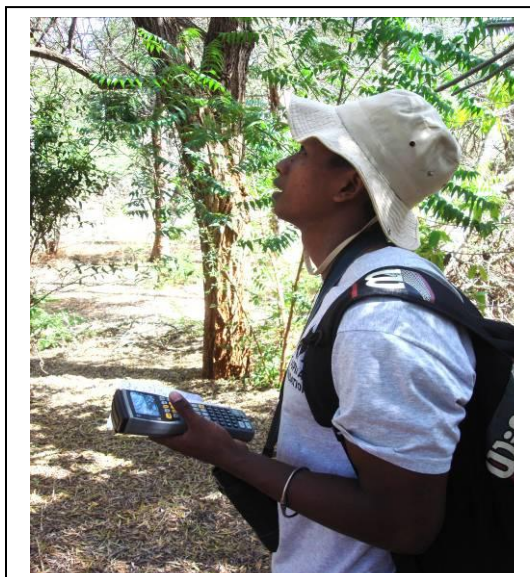


GUIDE FOR FIELD ASSISTANTS AT BERENTY RESERVE

By Fetraharimalala RANDRIATSARA

The following instructions are for Malagasy students who want to work at as field assistants.



Working as a field assistant with a Malagasy or a foreigner is not a difficult task and it's a nice job if you have a passion for nature, especially toward the lemurs. Berenty reserve is among the best places to watch lemurs, and observation is easier than in any other reserves in Madagascar. Many researchers from all over the world do their research at Berenty forest. Some of them work alone using their own experience. Others, like students, do it in teams or need some assistants' help in collecting data.

The author observing lemurs with a Psion Data recorder

Why be an assistant?

In Primatology, as in other Sciences, research is almost always done in a team; sharing an idea or an experience with someone else is important because everyone needs someone's helping hands. Studying requires a lot of money. If you work as a field assistant, not only do you receive a wage but also you can increase your own experiences, which is really important. In addition to helping a foreign student, Malagasy students may improve their English and may receive some help when they want to follow their own desire to study abroad, or even when they will arrive in others' countries.

How to become a good assistant?

There is no school to give a lesson to learn if you want to be a good assistant!

Here is some advice of qualities a good assistant may have:

- Have at least a master degree
- Have a love of nature and a will to protect it
- Be patient and serious in the field
- Have a character of sharing good ideas and experience with someone else
- Be obedient and flexible

- Always have scientific ideas

What an assistant may receive

First and foremost the contract between the researcher(s) and the assistant should be clear before starting, during and at the end of the fieldwork. All Malagasy assistants want to have a good relationship with other researchers. They have to work together in the field, during the analysis and the discussion. During the publication, their name must figure at the end of the paper. When in the field, the field assistant has the right to transportation costs, hotel stays, food, equipment, and weekly or monthly wage.

About the wage, it depends on the project budget of each researcher. According to a researcher who worked recently at Berenty and others from the reserve, the normal monthly wage for the field assistant is roughly 250 Euro including transportation costs and cost of food.

In addition to working with someone else, the field assistant usually wants to do their own research, eventually with assistants of their own. In that case, I encourage the Malagasy student to work in the field as an assistant. If you want to be a good researcher you have to begin your work as field assistant.



Working at school as in the forest

The last but not the least

Don't forget in your mind that doing research at Berenty reserve is not only focused on tracking lemurs but considering all of life. You can conduct research, or teach at the village or at a school to inspire the local people to appreciate their local biodiversity. And, if you have the possibility, it is better to give some help to the people so that they can resolve their problems in life and protect the reserve at the same time.

For further information, please contact me in my address below

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