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FOLLOW YOUR SUBORDINATES? TRAVEL DECISIONS AFTER INTERGROUP ENCOUNTERS IN GROUPS OF WILD CHACMA BABOONS (*PAPIO URSINUS*) – A PLAYBACK EXPERIMENT

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For example, few dominant baboons can repeatedly lead their group to a novel food source, and then exclude subordinates from feeding. The role of subordinates in decision processes is less clear. I investigated travel decisions in an infrequently but commonly occurring situation encountered by wild baboons, when interests of dominants and subordinates diverge: group encounters can negatively affect dominants, while subordinates may benefit. During 12 months I performed a large-scale playback experiment with two baboon groups on the Cape Peninsula, South Africa. I played back one group's infant play screams to another group from 200m, simulating the presence of a neighbouring group when they were in fact ranging elsewhere. I used ibis calls (*Bostrychia hagedash*) to control for audibility of stimuli, and Egyptian geese calls (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*) in control trials. During tests and controls, I video-taped responses of focal animals, and subsequently recorded spatial positions of individuals staying closest to the loudspeakers. Also, I recorded timing of movement onset and travel direction of the group as a whole. On an individual level, high-ranking males and high- and middle-ranking females walked away from the loudspeakers, while low-ranking males, subadult females and low-ranking adult females approached them. Movement onset was earlier after tests than after controls. During tests groups either headed towards the loudspeakers, following the movement of subordinates, or diametrically away, following the dominants. I investigated the circumstances under which the interests of subordinates were decisive for group movements.

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