

So near and yet so far: territorial pairs but low cohesion between pair partners in a nocturnal lemur, *Phaner furcifer*.

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So near and yet so far: territorial pairs but low cohesion between pair partners in a nocturnal lemur, *Phaner furcifer*

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Abstract

Among pair-living species, which represent a simple form of gregariousness, the degree of cohesion appears to be highly variable, but the mechanisms responsible for the maintenance of cohesiveness have been poorly studied. We present data from long-term behavioural observations of eight pairs of fork-marked lemurs, including year-round data on their sleeping site use and spatial data from simultaneous focal follows of both pair partners, that characterize its social organization as "dispersed pairs"TM. Although pairs were stable over several years, territories of pair partners overlapped almost perfectly and interactions between them were frequent, the cohesiveness of pairs was extremely low. High rates of conflict relative to frequencies of affiliative interactions indicated that avoidance of the pair partner is the key mechanism responsible for the

observed pattern of space use. The repeated use of the same predictable food resources during the night, frequent conflicts over food and patterns of vocal communication imply that avoidance of direct feeding competition, together with incomplete knowledge about the pair partner's position, lead to the observed low cohesiveness. The freedom to forage solitarily and the associated lack of information about the pair partner's position found in fork-marked lemurs are in contrast to most group-living species and qualify dispersed pairs as a focus for future studies of models on animal movement decisions. *Copyright 2003 The Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.*



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