



Research proposal guidelines

Proposals must take into account the specifics of the Barbary macaque, the living conditions at Trentham Monkey Forest and the existing literature. Some useful background information:

Park and study animals

Trentham Monkey Forest is a 60-acre forest interspersed with open grassy areas. Currently, 140 Barbary macaques live in 2 large groups of around 70 individuals. The monkeys live outdoors all year. Between February and October, the park is open to visitors who are restricted to a circular path while the monkeys are free to roam within the entire area. They are habituated to the presence of humans but are free to move into areas to avoid them.

Animal management

Monkeys are fed daily with fruit, vegetables, cereals and primate pellets, but also feed on vegetation of the park such as grass, leaves, buds, sprouts, beechnuts, acorns and some invertebrates. In order to control population size, the majority of adult females are under contraception, so that a limited number of infants are born annually (6-10). It is therefore not possible to measure reproductive success. All monkeys are tattooed on the inner thigh, which makes identifying individuals easier for new researchers.

Period of observation - seasonality

Barbary macaques originate from mountainous regions in Morocco and Algeria where winters are cold and snowy, summers are hot and dry. They are adapted to this temperate climate in many ways (morphology, physiology, behaviour). Their reproduction is strictly seasonal (birth in spring/early summer, mating in autumn/early winter). Their social behaviour undergoes drastic changes throughout the year, something to consider when choosing the period of observation or when comparing data with other studies on Barbary macaques or other species. The results of a study on social relations in a seasonal breeder depend largely on the time of the year, when data is collected.

Conditions for observation

Data collection can be undertaken easily at Monkey Forest. During the daytime Barbary macaques are mostly found on the ground. Visibility is good in most parts of the park. After a short period of time, the monkeys become habituated to observers. To avoid any disturbance observers must keep a reasonable distance and use binoculars. Management will give instructions on how to behave towards the monkeys. Students who only have a few weeks for their

data collection will have to remain on the path and adapt their research accordingly.

Choice of a research topic

The semi free-ranging conditions of the park, the large size of the groups and the seasonality of the species are important to consider when choosing a topic. Most studies on social relationships require at least a few months of observation to get sufficient data for statistical analysis. The pilot study alone (recognition of a large number of individuals, establishing the ethogram of the species, getting familiar with the daily routine of the groups, testing observational methods) takes generally a few weeks. Data collection can start only after the pilot study has been done.

The time allocated for data collection must be in accordance with the research aims and the frequency of the behaviours the researcher wants to focus on (to allocate more time for a rarer behaviour). Records kept by the management such as demographics can be made available if required.

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