

RANGING BEHAVIOUR OF VERREAUX'S SIFAKA (*PROFITHECUS VERREAUXI VERREAUXI*) IN A PRIMARY FOREST (KIRINDY MITEA NATIONAL PARK) IN MADAGASCAR.

K. H. Bannar-Martin and R. J. Lewis

Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, 78712, USA

In seasonal habitats, key resources can be particularly important in determining home range size. Verreaux's sifaka rely heavily on tamarind trees (*Tamarindus indicus*) during the season of food scarcity. No tamarind trees are present in the Ankoasifaka Research Station in Kirindy Mitea National Park. Therefore, we hypothesized that Verreaux's sifaka home ranges were larger in this undisturbed and continuous tract of tropical dry forest. Focal animal locations were collected every 10 minutes and all occurrence feeding locations were collected for four groups (3-8 individuals/group) in 2008 for a total of 2000 observation hours. In contrast to previously published home range estimates for Verreaux's sifaka in Kirindy Forest (5.7-10.1 ha) and Beza-Mahafaly Special Reserve (4-6 ha), home ranges in Kirindy Mitea varied from 13.26 ha to 46.66 ha. Home range increased with increasing group size ($\rho=1$, $p=0.082$, $n=4$), and the addition of a group member increased the home range by 20 to 25%. Home range overlap was highly variable (8.6% to 100%), with the two smaller groups ranging almost entirely within the largest group's home range. While Kirindy Mitea and Kirindy Forest are similar forests with similar lemur communities separated by only 100 km, the Verreaux's sifaka in these forests exhibit strikingly different ranging behaviors. Our findings are consistent with the hypothesis that the presence of tamarind trees drastically alters sifaka ranging behavior.