

LIFE HISTORY TRAITS, MATERNAL BEHAVIOUR AND INFANT DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUE-EYED BLACK LEMUR (*EULEMUR FLAVIFRONS*): IMPLICATIONS FOR ITS CONSERVATION

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This study presented the first results regarding the life history, maternal behaviour and infant development of the critically endangered blue-eyed black lemur (*Eulemur flavifrons*) in the north-western forest of Madagascar. Data were collected over two successive birth seasons in 2006 and 2007. A total of 13 lactating females and 22 infants from six groups were observed. Blue-eyed black lemurs breed seasonally, with births occurring at the end of the dry season, between late August and October. The age of first reproduction is about 3 years and a female gives birth to a single offspring. Estimated birth rate was 1.0 infant per female per year with a mean inter-birth interval of 358 ± 24.81 days (319 - 410 days). Infants spent the first 3 weeks of life constantly with their mothers; Ingestion of solid food and locomotory independence began at week 10 and they were weaned by week 25. By the end of 28th week, infants spent less than 20% of their time in contact with their mothers. Group members other than the mother provided alloparental care to infants, including carrying, grooming and playing. Over the study period infant mortality was 22.7%. Predation and sickness were observed as causes of infant mortality. Our results suggest that population is growing has implications for the conservation of the taxon particularly in their restricted habitat range that is currently facing several threats.

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