J.K. Hodges, J. Cortes (eds.)

The Barbary Macaque: Biology, Management and Conservation

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This latest book on the Barbary macaque was inspired by the Calpe symposium organized by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society in 2003. The editors have endeavoured to bring together Barbary macaque researchers from both the field and captivity.

The first section of the book focuses on historical perspectives. Groves discusses the species and its place in history, its various names and finally its taxonomy and phylogeny. Thereafter, Abegg draws attention to the potential influence of climate change on the geographic distribution of Barbary macaques over time and points out its relevance to present-day climate change issues.

The second section concentrates on sociality and reproductive biology. The majority of these studies have been conducted either on the large semi-free-ranging colonies in France and Germany or on the Gibraltar colony. These are of interest to anyone studying primate behaviour, dealing as they do with affiliation and conflict resolution (Thierry and Aurelli), kinship in Barbary macaques (Paul), vocal communication from a comparative perspective (Fischer and Hammerschmidt), differentiating copulation calls in female Barbary macaques (Semple and McComb), reproduction in female Barbary macaques (Heistermann et al.) and sexual swellings as specific mate recognition systems (Froehlich and Froehlich). Menard et al. focus on female philopatry, group dynamics and the distribution of genes in a wild population of macaques in Algeria.

In the next section, on management and conservation, Honess et al. review the potential zoonoses transmissible between Barbary macaques and humans and go on to present information on the health profile of the Gibraltar colony. Data on interactions between macaques and people on the Rock are presented by Fuentes.

Shaw and Cortes present new information on how Barbary macaques arrived on Gibraltar and discuss their history and demography. Cortes describes the management strategies used for the colony, the difficulties of enforcing a public feeding ban and controlling the expansion of this population. Kuester's review of the Barbary macaque population in European collections is, by her own admission, incomplete, but presents the only information currently available. Kuester warns against complacency amongst captive institutions about the genetic status of the species in captivity as this could result in genetic impoverishment amongst the population.

Modolo's chapter on the conservation genetics of Barbary macaques presents interesting and useful information on wild populations and concludes that the maintenance of genetic diversity in the remaining fragmented wild populations will be a challenge.

Mouna and Camperio describe the distribution of the species in both Morocco and Algeria and they then go on to explain why the species has declined so drastically in the Middle Atlas and make interesting, and sometimes odd, recommendations on how to halt the decline.

On the whole, a useful book both for those working on the species and for those interested in macaques in general. Poor editing in a couple of chapters spoiled the overall presentation. However, the most striking aspect of the book for me was the small number of contributions regarding wild Barbary macaques which is in stark contrast to the 1984 book on the species by John Fa. This lack of information about the wild population is readily acknowledged by the editors in their introduction and should inspire us to take more interest in a primate species occurring so close to Europe.

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