SHORT COMMUNICATION

Predation on Mammals by the Grey-cheeked Mangabey
*Lophocebus albigena*

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ABSTRACT. Behavioral observations were made on a habituated group of grey-cheeked mangabeys (*Lophocebus albigena*) in the Dja Reserve, Cameroon, using 5-min scan sampling periods at 15-min intervals. On two occasions male mangabeys captured and fed on mammalian prey, a squirrel and a bushbaby. Although grey-cheeked mangabeys have been studied at several sites, these are the first observations of carnivory by them.

Key Words: *Lophocebus albigena*; Predation; Carnivory; Mangabeys; Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

Arboreal primates are frequently classified as frugivores (fruit-eating), granivores (seed-eating), or folivores (leaf-eating). Despite these classifications, most well-studied cercopithecines are known to eat some vertebrate prey (Butynski, 1982). The feeding ecology of the grey-cheeked mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*) has been examined at several sites in Central Africa (Jones & Sabater Pi, 1968; Gautier-Hion, 1977; Cashner, 1972), but most detailed information comes from Gabon (Ham, 1994) and Uganda (Waser, 1977; Olupot, 1998). Although Waser (1977) documented the consumption of bird eggs and a small snake and Ham (1994) reported indirect evidence of bird egg predation by grey-cheeked mangabeys, there has been no report of mammalian predation by them. Here we document that the grey-cheeked mangabey is also opportunistically carnivorous.

METHODS

This study was conducted in the Dja Reserve, south-central Cameroon (3°11'27"N, 12°48'41"E) between February and December 1998. All observations reported here were made in relatively pristine semi-deciduous tropical rain forest [see Poulsen et al. (2001), for a description of the study site].

Diet and behavioral data were collected from one group of approximately 22 unmarked individuals that was habituated and then followed for 11 months. The group consisted of five males (two adults and three subadults), ten adult females, and seven juveniles (four males and three females). Individuals were categorized into age and sex classes according to the characteristics
given in WASER (1974). We observed the group continuously from dawn (06:00) to dusk (18:00) for an average of 12 days per month in two 6-day blocks, during the first and second halves of the month. Between February and December 1998, the group was observed for 1483 hr over 132 days, for a total of 5918 scans. Behavioral data were collected using 5-min scan sampling periods at 15-min intervals. Observers recorded the time of day, location, group size, group composition (age and sex), and activity during each scan. For more detailed methods see PoulSEN et al. (2001).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our first observation of carnivory occurred at 15:30 on April 20, 1998.

A male mangabey climbed away from other troop members with a squirrel carcass in his hand. While the capture of the squirrel (Funisciurus sp.) was not directly witnessed, the fresh condition of the carcass indicated that it had likely been captured. The male was first sighted 17 m high in the canopy, using his incisors to tear apart the carcass. Five other members of the troop frequently approached the male. He moved away whenever they came within 3 to 4 m, eventually climbing to a position 35 m high in the canopy. The five mangabeys, all females and juveniles, sat on branches directly below the male watching him. At least two mangabeys recovered and ate fallen pieces of the squirrel from the tree branches below the male. The male, however, consumed the bulk of the carcass by 16:10.

The second observation of carnivory took place at 11:30 on September 23, 1998.

This time, a male mangabey captured a bushbaby (Galago allen) in the forest canopy. An unrecognized vocalization was heard, and a male mangabey was observed holding a small, bleeding mammal. It is not known if a chase was involved in the capture. The monkey used his teeth and hands to tear apart the carcass. He fed on the prey between 11:30 and 14:45. As the first case, between four to nine mangabeys remained in the canopy next to and below the male. Throughout the observation, adult mangabeys attempted to approach the male, but each time they came within a few meters, he moved away. One female in estrus presented her swollen ano-genital region to the bushbaby-eating male, but, he moved away from the female, although the male had an erection.

At 12:00, a section of one of the bushbaby’s legs fell to the ground. The estrous female descended to the forest floor within 3 m of the observer to grab the fallen flesh. She remained on the ground to feed. A few minutes later, three mangabeys descended to the ground and chased the female up a tree away from the fallen prey. A period of chaos ensued, when many of the troop members chased each other through the canopy vocalizing loudly.

A second male found and consumed a piece of the bushbaby in the canopy at 12:15. The male fed 5 to 10 m off the ground; meanwhile, the first male continued to eat at a height of 20 m. Eight mangabeys sat on branches below the males.

At 12:37, a fight ensued between the two males, both attacking each other and loudly vocalizing. As a result of the fight, the second male fell 15 – 20 m to the ground. The male sustained an injury to his right leg, evidenced by his limping. He stayed behind the troop for the remainder of the day. During the fight, three mangabeys scrambled to the ground to gather flesh scattered by the males.

The uninjured male had eaten most of the bushbaby by 13:00. He consumed the head, with six mangabeys sitting and moving within 5 m of him. By 13:30, only a mass of bloody fur remained. Five monkeys still stayed close to the male, but others were foraging for fruit and insects 10 – 20 m up the canopy. The male left the remains of the carcass on a branch at 14:15. A female approached the carcass from the side of the branch opposite the male. Upon seeing the female, he chased her to the ground.