



Not for those with weak stomachs, Mama JJ's "condition." This was when we radio collared her.



In happier times, Mama JJ in a ball of cuteness, 2006.

We had a female red-ruffed lemur who birthed 4 infants last year. When we first saw her, we could not believe she was the sole mother or father—at first I thought she was a he because she had a prolapsed birth canal that looked like a male part. My guides assured me that that particular male part is normally not visible even with binoculars. We jokingly named the group Janga Janga because we thought the one male had two females in order to have 4 infants. It apparently means a man with many women; I am not sure if the name applies also to women who have many men or if it has negative connotations like it's a horribly offensive term. The name stuck despite the fact it's incorrect and makes people laugh every time I say it. Mama Janga Janga had the 4 infants herself and ran around the forest with her birth canal exposed and waiting to get infected. She managed to stay alive until at least January 2007. When I returned to Ambatoladaima this August, I pulled out the receivers to find the radio collared individuals from last year. We found everyone except Janga Janga. Her signal was much slower than others, and I remembered I had the radio collars programmed to emit a slower signal when the animal is not moving. We searched one rainy day and could not find her or her collar. A week later two guides came across her remains, including the radio collar, on the forest floor in an area far from where we ever saw her range in 2006 and early 2007. We had a few untestable hypotheses as to how she ended up so far from "home." I can be really good at creating untestable hypotheses as my committee will attest to.



This is how we found her.



The ancestral tomb/place of birth hypothesis:

Janga Janga returned to the site of her mother's and grandmother's site of death. Much like Malagasy, people are buried near their ancestors in tombs. This hypothesis was volunteered by Paul, one of my guides. Likewise he suggested this was where she was born.

The Predator hypothesis

Janga Janga was dragged to this site by the predator that either killed her or found dead (or just weak and ill from the impending infection) elsewhere in the forest. Her legs and arms were not included with her spine, shoulders, skull, and radio collar. So maybe those parts got et, bones and all, by the predator. This hypothesis was offered by Claire.

Change of range, infection got to her

Janga Janga ranges many places depending on the time of year and distribution of food, she happened to be in this far off place when she finally succumbed to the infection.

Alas, we will never know what happened to my little fluffy super-mother ball-of-cuteness that was Mama Janga Janga.*

Research this season is in memory of her. She was somewhat dominant over other females in the area. I saw her a couple times cuffing Mama Piste, another adult female with a radio collar. Cuffing is an adorable act of aggression, their little cupped hands slap another lemurs' face, but it never looks all that painful. It just looks humorous to us humans.



Sniff. Sniff. Flowers for Mama JJ.

* You will have to excuse my constant anthropomorphizing. I think people who study animals, especially primates, just can't help it! Rest assured, those scientific papers and the dissertation I write later will not have the same tone.