

Modelling Primate Crop-Raiding - Perceptions of Risk, Actual Risk and the Implications for Conservation

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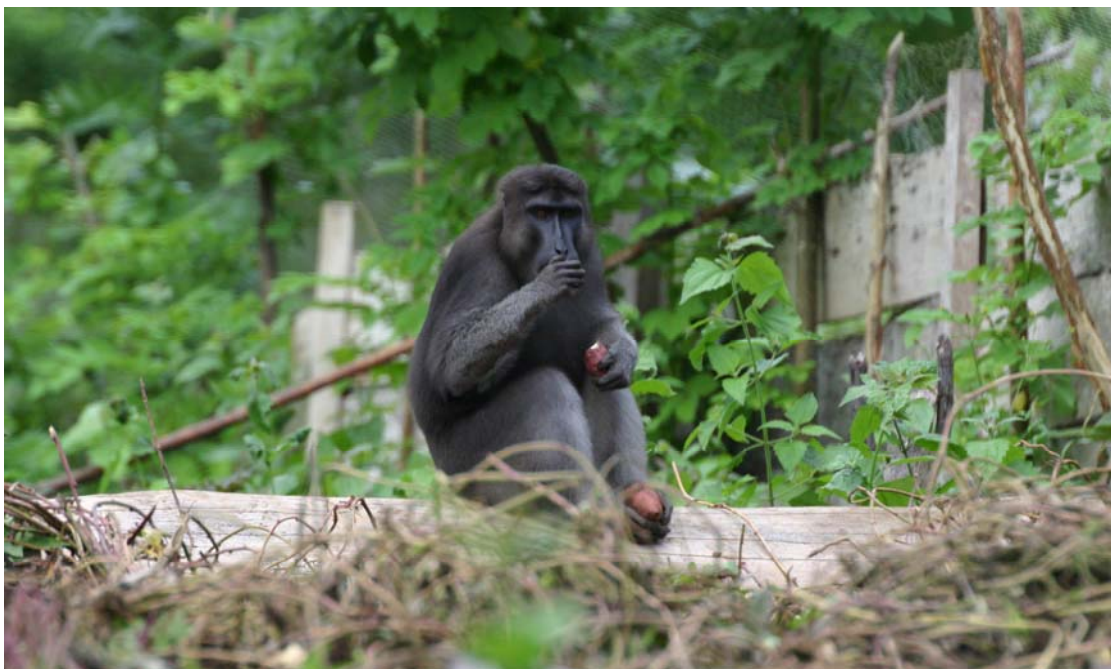
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Abstract

This project investigated the social, cultural and environmental context of crop-raiding to understand both the actual risk of primate crop-raiding and farmers' perceptions, and tolerance, of it. It worked with ten villages bordering the Lambusango and North Buton Reserves, Buton, South-east Sulawesi to simultaneously examine perceptions of crop-loss to primates and actual crop-damage levels by wildlife. Over 380 farms were monitored weekly and a predictive model of the spatial and temporal nature of primate crop-raiding is being developed to assist with devising mitigation strategies.

Semi-structured interviews with between 25 and 45 farmers in each village, focus groups (four per village) and participant observation were used to examine perceptions of household and individual risk of crop-damage by wildlife, factors shaping these perceptions and their influence on coping strategies. This project also explored both actual and perceived effectiveness of buffer crops (specifically ginger) as a mitigation strategy whilst also evaluating other potential solutions. Additionally this project evaluated a conservation management program by comparing perceptions of local people to wildlife and conservation around the two wildlife reserves.



Preliminary results suggest that close proximity of farm to forest borders and type of crop grown (sweet potato, maize and banana) increase the likelihood of raiding by monkeys (*Macaca ochreata brunnescens*) and pigs (*Sus celebensis* and *Sus scrofa*). Crop-raiding by wildlife is significant, yet farmers were generally more concerned about crop disease, insects and natural factors (flooding) than large vertebrate damage. Monkeys were a significant pest but high levels of tolerance were observed amongst local farmers. Conservation knowledge was much lower in villages around the North Buton Reserve than those surrounding the Lambusango Reserve. Despite this, perceptions towards conservation and the reserves are more positive around the North Buton Reserve. Perceptions around the Lambusango Reserve are more negative, even though there is a conservation management program in place. There was early abandonment of the ginger growing scheme by many farmers due to lack of a market for the ginger (owing to cheap, imported ginger from India) and lack of training in how to farm it. This has led to dissatisfaction amongst those farmers initially recruited into the scheme. Further in depth data analysis will explore these issues in greater detail and support recommendations for effective mitigation strategies.