

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION, FEEDING ECOLOGY, AND REPRODUCTIVE STRATEGY OF RUFFED LEMURS, VARECIA VARIEGATA. Frances J. White, Department of Biological Anthropology & Anatomy, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.

Ruffed lemurs, Varecia variegata variegata, observed at Ranomafana National Park, Madagascar, were monogamous and defended a territory of 197 hectares. As specialized frugivores, Varecia fed selectively in large fruit trees that were scarce and widely scattered within their habitat. The long day ranges needed to maintain and use this territory may make the non-shareable parental investment of infant-carrying uneconomical. When infants are left in nests and guarded (a shareable parental investment), more infants can be produced. This may explain why Varecia has litters that are left in nests. Prevention of dispersal, as in enclosures at Duke University Primate Center, can result daughters initially remaining to breed (unsuccessfully) within the group, although daughters evict mothers once breeding becomes successful.