



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

EMMA BLINKHORN

BA (University of Victoria, 2013)

**“A Cross-comparative Analysis of Meat Consumption in Omnivorous-
frugivorous Primates across Continents”**

Department of Anthropology

Thursday, April 21, 2016

1:00PM

Cornett Building

Room A319

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Lisa Gould, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Helen Kurki, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Cole Burton, Department of Biology, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Jon Willis, Department of Physics and Astronomy, UVic

Abstract

Primate dietary choices are subject to changing environmental conditions. Therefore, all primates must display varying degrees of behavioural plasticity and adaptability to ecological pressures and modify their diets in response to low food availability. Currently, primates worldwide are threatened by increasing deforestation and the removal of crucial food sources via anthropomorphic activity. Omnivorous-frugivorous primates in particular exhibit extreme degrees of behavioural and dietary plasticity in the wake of resource scarcity but generally do not include considerable portions of meat in their diets. Therefore, an increase in the amount of meat eaten (however small) could be an indicator of dietary stress due to habitat degradation. Considering the increasing fragmentation of primate habitats I investigated the relationship between primate meat consumption and food loss. The diets of a number of omni-frugivore primate species inhabiting different geographic regions, habitat types, and continents, were compared to determine variability in the percentage of meat consumption between each group and whether primate meat intake rose in conjunction with deforestation over time. Omni-frugivores in drier habitats or regions of marked seasonality consumed more meat than those found in wetter regions. There was no relationship between the protein content of the plants ingested and meat intake. The percentage of meat in the diets of omni-frugivores tended to increase with increasing habitat fragmentation between 1970-2014. The relationship between increasing meat consumption and deforestation could be an important variable in future conservation planning as well as primate population persistence and health.