

Conférence publique – Lundi 3 octobre 2016 – 14h00
Salle E 206 - UFR LSHS
UNIVERSITE PARIS 13 Sorbonne Paris Cité

Some mongooses are more equal than others: causes and consequences of variation in early-life care in a cooperative mammal

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Cooperative breeding is a reproductive strategy where individuals look after young that are not their own. A typical feature of such systems is that not all individuals provide and receive the same amount of care. From the caregivers' point of view, kin selection theory predicts that animals should direct costly care where inclusive fitness gains are highest. Where relatedness within groups varies, the helpers may achieve this by directing care at closer relatives, yet evidence for such discrimination in vertebrates is equivocal. From the offspring point of view, variation in the early life care that they receive can have profound consequences, impacting growth, survival and life-history traits such as well as fitness and senescence.

We investigated patterns of cooperative care in banded mongooses, where communal litters are raised by adult 'escorts' who form exclusive caring relationships with individual pups. There was no evidence of adults preferentially caring for more related pups, but there was favouritism by sex, with female carers being more likely to tend to female pups, and male carers to male pups. These results probably reflect high costs of discrimination in this system, where pups may do better concealing their identity than revealing it. This sex-specific favouritism in turn has lifelong impacts on individual