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## **How can behavioral studies assist in conservation of lemurs?**

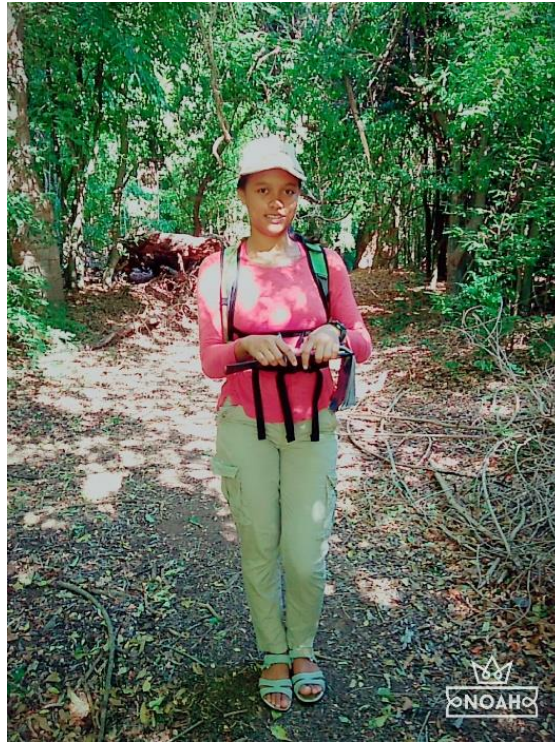
By  
Princiah Rabary

Lemurs are synonymous with Madagascar. These charismatic primates comprise 5 families, 15 genera and 112 species. They evolved here 65 million years ago even as the great dinosaur was in the throes of extinction crisis and left the lemurs an ecological niche they would thrive on and diversify with time.

Formerly known as the 'green island' Madagascar was home to several large animals like subfossil lemurs like the megaladapis, and the archaeoindris that weighed nearly 200 kg. These giant lemurs began to disappear with the advent of the first Malagasy until they became extinct due to human pressure and loss of forest which still is the primary driver of biodiversity loss in Madagascar.

The fate of the extant lemurs is like a thin thread that can snap any moment because deforestation, hunting, and pet trade. This ongoing crisis has made Malagasy and foreign scientists to take up 'in-situ' and 'ex-situ' conservation projects with the participation of students.

Studying lemur behavior plays a big role in their conservation. For example, studying the use of tree canopy by lemurs can help us discern the species and height of trees they use more. This could be useful for planting these trees for their progeny to use and aids in their conservation. Foraging behavior could help us to understand the competition for food between species.



Author surveys study site

Conserving a flag ship species like the lemur is of utmost importance in Madagascar, given their role play in the functioning of the ecosystem, and they are national treasure of the island nation.

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Principiah Rabary is a graduate student in anthropology and sustainable development at the University of Antananarivo, Madagascar.