

VARIATION IN FRUIT PHENOLOGY IN CENTRAL AFRICAN GREAT APE HABITATS.

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Chimpanzees and gorillas extend in a wide variety of habitats across African continent (chimpanzee: from arid savanna to tropical rain forest; gorilla: from montane forest to lowland tropical seasonal forest). However, when compared with east and west Africa, habitat condition such as climate, vegetation are relatively similar among study sites in central Africa, where chimpanzees and gorillas live in sympatry. On the other hand, recent studies have been revealed that there are considerable differences in feeding habits of central African great apes between various habitats. In order to investigate the factors affecting such differences, detailed comparison of environmental conditions, especially the spatio-temporal distribution of fruit food, is needed. In this study, I compare fruit phenology of three study sites, Ndoki in Congo, Loango and Moukalaba-Doudou in Gabon, to show the diversity in spatio-temporal distribution of fruit food for great apes in central Africa. Virtually the same methodology is applied for all three sites, i.e. fallen fruit counts by line transect method. Through the analysis, I discuss the possibility of inter-site comparison of great ape food choice, based on the quantitative analysis of difference in fruit phenology.

Keywords: fruit phenology, chimpanzee, gorilla, central Africa