

FEEDING PARTY SIZE AND PARTY COMPOSITION IN RELATION TO FOOD AVAILABILITY IN FREE-RANGING SPIDER MONKEYS

A.L. Perez-Ruiz¹, R. Mondragon-Ceballos².

¹CEFP SVLT, Mexico, Distrito Federal, Mexico, ²INP, Mexico, Distrito Federal, Mexico).

Presenter's Email: atelgeof@yahoo.com

Actually, it is known that foraging patterns of spider monkeys vary seasonally and are related to food availability. This study focuses on changes in party size and composition in relation to food availability during feeding periods in free-ranging spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*). Data were collected throughout a period of 18 months in a community formed by 9 males, 16 females, 5 juveniles and 7 infants, dwelling in Montes Azules Reserve, Chiapas, Mexico. Scan and focal sampling methods were used. Results showed positive correlations between feeding party size and number of fruits in relation with some of the more consumed tree species. Spider monkeys' diet varied according to seasonal changes in availability of particular fruits. Foraging followed a seasonal pattern, eating resources that became available at the same time each year. Large parties of females, but scarcely any males, were observed when virola fruits (*Virola koschnyi*) became edible. The largest parties, containing animals from both sexes and all ages, were observed when two of the more consumed species, *Brosimum alicastrum*. and *Manilkara zapota*, were ripe.

Keywords: spider monkeys, party size, composition, fruits availability.