**MSc thesis research topic**

**“Handedness in six wild primates”**

Keywords:

Animal behaviour, communication, cognition, laterality language evolution, handedness, human uniqueness

Background:

As a species, humans have a preference to use their right hand for various manipulations, particularly also for complex tasks, such as writing. Neurologically, the brain areas that govern manual motor control are closely located to some of the areas that also govern spoken language production, which has led to coevolution hypotheses. Consequently, there is a large literature on handedness and laterality in primates (and other animals), without any consistent patterns, especially in great apes. However, some of this may be due to various complexities, such as the fact that previous studies have not quantified the degree of complexities of the manual tasks and the fact that wild primates regularly use one hand for support *before* carrying out a manipulation with the other and that they are often spatially constrained when trying to use their hands.

Research questions:

The goal of this study is to describe hand use by taking into account the above considerations in free-ranging primates in Budongo Forest, Uganda: chimpanzees, baboons, red-tail monkeys, blue monkeys, Guereza Colobus monkeys, and humans.

Data collection:

90 days of fieldwork (15 days per species) distributed over 6-7 months in Budongo Forest ([www.budongo.org](http://www.budongo.org)). Data are collected via focal animal sampling, supported by high-res video recordings. For chimpanzees and baboons, individuals can be followed without difficulties. For the remaining monkey species, observations and recordings have to be made at greater distances.

Time period:

Observation conditions are best during the dry season (beginning December to end of January). Data collection should start around July/August, depending on space.

Financial implications:

Field costs are in terms of station fees (GBP 350 per month), flight to EBB, visa and permits, vaccinations and antimalarial. Total field costs are around CHF 4,500. There are possibilities to apply for grant money to cover these expenses. All equipment will be supplied, including office space in Neuchatel for subsequent analysis.

Contact:

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