



seed **madagascar**

sustainable environment, education & development

**An update on**

**Project Microcebus: Promotion and *in situ* conservation of an undescribed species of *Microcebus* in the Sainte Luce littoral forest, southeast Madagascar**

**July 2017 - January 2018**



**SEED Madagascar**

Suite 7, 1a Beethoven St, London, W10 4LG, United Kingdom  
Villa Rabemanda, Ambinanikely, B.P. 318, Tolagnaro, Madagascar

Tel: +44 (0)208 960 6629

Email: [projects@seedmadagascar.org](mailto:projects@seedmadagascar.org)

Web: [madagascar.co.uk](http://madagascar.co.uk)

UK Charity No. 1079121, Company No. 3796669

Over the past three months, SEED Madagascar’s Executive Conservation Coordinator Sam Hyde Roberts and the SEED Madagascar Conservation team have been working hard to capture further mouse lemur individuals in Sainte Luce in order to fit them with radio tracking technology. Despite the bad weather, a further 5 individuals have been captured since November, three of which have been fitted with miniature HOLOHil radio tracking collars, each weighs less than 3grams. 2 of the 5 mouse lemurs captured however were still too small to wear the collars, which must not exceed more than 5% of the animal’s body weight. To date, eight mouse lemurs are collared in Sainte Luce in forest fragments S8 and S9. When a mouse lemur is first caught, a full suite of biometric measurements are recorded. These range from the basic; gender, maturity status, weight and length measurements; to the more intricate such as dentition, intermembral index and testicle size in males. After the radio collars are fitted and measurements are complete, the lemurs are then safely released back into the forest at the same location where they were captured. Similarly, animals are only released at night, in order to reduce the likelihood of predation from diurnal predators.



Research Assistant Ruth Smith measuring our tiny friend!

The radio collars then allow Sam Hyde Roberts to track and follow these elusive and highly mobile nocturnal lemurs through the forest. Through careful study, the home ranges and territory sizes, feeding ecology and behaviour of these individuals can then be studied, and will ultimately contribute to Sam's PhD at Oxford Brookes University. A usual night follow lasts 6 hours, and begins at the time when the lemur first leaves its sleep site! As an auxiliary study aspect, Sam is also assessing the influence of ambient light as a trigger for lemurs to leave their sleep sites. This collected data further helps SEED to accurately estimate the total size of the sub-populations in each study fragment, and highlights areas of the forest that are important to this species. Ecological and census data collection will continue throughout 2018.



Cleopatra in her natural habitat. Photo: Sam Hyde Roberts.

The genetic samples that have been collected so far are now ready for export and import into the European Union for thorough genetic analysis. Preliminary results indicate that this species may represent a candidate new species and we are hopeful to have reliable and robust evidence in support of this in time for the meeting of the IUCN International Specialist Group in Antananarivo in May 2018. The presence of a new form of lemur in the littoral forests of Sainte Luce would represent a substantial finding for conservation in these threatened forests, and would provide further support for their wider protection.

SEED Madagascar sees youth education as a crucial part of a successful and sustainable conservation strategy. Therefore, whilst the SEED Madagascar research team are waiting for

the results of the genetic analysis, they have focused some of the lessons in the local Conservation Club – Club Atsatsaky - on the mouse lemurs of Sainte Luce. The sessions have included the broad conservation messages, information on the animal’s ecology and habitat and also the threats faced by mouse lemurs nationwide. The children also had great fun with a mouse lemur drawing competition, and showed they can easily recognise the new species! The conservation team have also introduced ideas within the community of the importance of reconnecting areas of fragmented forest back together, a long term initiative of SEED Madagascar’s Conservation team. Presently, several species of nocturnal lemur are restricted to within small forest remnants, ultimately increasing their extinction risk. By reconnecting several forest fragments using habitat corridors over the coming years, we aim to reunite isolated subpopulations and increase the chances for the long term survival for the lemurs of Sainte Luce.



Children in Club A partaking in the mouse lemur drawing competition