

The Department of Anthropology Presents

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24 @ 3PM IN SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING 107 (SSB 107)

Becoming successful primates: The development of social competence in infant olive baboons

Among primates, olive baboons (*P. anubis*) are second only to humans in numbers and geographical distribution. They live in large groups structured by complex rank and kin relationships, which can be cooperative and affiliative as well as competitive and aggressive. These relationships affect every single aspect of a baboon's daily life, and developing the sophisticated social skills necessary to navigate them is a key requirement to becoming a 'successful' baboon. To understand the ontogeny of social competence in infant olive baboons, my research focused on the effects of maternal responsiveness and secondary attachments. I was also able to situate this process within the long-term ecological data available from the field site, the Uaso Ngiro Baboon Project (UNBP) in Laikipia, Kenya. In particular, I examined the effects on maternal behavior and infant development of the spread of an invasive plant food species, the prickly-pear cactus *Opuntia stricta*. In this talk, I will present the results of my research, as well as the results of two follow-up studies. The first one looked at infant coat-color transition as a marker of physiological development. The second examined grooming behavior in the same study subjects once they became juveniles, to investigate whether the differences in social competency I had observed in infancy persisted at a later life stage. I will also introduce several new collaborative projects that we will pursue over the next few years at the UNBP.



***Reception to follow immediately in SSB 269 Spiro Library**