

Collaborating with social
scientists to inform
community-based
conservation of the habitat of
Eulemur cinereiceps

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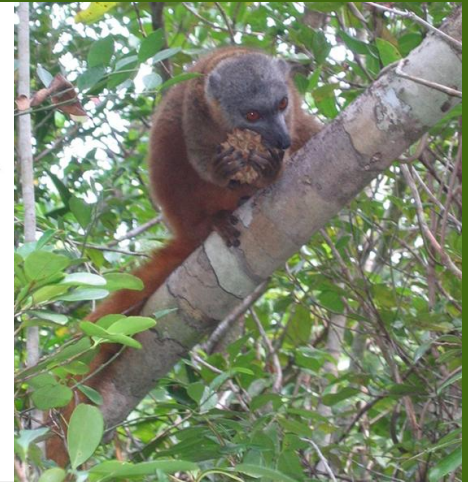
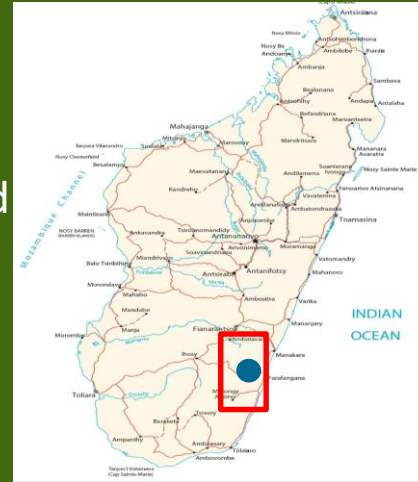


Context

- Most Malagasy protected areas are threatened, and these threats mainly due to locals
- Conservation success depends on identifying and implementing activities to ethically mitigate these threats
- Definition of activities requires a deep understanding the unique cultural and socio-economic context of diverse local stakeholders
- PA Management teams (especially site-based staff) have a good understanding of the complex drivers for non-sustainable practices and integrate (sometimes subconsciously) this knowledge into decision-making.
- However, collaboration with social scientists can provide more objective, far-ranging, nuanced and explicit insights that are powerfully relevant to decision-making
- Example: **study of local perceptions at the Agnalazaha Protected Area**

Introduction: the Agnalazaha Forest

- 2745 ha of very rare littoral forest in SE Madagascar
- Rich biodiversity including many threatened species: CR Grey-headed brown lemur
- MBG has supported community-based conservation here since 2002.
- Designated as PA in 2015, management delegated to MBG.
- Includes zones of strict conservation and sustainable use
- Threats:
 - Formerly = lemur hunting, shifting cultivation, charcoal production;
 - Persistent = over-exploitation of timber, wildfires, alien invasive species.



Introduction: the locals

- Intersects with 10 fokontany (total population = 8738 Instat, 2020)
- Antesaka
- Subsistence farmers (rice, cassava, maize, sweet potatoes), fisherfolk, pastoralists (zebu), weaving
- Reliant on natural capital for fertile soils, water, timber, fuel.
- Prone to environmental catastrophes, and social instability



Methods

- Objective to capture information on local perceptions about forest, MBG and the hedge project.
- Collaboration with Chester Zoo (context of DI-funded project to promote use of hedges to protect crops from cattle).
- Chester Zoo's social scientists (Greg Counsell+ Andrew Moss) conceived method and trained me in application and analysis of data.
- Semi-structured interview using Dictaphone of random sample of locals(N=84), transcription, analysis.

173 Apart from the use of the valavelo fences, what other strategies would you recommend to better
174 protect your farmlands? Tell me about your current seeds and crops? Are they growing well?
175 *They seem to be growing well as I noticed from my fields yesterday.*
176 How about the pineapples?
177 *They seem to be growing well too.*
178 Are the valavelo fences helpful to you?
179 *Yes they are! I just want to make sure I take a good care of the valavelo and barbed wire so that they*
180 *can last for years so that the zebras are kept away from our farmlands.*
181 Have the non-beneficiaries of the valavelo project ever asked you about the project and its benefits?
182 *Nobody is asking about it up to now.*
183 This brings us to talk about the MBG now after talking about the project. Tell me what you know
184 about MBG?
185 *I find MBG and its actions beneficial to me as they have supplied the barbed wires so I will be always*
186 *thankful to what they have done for the community.*
187 Tell me more about the things you have benefited from them?
188 *To be honest, I haven't gotten much from them except the barbed wires.*
189 Do you mean you've only been given the barbed wires?
190 Yes.
191 When you pass by the town, you'd better inquire on the supply dates of clove, or young coffee
192 plants provided by MBG.
193 *I will do that.*
194 Do you think MBG and its actions beneficial to your commune?
195 *Do you mean within our commune? Are its actions beneficial to the people in our commune? I'm not*
196 *really sure what you exactly mean.*
197 I just wanted to know your opinion on the actions of MBG in your community. Do you think they are
198 helpful to your community?
199 *They have really impacted our community as far as I see it.*



What do locals really think: the forest

Questions types	Responses	Percentage
Change in forest	Worse before	73%
	Same (didn't change)	18%
	Better, Dense and large	14%
Should the forest be protected ?	Yes	100%
Why should the forest be protected ?	Resources (water, wood for houses, fences)	70%
	Important Environmentally (increase the rain, soils fertile)	46%
Should access to natural resources be restricted	Yes, for the beneficiaries of MBG	87%
	Maybe, for the non beneficiaries (existing rules enough", "but coupled with other support for all")	64%

What do locals really think: MBG

Questions types	Responses	Percentage
Understanding of MBG's role	Protect the forest + community development "providing things"	93%
Appreciation of MBG	Positive: providing ducks, chickens, clove trees, eucalyptus" "helped forest to improve", "need more jobs, more materials.	83%
	Sad, that rules have changed	14%
Responsibilities about protection	Joint responsibility of Community/MBG	46%
	Sole responsibility of locals ("the forest belongs to them")	21%
	Sole responsibility of MBG	15%

What do locals really think: the hedge project

Questions types	Responses	Percentage
Understanding of project	Beneficiaries : protect the forest from exploitation intensive of the poles.	93%
	Non beneficiaries: help the farmers to protect their crops.	79%
Evaluation of project	Beneficiaries: report positive change in life. “we don’t cut young stems in the forest anymore”, “we Have more time for farming and fishing”, “we have a good harvest because the crops doesn’t eaten by zebu anymore”.	93%
	Not sure some installed recently, some waiting the result from others.	7%

What did we learn?

- Forest appreciated for resources (not biodiversity!)
- Role of MBG in conservation understood but MBG appreciated mostly for livelihood support
- Most accept rule-based sustainable exploitation – but require support



Discussion

- Despite 2 decades of awareness-raising about biodiversity (especially lemurs) very few mentioned it.
- People's clear priorities = own well-being
- Supportive of conservation/sustainable use if positive impact on well being



Conclusions

- This collaboration not only provided a compelling channel to seek feedback from locals but also built capacity in Madagascar for further work of this type.
- A powerful example of how foreign researchers can use their abilities to directly improve conservation outcomes.



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