

***Saving Prolemur simus:*
Summary report 2012**



**The Aspinall Foundation – Madagascar Programme
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Saving *Prolemur simus* **The Aspinall Foundation Madagascar Programme**

The aim of the “Saving *Prolemur simus*” project is to ensure the long-term persistence of the critically endangered greater bamboo lemur *Prolemur simus*, one of the rarest primates in the world. To achieve this aim, the project has five objectives, which we will discuss in turn below. Further details can be found in the publications listed at the end of this report.

1. To play a key role in coordinating an urgent, collaborative response to the current crisis facing the greater bamboo lemur in the wild and in captivity

Our interactive [facebook webpage](#) grew rapidly in popularity during 2012, and in addition to targeted email lists helps facilitate communication between everyone interested in the conservation of *Prolemur simus*, and raise awareness of *Prolemur* conservation both nationally and internationally. We published one article in English in the international scientific journal *Oryx*, and several more in French in the IUCN Madagascar Specialist Group journal *Lemur News*. Three members of our team participated in the IUCN lemur red-listing and conservation planning workshop in Antananarivo in July 2012, when *P. simus* was recognised as probably the only lemur species showing a positive conservation trend in recent years, resulting it in being removed from the list of the 25 most endangered primates in the world for the first time in a decade. We facilitated and participated in several regional meetings and workshops concerning conservation in and around the Ankeniheny-Zahamena Corridor, ensuring *Prolemur* sites received priority attention. Our team of national primatologists collected a further 68 *Prolemur* faecal samples during 2012, to add to the 166 samples collected in 2011, for genetic analysis by a research team from Henry Dorly Zoo. The results of this analysis will give valuable insights into *Prolemur* taxonomy and population parameters, including levels of connectivity between sites and population viability estimates which will aid conservation-management decision-making concerning *Prolemur* sites.

2. To organise as a matter of urgency a rapid but extensive survey of greater bamboo lemur distribution and abundance in the wild

Following our successful collaborative surveys in 2009 and 2010, we have reduced our efforts to undertake distribution surveys since 2011, concentrating mainly on trying to establish the northern and southern limits of the species range. In the south of the range, we again partnered with WWF-Madagascar to survey the Midongy-Vondrozo Corridor, but as in 2010 and 2011, our team found feeding signs but failed to obtain direct sightings. We did however find feeding signs within the Midongy du Sud National Park, which represent a small southern extension to the species range. We also found indirect and unconfirmed evidence of the species continued existence in the Ankarana National Park in the far north of Madagascar, which if confirmed would represent a huge northern extension to the known current range of the species. We are therefore looking for funding of approximately 3,000 Euros to organise a second mission to this site, preferably during the first quarter of 2013. Another site worth surveying is the Mananara Nord National Park, from where there is an old, unconfirmed record of *P. simus* presence.

We continued our efforts to provide abundance data from the majority of the sites we discovered during previous years' distribution surveys. We located an extra *Prolemur* group at Vohibe at the confluence of the Mangoro and Nosivolo rivers, bringing the total now to

five groups at this site, comprising at least 27 individuals. Our main focus remains the Ankeniheny-Zahamena Corridor (CAZ), where we have now found eight groups within the main forest corridor containing approximately 70 individuals (including a new group at Sahanomana), another eight groups of approximately 60 individuals in secondary lowland bamboo thickets surrounding the Andriantantely forest fragment to the east of the corridor, and ten groups comprising at least 200 individuals at three isolated lowland sites to the south-east of the CAZ. Comprising approximately 330 individuals, these 26 groups in and around the CAZ therefore represent at least half the currently known population of *Prolemur simus*.

3. To ensure that all known sites within the remaining rainforest corridors that support greater bamboo lemurs are effectively managed for their conservation

4. To develop management mechanisms for all small, isolated populations in habitat fragments outside the main rainforest corridors, for their persistence and their potential role as sources for release stock for potential future translocation, reinforcement or reintroduction strategies

Considering these two objectives together, we are working with various local partner organisations to help the community associations responsible for the management of the sites we have discovered in and around the CAZ to ensure the long-term conservation of the sites in general, and of the *Prolemur* groups within them. We continue to fund nine teams of a total of 25 local community members to monitor the *Prolemur* groups, collect basic information on other endangered lemurs such as black-and-white ruffed lemur, diademed sifaka and indri, identify the anthropogenic pressures threatening the sites, and undertake immediate conservation measures such as the destruction of illegal lemur traps. The information collected by these teams is then passed on to the community associations and local forestry officials to facilitate improved conservation management.



In addition to funding and supervising the patrol teams at each site, we are working with the community associations (COBAs) to legalise their status and their management transfer agreements. Inside the CAZ corridor, we facilitated the creation of the Ala maitso COBA for the Ranomainty site in the Didy Commune, resulting in the signing of their management transfer contract in Nov 2012, and facilitated the renewal of the management contract for the Mamelontsoa COBA in the Morarano Commune, signed in

August 2012. For the sites around Andriantantely, we are working on the creation of the Soafaniry COBA at Ambinanifanasana, and the evaluation and renewal of the Dimbiazanjafy COBA at Lanonana. For the isolated sites to the south-east of CAZ, we facilitated the creation of the Ainga Vao COBA at Mangabe and their management transfer contract for the Ambalafary site, which was signed in April 2012, and are trying to officialise various COBAs for the Vohiposa site – however the process for Vohiposa is proving particularly challenging due to the complexity of the social context of this site.

Once the management transfer contracts are completed, our support of each COBA can become more regulated, with levels of support linked to conservation performance. We continue to try to improve environmental and conservation awareness at the sites through the organisation of several information and communication missions to local communities. Following the devastating Cyclone Giovanna in February 2012, thanks primarily to funding from Help Simus we were able to provide 440 corrugated iron sheets to help repair 15 schools damaged by the cyclone within villages surrounding our CAZ *Prolemur* sites.

Outside the CAZ, with funding from Help Simus we have begun the “Ramaimbangy project” for the conservation of the *Prolemur* population at the Vohibe site, through hiring a team of 6 community members to patrol the forest on a weekly basis, and of a team of local animators to continue the education and communication programme initiated since 2011. We also distributed a medicine against bilharzia, a disease very prevalent in the area. In the Midongy-Vondrozo corridor we funded extra patrol days for members of a WWF-supported community association, as an initial attempt at participatory monitoring of the *Prolemur* apparently occurring in their community forest. This was successful in that the local team undertook the monitoring over a period of several months, but they failed to get a good photo to finally confirm that the lemurs they were monitoring were indeed *Prolemur simus*. During our final mission to work with this team in December 2012, we collected some faecal samples that might be sufficient to confirm the presence of the species, so we await the genetic results.

There are several confirmed and unconfirmed sites currently not receiving any conservation actions specifically focussed on the species. Confirmed sites include several COBA-managed forests in the Didy commune at the north of the CAZ, so we recommend organising a preliminary 3-month population study of *P. simus* in these sites, including collection of faecal samples for population genetic studies, and the isolated lowland site of Mahalina, where we recommend the initiation of a small-scale community-based conservation project.

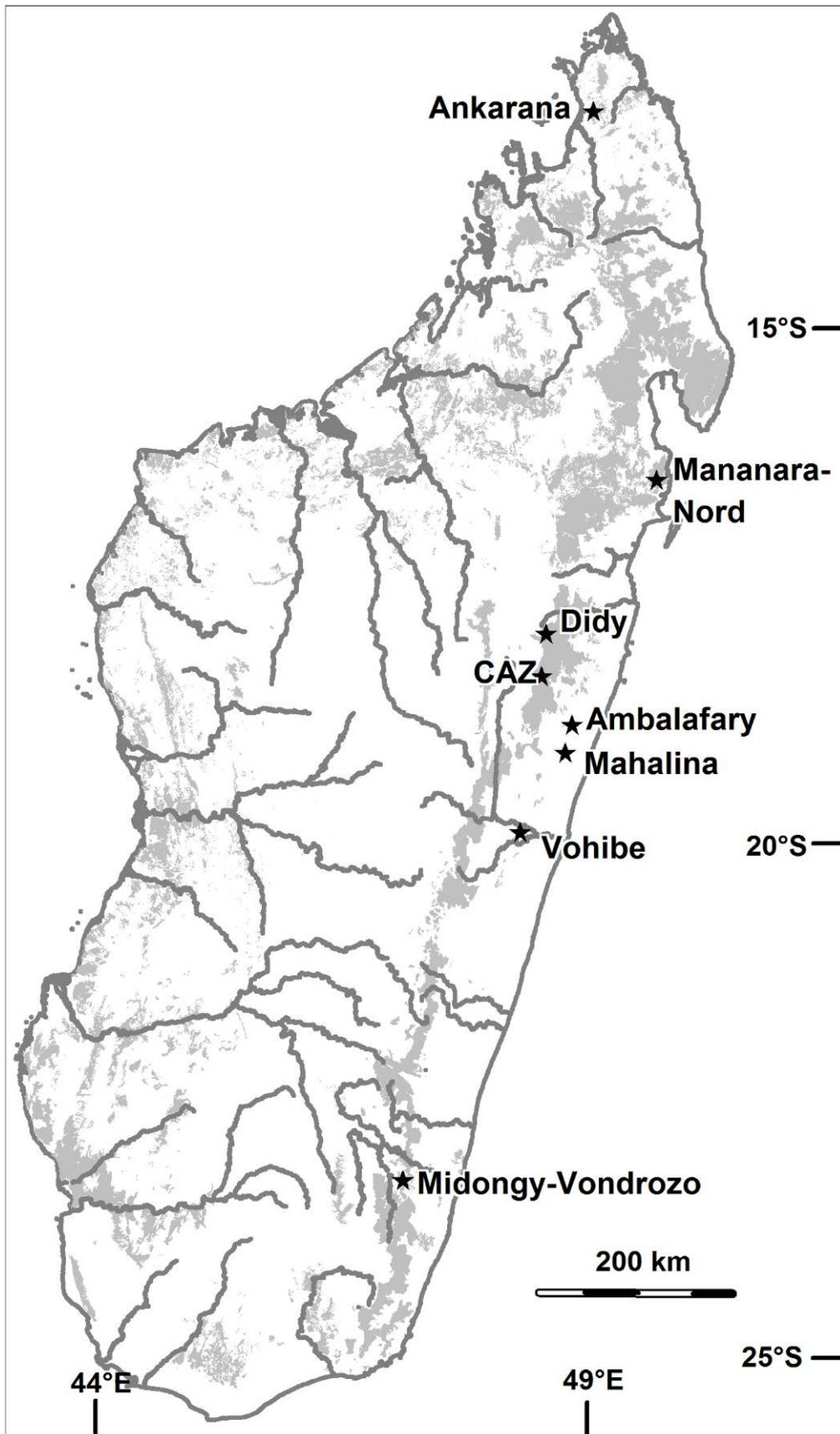
5. To ensure the survival of any greater bamboo lemur groups or individuals restricted to sites or habitats that can not be protected

We continue to try to protect all known *Prolemur* sites, although prioritisation may be necessary soon.

Funding opportunities for 2013

Based on the recommendations given above, the following is a non-exhaustive list of small-scale funding opportunities that can make a significant contribution to *Prolemur simus* conservation in Madagascar during 2013. The budgets quoted are in Euros.

	Budget 2013
Survey of Ankarana National Park for evidence of <i>P. simus</i> presence	3,000
Survey of Mananara Nord National Park for evidence of <i>P. simus</i> presence	3,000
Preliminary population study of <i>P. simus</i> in the Didy Commune of CAZ	3,500
Community-based monitoring of new group at Sahanomana in the CAZ	1,500
Community-based monitoring of sites in the Midongy-Vondrozo Corridor	4,000
Preliminary community-based conservation project for Mahalina site	4,000
Support of community-based management of Ambalafary site	3,000



Map of Madagascar showing approximate locations of sites mentioned in the text (stars), approximate forest cover (light grey), and major rivers (dark grey).

Publications and major reports

- Bonaventure, A., Lantovololona, F., Mihaminekena, T. H., Andrianandrasana, Z. A., Ravaloharimanitra, M., Ranaivosoa, P., Ratsimbazafy, J. & King, T. 2012. Conservation de *Prolemur simus* dans le site de basse altitude de Vohiposa, District de Brickaville. *Lemur News* 16: 15-20.
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- Rakotonirina, L.H.F., Rajaonson, A., Ratolojanahary, J.H., Missirli, J.M., Razafy Fara, L., Rahoijaona, Andriamanajaranirina, M. & King, T. 2011. Southern range extensions for the critically endangered black-and-white ruffed lemur *Varecia variegata* and greater bamboo lemur *Prolemur simus*. *Primate Conservation*, in press.
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Publications submitted or in preparation

- Andrianandrasana, Z.A., Rasolofoharivelo, T., Chamberlan, C., Ratsimbazafy, J. & King, T. Submitted. Etude préliminaire de *Prolemur simus* (« Ramaimbangy ») dans la forêt de basse altitude de Vohibe, bassin versant Nosivolo, et implications pour sa conservation. Lemur News
- Chamberlan, C., Ranaivosoa, L., Ravaloharimanitra, M., Randrianarimanana, H.L., Randriahaingo, H.N.T., Roullet, D. & King, T. Submitted. Distribution of school reconstruction materials following Cyclone Giovanna to local communities working to conserve greater bamboo lemurs in and around the Ankeniheny-Zahamena Corridor, eastern Madagascar. Lemur News
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- Ravaloharimanitra, M., Ranaivosoa, L., Mihaminekena, T.H., Chamberlan, C. & King, T. In prep. Conservation communautaire de *Prolemur simus* à Ambalafary, District de Brickaville, Madagascar. Lemur News