to continue to survive. Without this information, the human species will never know them and will never care enough to protect them and the habitats that they need. One day we humans will understand how preciously interwoven the life on this planet is and how our lives are dependent upon it. The question in many of our minds is unfortunately, "How much life will be lost before we understand this and change our ways"

A survey of nocturnal primates in southern Nigeria. By Elizabeth Pimley and Ludwig Werre

A survey of nocturnal prosimian primates inhabiting the forests of southern Nigeria was conducted by E. Pimley from July to September 2003. This survey is the first comprehensive attempt to determine prosimian abundances and distributions in all of southern Nigeria's ecoregions: Forest paths were walked systematically, and eye-shine was detected with powerful torches. In swampy regions, surveys were conducted along the waterways by canoe.

Calabar angwantibo (*Arctocebus calabarensis*) in swamp forest photo E.Primley

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Elizabeth and her assistant Francis cross Niger Delta in a wooden canoe. photo E.Primley

Species identification was made by observation of pelage, morphology, eye-shine and/or vocalizations.

My most interesting observations were the presence of a different variety of dwarf bushbaby and a large form of angwantibo. The bushbaby *Galagoides sp* which had a characteristic red tail was found in the Okomu Forest Reserve were both dwarf bushbabies *G. demidovii* and *G. thomasi* were also found.

The large form of angwantibo *Arctocebus sp.* was found on the east and west side of the River Cross. This large variety of angwantibo occurred sympatrically with the Calabar angwantibo *A. calabarensis*.

Both these observations warrant further investigation including the collection of genetic samples and morphological data before firm conclusions are reached.

The major rivers (Niger and Cross) in southern Nigeria appear to influence speciation patterns among the lorisids (pottos, angwantibos) to a greater extent than the bushbabies.
The lowland rainforest reserves of the Cross-Sanaga-Bioko Coastal Forests and western Nigerian Lowland Rainforest supported the highest species diversity and abundance of prosimians as did the Niger Delta Swamp Forests. A lower diversity and abundance of prosimians was found in the more heavily degraded habitat of the Cross-Niger Transition Forests.

The variety of prosimians and other mammals found in the Niger Delta Flood Forest ecoregion indicate that the remaining areas of secondary flood forest hold viable populations that are worth protecting. However, the rapidly growing human population of the Niger Delta has put considerable pressure on the remaining flood forest and its wildlife. Since there are presently few protected areas in the Delta area, urgent conservation efforts are necessary in order to prevent further degradation of these flood forests. The fact that the reserve areas surveyed in Cross-Sanaga-Bioko Coastal Forests and Nigerian Lowland Rainforests ecoregions contained a higher diversity of species and a greater number of animals than other regions with fewer protected areas, indicates that reserves are relatively successful in acting as protected areas for the nocturnal primates. However, the present situation in Nigeria does not provide sufficient protection for reserves.

Even the nocturnal lifestyle of the prosimians cannot save them from extinction if the forests they inhabit are being degraded and destroyed at the current level. It is therefore essential that more areas of natural vegetation be preserved in Nigeria to enable migration of animals through ecoregions. Better protection of Nigeria's National Parks is needed, in order to control the illegal logging, hunting and farming. The results of this preliminary survey will provide a source of reference for more comprehensive studies of the region, which will be useful when conservation plans for southern Nigeria are implemented. If the recently discovered varieties of nocturnal primate turn out to be new species, they could serve as flagship species to promote the protection of Nigeria's remaining forests.

Young needle-clawed bushbaby (*Euoticus pallidus*) in lowland rainforest. Photo E.Primley

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A soon to be named new species of sportive lemur Photo A. Baden

Andrea Baden of SUNY Stony Brook received a grant from PCI in the spring of 2004.

The field season of summer 2004 was one of the most rewarding experiences that I've ever had. Approaching the opportunity as a first-year graduate student, I was quite optimistic (or should we say naïve)- I had been to Madagascar once before as an undergraduate study abroad student, so I felt as though I knew Madagascar well enough to comfortably hold my own for the next three months. Little did I realize, study abroad and independent field research are on two very different ends of a hugely diverse spectrum, and I had so very much to learn.

Being the stereotypical 'starving graduate students' that we were (and still are, might I add), a fellow Stony Brook colleague, Wendy Erb, and I flew to Madagascar with little more than the necessary field gear, some clothes, the essential research supplies.

I can distinctly remember the rush of excitement I felt as we stepped into Ranomafana National Park for the first time. It was exactly as I had remembered it, only this time I was going to be conducting my own research. It was thrilling, but at the same time, quite unnerving- I was in charge, and leading my own research team.

Unfortunately, my research was delayed, as permits were not available as quickly as I had hoped. It was frustrating but it allowed time for planning and organizing my team which included two Malagasy guides, Raleso and Menja, and my student, Rindra.

When we got to the research site, my team and I quickly mastered the art of clearing line-transects and flagging trails, and before we knew it, we were working together like we were pros. It was absolutely thrilling. During the course of the day, Menja, Raleso, Rindra and I would explore the forest, and educate each other in our respective languages. By night, we would split into teams of two or three, and spend the rest of the evening systematically searching the darkness with our headlights for glimmers of eye-shine in hopes of documenting the presence and abundance of the nocturnal lemur species at the site.

In addition to the four nocturnal species that we encountered nightly, we also spotted a number of other exciting animals, including the small cat-like fossa, galidia (a mongoose), bats, tree frogs, leaf- tailed geckos, brilliantly colored chameleons, and to our dismay…many, many leeches! Nights were often quite cold and rainy, as we were conducting our work during Madagascar's austral winter, and the hike home could probably be described as one of the least pleasant experiences of the night. Most often, we were practically running down hills, flying around trees, through bushes, and across streams just to reach the warm fire and our late-night meal…but upon reaching camp, not only did there come a sense of comfort, but also a sense of accomplishment.

We were recording the population densities of nocturnal primates at two sites in Ranomafana National Park. We were especially interested in documenting the newly discovered sportive lemur but also the mouse lemurs, dwarf lemurs, and woolly lemurs. We recorded their distance, activity, and how they were detected among other data.

The drill was always the same - rest and explore by day, work, and census by night. It seems quite trivial now, but the biggest concern at the time was the source of our next battery supply as no batteries means no light, and thus no research.

Andrea and her team in camp. Photo A. Baden

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All-in-all, the entire season was a success. My team managed to collect a substantial amount of data, and a publication on the effects of seasonality on nocturnal lemur encounter is currently in the works. We found that mouse lemurs and sportive lemurs were encountered at similar frequencies during winter and summer months across sites as compared to another study done in the summer months at the same sites. However, more interestingly, the woolly lemurs were seen more frequently during the winter and dwarf lemurs were seen more frequently during the summer. Dwarf lemur summer abundance is easily explained because they are the species that exhibits torpor, a kind of hibernation. But the explanation for the woolly lemurs is much more elusive. Why would this species be more apparent during winter months? Is their preferred food lower in the canopy? Are they more likely to be foraging more conspicuously because they require more food for thermoregulation? Or is there something more?

I am hoping to return again this coming field season and am keeping my fingers crossed that the 'grant-gods' will be smiling on me once again.

Sanje mangabey *Cercocebus sanjei* photo C. Ehardt

The Sanje Mangabey of the Udzungwa Mountains, Tanzania Dr. Carolyn L. Ehardt University of Georgia

The critically endangered Sanje mangabey *Cercocebus sanjei* has only been known to science since 1981 and is recognized as one of the "World's 25 Most Endangered Primates" by Conservation International. It is found only in the fragmented forests of the Udzungwa Mountains in south-central Tanzania. With support from PCI and other donors, research has focused on assessing the full conservation status of the Sanje mangabey and acquiring ecological information vital to effective conservation management. For an unknown and threatened species such as this mangabey, it is critical to understand what their habitat requirements are, including data on their diet and ranging patterns. The information collected on the study group over a full year is revealing that aspects such as a broad-based diet, flexible grouping patterns, and use of a varied environment do seem to characterize the Sanje mangabey, and these are factors which should enhance the viability of their remaining population. What is essential at present, however, is ensuring that hunting is stopped and the habitat which remains for this endangered primate is maintained and managed such that no further loss or degradation occurs.

The Sanje mangabey has been the 'flagship species' of the Udzungwa Mountains National Park and is a very important part of the rich biodiversity of these montane forests. Research is ongoing in the long-term commitment to assist the Tanzanians in the conservation of this fascinating mangabey, as well as the other primates which exist in the Udzungwas - an area now becoming recognized as one of the most important in Africa for primate conservation.

How to Support PCI

PCI is an all-volunteer, tax-deductible private operating 501 (c) (3) foundation. Since our first grant in 1993 we have supported with full or partial or renewal funding 240 projects in 27 countries with primate habitats. Projects in Asia have received 40% of our funding, African projects 32%, Madagascar 22%, and South America 6%. Grants have gone to study leaf monkeys (24%), apes (23%), lemurs (22%), cheek pouch monkeys (15%), prosimians (6%), new world monkeys (6%) and tarsiers (4%).

If you would like to contribute cash, stock or real estate to PCI or would like more information on a specific project please contact me at the address below.

To keep our overhead to a minimum, so that as much of the money raised is used to support field conservation projects; we only send one newsletter per year. This is our annual appeal for your donations. You will not receive other mail from us, nor will we share your name with others. We appreciate your support. and hope you will give generously .to support one of these primate projects.

Sincerely,

Noel Rowe

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