

DOCUMENTING GEOPHAGY IN WILD CHACMA BABOONS AT WILDCLIFF, SOUTH AFRICA, USING TRAP CAMERAS

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The aim of this one-year study was to document geophagy in a troop of wild chacma baboons and to determine the underlying motivation for this behavior. Geophagy, one of the oldest reported forms of self-meditative behavior in numerous primate species, is still poorly documented in *Papio ursinus*. Proposed functions for geophagy include, but are not limited to: mineral supplementation, alleviation of gastro-intestinal distress or food hunger, and/or enhancement of other pharmacological properties. The 100+ members of the study troop are still semi-habituated, making data collection on less frequently occurring behaviors, such as geophagy, difficult. Scoutguard SG 550 trap cameras were used to document the troop's behavior at three of four known clay sites within the baboons' home range. The images from a trap camera, placed at one frequently visited site, allowed me to look for trends in geophagy among gender, age class, reproductive status, time of day, and duration of feeding bouts. Clay samples collected from this site were analyzed for particle size, total dissolved solids, major and minor elements, conductivity-pH, X-Ray Fluorescence, and X-Ray Diffraction. Preliminary findings suggest that clay from this site is consumed for its ability to alleviate GI distress and possibly mineral supplementation.

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