

Preface

This edited volume features a collection of essays discussing the virtues and challenges of conducting long-term field projects on wild primate populations in Madagascar, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. All of these projects have been ongoing for a significant portion of the respective species' life cycle; some of them already cover multiple generations. Taken together, the contributions to this volume represent all major primate radiations and therefore provide a representative sample of taxon-specific opportunities and challenges of this type of research. Still, not all important long-term studies could be included in this volume, with the absence of specific chapters on nocturnal primates perhaps the most important omission. In contrast, some taxa, such as sifakas, capuchin monkeys, and chimpanzees, are covered in more than one chapter. In each case, the comparison revealed striking differences between study sites and populations, emphasizing the perhaps not so obvious fact that single long-term studies are apparently not sufficient to document the full range of species-typical life history adaptations and variation in social systems.

Continuous observations of habituated and individually recognizable primates originated with Imanishi's project on Japanese macaques in the late 1940s. Some of the projects described in this volume originated in the 1960s. Gombe, Amboseli, Berenty, Caratinga, Koshima, and Ketambe are names familiar to all primatologists today because these projects have contributed unique insights into the natural histories and life histories of wild primates. Such long-term studies are especially necessary in primatology, because primates have slower life histories than most other terrestrial mammals. In many cases, several decades are necessary to document the timing of important life history milestones, and in most cases this is not even sufficient to garner large enough samples to analyze the adaptive basis of life history variation. Variability in key social parameters and documentation of behavioral development provide additional justification for a long-term approach. Moreover, rare but important events, such as predation, infanticide, or dispersal, also necessitate continuous observation for many years to obtain samples large enough for satisfactory empirical analyses. Finally, most long-term primate field studies

today have positive effects on local conservation efforts; this alone is enough to justify their continuation in the view of many primatologists.

The authors of the chapters on specific projects covered in this volume were asked to summarize results and insights that were only possible because of the long-term nature of their studies and thereby to provide concrete examples for the scientific necessity and benefits of this kind of research. Because long-term projects of this kind also face numerous practical problems and challenges, especially with respect to data management and continuous funding, we also asked all authors to furnish summaries of the history and logistics of their projects, which we hope will be valuable for historians of our discipline and for colleagues initiating new projects, respectively. Because this volume presents the first collective summary of unique datasets from several influential long-term primate field studies along with new research results, we hope that it will interest not just primatologists, but also anthropologists interested in the value of comparative research on nonhuman primates for understanding human evolution and the behavior of modern humans and behavioral ecologists involved in long-term projects on other vertebrates. If examples included in this volume can provide arguments and examples that convince academic administrations and funding agencies of both the scientific value and the conservation importance of such field projects, it would have achieved another important purpose.

Göttingen and New Haven
Peter M. Kappeler
David P. Watts



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-642-22513-0>

Long-Term Field Studies of Primates

Kappeler, P.M.; Watts, D.P. (Eds.)

2012, XX, 464 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-642-22513-0