Book Review

P. Charles-Dominique et al. Nocturnal Malagasy Primates

Ecology, Physiology and Behavior Academic Press, New York 1980 215pp.;US\$ 27.50 ISBN 0-12-169350-3

This book presents the results of a combined field and laboratory study on ecology and behavior among five species of Malagasy lemurs, all of which occupy the deciduous forest of Marosalaza on the western coast of Madagascar. The research, which was conducted by members of the Brunoy research laboratory, is both descriptive and analytical. The field studies, discussed in the first five chapters, focus on habitat description, subsistence activities for all five species in relation to the habitat, and detailed behavioral observations for two of the species, *Phaner furcifer* and *Microcebus coquereli*. The laboratory studies present further information on variations in activity rhythm, feeding, body weight, and reproduction for the five species; these data, along with discussions of fecal marking in *Cheirogaleus medius* and visual learning in *M. murinus* and *P. furcifer*, constitute the remaining five chapters.

In many ways, this anthology complements Pierre Charles-Dominique's earlier monograph on the nocturnal lorisiforms of Gabon ('Ecology and Social Behaviour of Nocturnal Primates', Columbia University Press, New York 1977). The earlier book discussed the activities of a sympatric association of African prosimians in a single forest habitat, and 'Nocturnal Malagasy Primates' adopts a similar approach for sympatric Malagasy prosimians. The latter volume, however, lacks the more broadly comparative framework of Charles-Dominique's previous work, and this is its chief limitation. Comparison and synthesis of the adaptations of the Marosalaza primates to the lorisiforms and to other nocturnal Malagasy lemurs are largely lacking, and in this sense the book is a disappointment. Although the title may suggest otherwise, this anthology is emphatically not a general discussion of nocturnal Malagasy primates.

On the other hand, the book is a success within its more limited scope. Most of the observations presented here confirm and elaborate the ways in which nocturnal life influences the biology of the species discussed in the book. Another point which emerges from this work is the global similarity between behavior in captivity and behavior in the wild; although variations between the two do occur, the similarities are often striking. Finally, the new information on two poorly known species (*P. furcifer* and *M. coquereli*) is a welcome addition to the prosimian literature. Clearly, 'Nocturnal Malagasy primates' contains valuable reference material for primate ecologists and prosimian biologists. It seems unlikely, however, that the book will hold great appeal for researchers outside those areas.

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