

Primate research at Boabeng-Fiema, Ghana

Dr. Eva Wikberg's research focuses on animal behavior and molecular ecology in a conservation context. She is a principal investigator of the Boabeng-Fiema colobus monkey research project in Ghana. In this population, rapid habitat loss combined with increased protection from hunting have led to population compression and increased competition for access to food and mates. This may also lead to intensified sexual conflict between males and females, as new dominant males often kill unweaned infants sired by other males. The colobus monkeys have shown a remarkable degree of behavioral flexibility, including altering ranging patterns and activity budgets to gain better access to resources. Understanding different forms of behavioral flexibility and whether they are sufficient to cope with today's rapidly changing environments is a major focus of the current research program.

Since 2000, the research team has collected data on population trends and demography, behavior, plant phenology, and host and gut microbiome DNA. Students will have the opportunity to work with these data sets, and the following questions would be especially suitable for student projects:

- Are the increases in population density and competition associated with changes in activity budgets?
- Can individuals gain increased access to resources or decrease mortality risk by changing their patterns of social interactions?
- Can changes in study group demography or behaviors predict population dynamics and be used for population monitoring to improve chances of population persistence over time?

To learn more, send a message to evawikberg@gmail.com!