

An investigation of differences in the behavioural repertoire of the ruffed lemur and the ring-tailed lemur in a captive environment

Amirah Barri

University of Bristol, Anthropology

Studying animals within artificial situations can tell us much about how an animal has adapted to its natural environment. Especially when two geographically isolated, yet closely related species are put together in captivity. The study interpreted behavioural data on both *Varecia variegata rubra* (red ruffed lemur) and *Lemur catta* (ringtailed lemur) at Bristol Zoo Gardens, analysing activity budgets and location data in order to show how these animals may have evolved to suit their habitats. In the wild, *L. catta* spends 2/3 of its time on the forest floor, as a result animals are able to have close physical contact with one another through behaviours such as following, huddling and allogrooming. Results of activity budgets showed *L. catta* spending significantly more time allogrooming than *V.v. rubra*. In contrast, *V.v.rubra* spends significantly more time vocalising. Vocalising allows this arboreal species to maintain contact within the upper forest structure. These very different ways of communicating suit the lemur's lifestyle; maintaining group contact is extremely important in social species. As well as day time activity observations, nocturnal observations were also undertaken on *L. catta*. Results showed some cathemeral behaviour was observed in *L. catta*. Reduced activity during the day correlated with heightened activity at night. However, results stated here are only preliminary observations until more data can be collected. *V.v.rubra* were highly territorial in this study and took over the outside habitat space to a greater degree, perhaps due to larger group size. The study emphasises the importance of niche separation between closely related species in the wild. The huge diversities within Madagascar were likely to be a result of heightened ecological diversity.

For more information contact:

Research Department, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3HA
(research@bristolzoo.org.uk)



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