

EFFECTS OF HABITAT DEGRADATION ON BEHAVIOUR AND ECOLOGY OF THE SAHAMALAZA SPORTIVE LEMUR, *LEPILEMUR SAHAMALAZENSIS*, IN NW-MADAGASCAR

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This study is the first to assess the impact of habitat degradation and fragmentation on key aspects of the behaviour (e.g. home range size and use, social behaviour, antipredator behaviour and acoustic communication) of the Sahamalaza sportive lemur (*Lepilemur sahamalazensis*), first described in February 2006 and exclusively found on the Sahamalaza Peninsula. Here we present results on sleeping site choice and activity budgets in relation to forest fragment degradation. In July-October 2009, 17 *Lepilemurs* in forests of different degradation using two classes of day roosts (tree holes vs. tree tangles) were observed for 606 hours during the day and 324 hours at night. 24-hour activity budgets and behaviour were quantified. Preliminary analyses show differences in the ratio of active to inactive behaviour a) between different sleeping sites and b) between differently-degraded forest fragments. Individuals resting in tree tangles were active during 11% of daylight hours, while individuals resting in tree holes 23%. During the day, observed individuals never left their chosen resting site. Individuals in a secondary forest fragment were active during 25% of daylight hours, in mixed and mature secondary forest fragments, 18% and 16% respectively, and in a degraded primary forest fragment 7%. However, the latter group had a higher percentage of time out of sight. These differences are most likely predator avoidance strategies and highlight the importance of intact mature forests for this species. Further research into the diurnal habits of this nocturnal primate is ongoing investigating their anti-predator responses and detailed habitat requirements.

Keywords: Critically endangered, Habitat degradation, Activity budget, Resting ecology