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GREAT APES AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY

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Socioecological studies of African great apes have been lead by a few long-term field sites. General trends of great ape socioecology (i.e. chimpanzees are ripe-fruit pursers with fission-fusion social-systems and gorillas are herbivores foraging in cohesive one-male groups) have been derived from those studies. Since 1990s, several field sites in central African have been established. African great apes occupy a wide variety of habitats and adapt to these habitats in diverse ways, showing their ecological flexibility. Now we cannot specify a "typical habitat" for any great ape species. Thus, reconsideration of our stereotyped view for great apes requires focusing on the diversity in great ape socioecology. Along with the increased attention for conservation of tropical forests, new field sites for the study of great apes have been established during the last decade. In addition, detailed data on the fauna and flora, (e.g. biomass of sympatric mammals, vegetation, plant phenology and human-ape relations) have been accumulated at both old and new study sites. Taking these situations into consideration, this symposium aims to exchange information on a range of habitats and discuss the prospects for comparative studies.

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