

Project Update: May 2022

The project was delayed by almost a year because of the COVID-19 situation. While waiting to be able to travel to the field, some changes were made to the data collection protocol after discussing with other researchers and conservation specialists working on the three study species. I was able to travel to the field at the end of January 2022 and started my project. However, 3 weeks in, a category 4 tropical storm was approaching the east coast of Madagascar, and the landfall was projected to be 75km from our study site, Kianjavato. My team and I were evacuated to a safer research station in Ranomafana National Park which is at a higher elevation and further from the coast. We couldn't travel back to our study site because of landslides that blocked the road until a week after the tropical storm. To our dismay, we found out that several of the forest fragments we were working in and the research station in Kianjavato were severely damaged by the storm.



Photos of the forest after the tropical storm

After an assessment we decided that it was no longer safe to work in Kianjavato until trails were cleared and we could resume of research activities. Upon permission from The Rufford Foundation we decided to move the project to Ranomafana National Park which sustained minimal damage after the storm, and which is also home to our three study species.

We travelled to the capital city and stayed there for 10 days where we bought material and supplies to start expeditions in Ranomafana National Park.

Since then, we have successfully established our project in the Ranomafana National Park where we are monitoring the three study species, and surveying changes in the availability of lemur food plants through botanical transects. The changes in data collection methodologies and setting up a new study site in Ranomafana changed our requirements in terms of material and human resources which substantially changed the initial budget and therefore the timeline of the project. We are hoping to continue the project for an extra month or two and will follow up with a final report.



Left to right: *Varecia variegata*, *Eulemur rufifrons* and *Eulemur rubriventer*.