



The river between camp and Route National 5.

My camp is very nice this year. It is in the same site as last year, but we are not threatened by the rising river since it is not yet cyclone season. Camp sits on the other side of a river from Route National 5. This is a major highway but still a footpath in this part of the country. I feel pretty secure in camp, I have a great guardian and cook who are always there. But one day in early August we had to take measures to prevent the “olo adalas”* in taking an interest in camp. It was after lunch on a day we were not with the lemurs all day. A man was staring at camp from Route 5. He crossed the river to ask for a light for his cigarette. Then he crossed back and continued to stare at camp poorly concealed behind some shrubs along the route. Finally the guides in camp yelled across the river asking what he wanted. He didn't reply just kept staring.



“No Trespassing”

We all stared back for like 5 minutes. Then he slowly walked away. Four of my henchmen-like guides crossed the river to follow. They chased him and when they caught up they told him to go away, he said he didn't want to go away. Then the crazy man went off the trail looking for a piece of wood to strike the guys with. But then one of the guys slapped the crazy man, and he ran away. I didn't get to witness this. This is what was relayed to me. So, we decided to take the drastic measure of putting up a sign saying the Malagasy equivalent to

* Crazy people, probably I spelled this wrong.

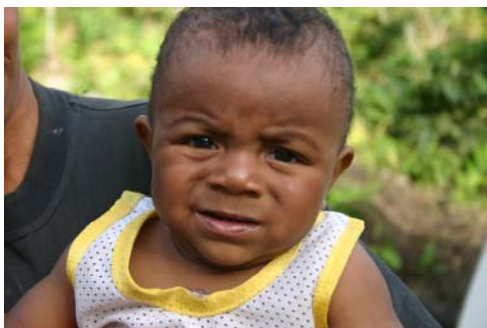
“No Trespassing” and the guardian built a bamboo gate at the two possible entrances to camp.

I started a precedent of giving clothing in exchange for cadeaux from people living near my research camp. Last year, it was mostly the wives of the guides who worked with me. But this year, the word has spread and women, mostly women, and their children come to my camp bearing gifts like greens, chickens, coffee, and large misshapen potatoes called “Ovy be.” At first, women would wait in camp all day while I was in the field. When I return at sundown, all I want to do is change out of my smelly field clothes and eat my dinner. Therefore, I set a rule that seems a bit Draconian. I would only accept gifts on Sundays, preferably Sunday morning before 11 AM. That was my day to relax, nap, enter data, wash clothes, etc. And the gift giving takes time, the posturing we must go through to show our mutual appreciation, the explanations that I am out of clothing to give in exchange, let me write your names, and after I return from Tana I will have a cadeau for you, too.

One Sunday afternoon a long line formed across the river from camp. The guardian was holding back a group of impatient-looking women because he wouldn't let them in camp. I had been napping and woke to see this. The guardian asked me if he should send them away to come back next Sunday. At first I said yes, because as some people know I can be rather grumpy after waking from a much-needed nap. Then I woke up a bit more realizing most of the women came from a village an hour away, and then I felt like some imperialistic fool asking my guardian to send “those people” away. Not the message I intend to send. So, we did our gift exchanges; most were happy because I had not yet run out of clothing. My mom had contributed some clothing especially for women. I had to shoo the men away while we had a special fitting ala Victoria's Secret. Some of the women ask for more than clothing, like empty oil bottles, toys for their babies, including the used tomato paste cans as toys. I refuse to give the tin cans to the kids because even adults still cut their fingers on them.



One man sporting his cadeaux in camp—3 long sleeved shirts, one t-shirt. He happens to be one of the local patriarchs. Patriarchs and matriarchs got a little more cadeaux when I first arrived in August.



By far one of the cutest man-faces in Madagascar!
(Term coined by my brother meaning small children who have the expressions of old men.)

Speaking of cutting hands, no one in the region seems to have (or remember ever receiving) a tetanus shot. Thus, Claire's mission aside from helping study the lemurs is to improve basic first aid knowledge in the region. The cleaning and care of wounds I have happily passed on to Claire, who actually enjoys cleaning up 3-day old wounds on the verge of gangrene.