

THE ONTOGENETIC DEVELOPMENT OF GAZE FOLLOWING AMONG BARBARY MACAQUES IS MODULATED BY SOCIAL INFORMATION

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The tendency to direct one's attention to locations looked at by others ('gaze-following') is an important aspect of social cognition. In humans, gaze-following has been viewed as a developmental prerequisite for shared attention, perspective taking, and attribution of mental states to others. The cognitive mechanisms underlying gaze-following in non-human primates, however, are less well understood. Combining longitudinal and cross-sectional observational data from 72 Barbary macaques, *Macaca sylvanus*, living in three social groups at 'La Forêt des Singes', Rocamadour, we examined the ontogenetic trajectory of gaze-following among conspecifics. Gaze-following develops within the first year of life with a rapid increase between 4 and 5 months of age, when infants become more independent. The ontogenetic trajectory was influenced by the facial expression of the model: young monkeys followed the gaze of others more frequently when the gaze was accompanied by a variety of facial expressions. Adult monkeys showed elevated gaze-following only in response to facial expressions given in response to interactions between third parties, corroborating the view that higher-level cognitive processes modulate the reflexive nature of gaze-following. Gaze-following appears to be an important route to gather information about ongoing events in the surroundings, particularly social relationships between others.

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