**Incongruence between genetic and morphological diversity in Microcebus griseorufus of Beza Mahafaly**

Kellie L Heckman*1, Emilienne Rasoazanabary2, Erica Machlin, Laurie R Godfrey2 and Anne D Yoder3

Address: 1Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Yale University, P.O. Box 208106, 165 Prospect St., New Haven, CT 06511 USA, 2Department of Anthropology, 240 Hicks Way, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 USA and 3Departments of Biology and Biological Anthropology & Anatomy, Duke University, Box 90338, Durham, NC 27708 USA

Email: Kellie L Heckman* - kellie.heckman@yale.edu; Emilienne Rasoazanabary - rasmie@acad.umass.edu; Erica Machlin - erica.machlin@yale.edu; Laurie R Godfrey - lgodfrey@anthro.umass.edu; Anne D Yoder - anne.yoder@duke.edu

* Corresponding author

**Abstract**

**Background:** The past decade has seen a remarkable increase in the number of recognized mouse lemur species (genus *Microcebus*). As recently as 1994, only two species of mouse lemur were recognized according to the rules of zoological nomenclature. That number has now climbed to as many as fifteen proposed species. Indeed, increases in recognized species diversity have also characterized other nocturnal primates – galagos, sportive lemurs, and tarsiers. Presumably, the movement relates more to a previous lack of information than it does to any recent proclivity for taxonomic splitting. Due to their nocturnal habits, one can hypothesize that mouse lemurs will show only minimal variation in pelage coloration as such variation should be inconsequential for the purposes of mate and/or species recognition. Even so, current species descriptions for nocturnal strepsirrhines place a good deal of emphasis on relatively fine distinctions in pelage coloration.

**Results:** Here, we report results from a multi-year study of mouse lemur populations from Beza Mahafaly in southern Madagascar. On the basis of morphological and pelage variation, we initially hypothesized the presence of up to three species of mouse lemurs occurring sympatrically at this locality, one of which appeared to be undescribed. Genetic analysis reveals definitively, however, that all three color morphs belong to a single recognized species, *Microcebus griseorufus*. Indeed, in some cases, the three color morphs can be characterized by identical mitochondrial haplotypes.

**Conclusion:** Given these results, we conclude that investigators should always proceed with caution when using a single data source to identify novel species. A synthetic approach that combines morphological, genetic, geographic, and ecological data is most likely to reveal the true nature of species diversity.

**Background**

A remarkable amount of primate diversity remains undocumented due to cryptic variation among species. To accurately and thoroughly document this diversity, genetic and/or behavioral investigations, in addition to morphological analyses, are necessary. The phenomenon of cryptic diversity is being actively explored, particularly for nocturnal primates [1-11]. Mouse lemurs (genus *Microce-
bus) can potentially be said to represent a cryptic species radiation. They are the world’s smallest living primates, with brown pelage and average adult body size ranging from 30 to 72 grams [12]. Given that they are strictly nocturnal, theory [13-15] would predict that mouse lemurs will emphasize olfactory and auditory communication signals over visual signals, as has been demonstrated for other nocturnal primates [1,2], [5,6], [16-18]. An array of studies conducted on mouse lemurs within the past several years appears to confirm this prediction. For example, exposure to female urine can significantly increase testosterone levels in males, just as exposure to the urine of dominant males can suppress testosterone production in other males [19]. Similarly, acoustic studies have revealed remarkable subtleties in signaling, with two noteworthy results that have direct implications for potential speciation mechanisms. Acoustic signals in mouse lemurs appear to evolve extremely rapidly, with the greatest levels of acoustic separation occurring in the sexual advertisement calls of males [11,20,21]. Thus, it is not surprising that morphological features might be only subtly variable in mouse lemurs, making them difficult to distinguish with human eyes. As with other cryptic species radiations, empirical recognition of species boundaries will depend on the reciprocal illumination obtained from a comparison of genetic and morphological data. The results of these analyses will then form working hypotheses of species boundaries of mouse lemurs [9,10], [26,27].

In 1972, Martin [22] recognized only two species of mouse lemur (up from one): Microcebus murinus, a small-eared, gray form, and M. rufus, a large-eared, reddish-brown form. This taxonomy was standard until the last decade of the twentieth century (see, for example, [23]). In the mid-1990s beginning with the work of Schmid and Kappeler, two additional species were added to the roster on the basis of variation in morphometric and coat color characteristics [24,25]. Then, in a geographically-broad morphological study that considered cranial, dental, and postcranial traits, Rasoloarison et al. [12] differentiated seven species of mouse lemurs from western Madagascar alone. These species were also described as identifiable by subtle differences in pelage coloration as well as dental and other morphological characteristics. Rasoloarison et al. [12] suggested that, by lumping “red” and “gray” forms into only two species, earlier researchers had underestimated the species diversity within the genus.

Molecular phylogenetic methods provide an alternative, powerful tool for examining the relationships and potential species boundaries of mouse lemurs [9,10], [26,27]. These methods identify species as genetic clades that may be comprised of individuals even from disparate geographic locations. This approach also provides the additional benefit of potentially identifying specimens of unknown origins, or of elucidating species identity by examining specimen positions on phylogenetic trees. This strategy was previously used to classify mouse lemur specimens collected in the Berenty Private Reserve (in southeastern Madagascar) from two forest types [10]. The resulting phylogenetic tree demonstrated that the study specimens grouped into two mouse lemur species clades, identifying a single individual as M. murinus and multiple individuals as M. griseorufus. Thus, two species of mouse lemur were identified as inhabiting the region of the Berenty Private Reserve. These two species exhibited microhabitat separation at Berenty: individuals identified as M. griseorufus were captured in the spiny forest, while the single individual captured in the gallery forest was determined to be M. murinus. As such, microhabitat separation of the two species at Berenty seemed evident, and concordant with the observation that M. murinus inhabits a lusher forest bordering a river at Kirindy, while M. griseorufus was known from drier forests at Beza Mahafaly.

We used a similar approach to classify wild-caught mouse lemur individuals from Beza Mahafaly, a Special Reserve in southwestern Madagascar composed of two disparately sized, noncontiguous parcels separated by several kilometers. We captured mouse lemurs at three locations (all within a radius of about 7 km), including the dry forest at Ihazoara, but also two locations within the Reserve proper – a gallery forest (Parcel 1) bordering the Sakamena River, and a spiny forest (Parcel 2) dominated by succulent vegetation, located further from the Sakamena River [28] (Figure 1). The dry forest at Ihazoara is intermediate in vegetation characteristics between that of the spiny and gallery forests, but more similar to the spiny forest.

Previous researchers had inferred the presence of M. murinus at Beza Mahafaly [23,29,30], but no one had actually studied them in this region until Goodman [31,32] collected osteological specimens from owl pellets outside the reserve, and found them to contain large numbers of jaws and postcranial bones of mouse lemurs. Rasoloarison et al. [12] identified all but one of the jaws as belonging to M. griseorufus; the outlier appeared to be M. murinus. Additionally, six mouse lemurs captured by Rasoloarison at Ihazoara were all identified as M. griseorufus [12].

Rasozanabary [28] began a long-term program of intensive monitoring of mouse lemurs at Beza Mahafaly in 2003, and individuals captured and released in 2003 for this behavioral study are the subjects of the molecular phylogenetic analysis presented herein. Most interesting was her discovery in 2003 of individuals of differing pelage coloration. The majority of captured individuals shared the “typical” M. griseorufus pattern, consisting of a
Map of the Beza Mahafaly region and sampling locations

Figure 1
Map of the Beza Mahafaly region and sampling locations. P1 and P2 indicate the locations of the two parcels that belong to the reserve. The Ihazoara River is a tributary to the Sakamena River, which in turn flows into the Onilahy River to the north. The Ihazoara dry forest surrounds the village of Ihazoara. Locations of additional villages within a radius of 7 km from the reserve are also shown. For scale, the distance across P1 (east to west) is 1.25 km.
red-brown tail, shades of gray and brown on the back, a red-brown stripe of varying intensity along the dorsal midline, white underside, white stripe between the eyes, and reddish-brown markings above the eyes, converging in an apex (the "reversed V") on an otherwise gray cap. However, six individuals, all captured in the spiny forest, resembled more strongly the pattern typical of *M. murinus* in the region of Kirindy (red-brown tail, gray back lacking a dorsal midline stripe, cream underside, and no facial markings or reverse V on the cap). Moreover, two individuals (one in the gallery forest and one in the spiny forest) had a unique appearance (red-brown tail, red-brown back lacking a dorsal midline stripe, cream underside, red-brown face and cap but with a creamy white stripe between the eyes) (see figure 2).

Rasoazanabary conducted additional captures and focal individual follows of mouse lemurs in the three forest habitats at Beza Mahafaly during the years 2004 and 2005 (for a cumulative total, with 2003, of 14 months). About 17% (i.e., 15) of the individuals captured in 2003 were recaptured in 2004, 2005, or both. In all, 196 individuals were captured and marked during the 14-month sampling period. Of these, 13 (about 7%) showed *murinus*-like coloration, 165 (about 84%) showed typical *griseorufus* coloration, and 18 (about 9%) showed the "all-red" coloration.

The objective of the present study is to use molecular phylogenetic analysis to determine the placement of individuals of different pelage coloration within the larger mouse lemur phylogeny, and thus to investigate species identity using genetic evidence. Our *a priori* hypothesis was that individuals that displayed a *Microcebus murinus*-like coat coloration would fall into the *M. murinus* clade and *M. griseorufus*-like individuals into the *M. griseorufus* clade. We also hypothesized that the "all-red" individuals would form a novel clade in the *Microcebus* tree. In addition to examining the broader phylogenetic relationships, we employed molecular techniques to examine the relationships among individuals at the three forests, and thus to test whether geography has played a significant role in the generation of intraspecific variation. The genetic and morphological data were tested for structure with respect to three sampling locations in the Beza Mahafaly region. As the three sites are ecologically and geographically distinct (two located within the reserve and one outside, and on the opposite side of the Sakamena River), we aimed to determine whether the river and fields separating them, or the different microhabitats they represent, are potential barriers to gene flow.

**Results**

We examined the relationships of seventy specimens from Beza Mahafaly, in addition to six samples of *M. griseorufus* previously obtained from Ihazoara and eleven samples of *M. griseorufus* from the Berenty Reserve. From the 70 cytochrome b sequences produced in this study, 44 haplotypes were found. Included in the analysis were DNA sequence data of the 70 individuals sampled from Beza Mahafaly, in addition to thirty-eight published sequences of *Microcebus*, representing seven recognized species (Table 1) and two species of dwarf lemurs (*Cheirogaleus major* and *Cheirogaleus medius*) from the same taxonomic family, Cheirogaleidae.

Phylogenetic analyses revealed that all Beza Mahafaly individuals collected for this study were clearly nested within a *Microcebus griseorufus* clade, composed of individuals from both the Beza Mahafaly and Berenty regions, regardless of coat color or sampling location within Beza Mahafaly (Figure 3). In addition, individuals that displayed murinus-like or unique pelage patterns shared a haplotype with individuals bearing the more common griseorufus form. The specimens from Berenty formed a distinct clade nested within the greater *M. griseorufus* clade.

We examined the *M. griseorufus* sequences for geographic structuring of haplotypes from the two collection sites, Beza Mahafaly and Berenty. The AMOVA revealed strong genetic structure separating individuals from Beza Mahafaly from individuals from Berenty (θst = 0.3552). MIGRATE analyses consistently yielded the highest population size in Parcel 2 within the reserve, the spiny habitat (0.024); while Parcel 1, the gallery forest, had the smallest (0.0006; Ihazoara: 0.004). This result is consistent with the density patterns observed in the field. Migration rate analyses revealed that most *M. griseorufus* movement was

![Figure 2](image_url)

**Figure 2**

Two morphotypes collected at Beza Mahafaly. On the left is 0659-D2FC (the "all-red" variant), and on the right is 0659-C682 (with "typical" *M. griseorufus* coloration). Both of these individuals were found in the gallery forest. Photo by L.R. Godfrey.
Phylogenetic tree of *Microcebus* derived from cytochrome b sequences. Asterisks along branches indicate posterior probabilities greater than 95%. *Microcebus* sequences generated during the course of this study are in red. Gray arrows are indicative of haplotypes from individuals with the all-red variant. Black arrows are indicative of haplotypes from individuals with the *murinus*-type variant.
leading into the spiny habitat from the other two populations, though gene flow was bidirectional among pairwise combinations of all three locations.

The haplotype network (Figure 4) visually demonstrates the distribution of the atypical *M. griseorufus* morphotypes. These morphotypes share common cytochrome *b* haplotypes with individuals of typical coat coloration. Also, there are common haplotypes that are shared between multiple sampling sites. However, haplotypes that show greater divergence from the common haplotypes, five or more missing haplotypes connecting two haplotypes, are more often from the spiny forest (5 occurrences) or from Ihazoara (2 occurrences), compared to the gallery forest (no occurrences).

Chi-square tests of the differences in distributions of pelage types across the three forests fail to reveal significant differences (Table 2, 3, 4); instead, the distributions are remarkably similar in all three. However, discriminant function analysis shows significant morphometric differences between populations in the three forests. Only the first canonical function (with a Wilks’ Lambda of .73 and a chi-square of 30.22, df = 12) is statistically significant (*p* = .003). This function accounts for 83.3% of the variance, and separates individuals from the gallery forest (with positive scores) from those in the spiny forest (with negative scores). There is considerable overlap of scores of individuals from each forest type, with individuals from Ihazoara intermediate and most likely to be classified as coming from one of the other sites. The post hoc classification success for all individuals is 55.3%, with 69.8% of individuals from the spiny forest, 50% of individuals from the gallery forest, and only 40% of individuals from Ihazoara correctly classified. The structure matrix, when considered in conjunction with the centroid scores of individuals from each of the three forests (Table 5), reveals that individuals from the spiny forest tend to have shorter skulls, ears, and bodies than individuals at either of the two other sites, but especially the gallery forest. Essentially, individuals from the spiny forest are smaller in body size than those from other forests. ANOVA confirms that these differences are statistically significant (Table 6), even at a univariate level. The three additional variables (tail length, bizygomatic breadth, and canine height) are poorly correlated with scores on this axis, and two (bizygomatic breadth and canine height) do not vary significantly by site.

**Discussion**

The results of molecular phylogenetic analyses of cytochrome *b* mtDNA sequences fail to support our initial hypothesis that mouse lemurs collected at Beza Mahafaly with *murinus*-like or unique pelage characteristics are either *M. murinus* or a novel species. All individuals form a single clade with individuals previously classified as *M. griseorufus*. Therefore, we believe that all seventy individuals sequenced should be classified as *M. griseorufus*. *M. griseorufus* has significantly diverged from its sister species, *M. murinus*, with both species forming distinct clades with significant posterior probability (>95%). The mouse lemurs with divergent coat characteristics were included in the *M. griseorufus* clade, as they shared identical mtDNA haplotypes with individuals displaying the more typical *M. griseorufus* morphotype. The complex color patterns are independent of habitat type as confirmed by chi-square tests (Table 2, 3, 4); they are also uncorrelated with genetic distance, as suggested by the distribution of haplotypes in the network (Figure 4).

**Table 2: Pearson’s chi-square tests of pelage differences by habitat: dorsal fur (Chi-square = .64, df = 4, *p* = .96, NS)**

| Habitat   | Dorsal fur color | Gallery | Ihazoara | Spiny | Total |
|-----------|------------------|---------|----------|-------|-------|
| Grey      | 3                | 3       | 7        | 13    |
| Grey-Brown| 46               | 45      | 74       | 165   |
| Red       | 4                | 5       | 9        | 18    |
| Total     | 53               | 53      | 90       | 196   |
It is instructive to consider the relative importance of visual, auditory, and olfactory signals in *M. griseorufus* social communication, and how variation in pelage coloration is likely to be perceived. Like other mouse lemurs, *Microcebus griseorufus* are nocturnal, solitary foragers with a dispersed social system. Encounters among individuals at Beza Mahafaly are common (indeed, while foraging, two mouse lemurs may occupy a single tree), but rarely are individuals in physical contact while active. As in other mouse lemurs, audition and olfaction are critical to social signaling. For example, *Microcebus murinus* has been shown in captivity to display group-specific vocalization patterns [21], as have male *M. ravelobensis* in neighboring demes during the breeding season [20]. In addition, wild *M. ravelobensis* were shown to regulate inter- and intra-group spatial distributions using olfactory and acoustic signals [35]. In this species, individuals use different acoustic signals when sleeping groups disperse at sunset as opposed to when they gather at sunrise. These acoustic calls were found to be specific to each social group [35]. Zimmermann et al. [11] have shown that *M. murinus* can be distinguished from *M. rufus* using vocal fingerprinting. Olfactory and auditory cues have not been studied in detail in *M. griseorufus*. Nevertheless, Rasoazanabary has observed the use of trill vocalizations to attract mates, and vocalizations can be heard during or just prior to agonistic encounters. Urine washing is common, and individuals have strong odors that are detectable even by human observers. Olfaction and audition are almost certainly more important than vision in social encounters.

**Table 3: Pearson’s chi-square tests of pelage differences by habitat: reversed V (Chi-square = .84, df = 2, p = .66, NS)**

| Presence of reversed "V" | Habitat  |
|--------------------------|----------|
|                          | Gallery  | Ihazoara | Spiny | Total |
| Absent or indistinct     | 7        | 7        | 12    | 26    |
| Distinct                 | 46       | 46       | 78    | 170   |
| Total                    | 53       | 53       | 90    | 196   |

This is not to imply that vision is unimportant to mouse lemurs. Reproduction is photoperiod controlled, as is seasonal torpor [36-38]. Indeed, photoperiod appears to have an effect on life span in mouse lemurs [39]. On a daily basis, light intensity helps to regulate activity levels [40]; mouse lemurs do not emerge from their nests to forage until light levels are sufficiently low. Facial patterns (light and dark areas) may contribute to species or individual recognition [41]. As in almost all other strepsirhines, mouse lemurs possess a tapetum lucidum to increase their sensitivity to low light intensity.

However, vision in mouse lemurs is dominated by rods (photoreceptor cells with high sensitivity to very low levels of illumination, and with a pigment showing maximum sensitivity to light in the green part of the spectrum) and is thus largely scotopic. This contrasts with primates that have photopic vision (dominated by cones, which are sensitive to varying light wavelengths, depending on pigment type). Cones are not active at low light levels, and rods have a restricted range of wavelength sensitivity, so vision may be expected to be achromatic for all strictly-nocturnal primates [42]. Furthermore, the density ratio of cones to rods is likely to be low in *M. griseorufus*. Dkhissi-Benyahya et al. [43] report a peak rod density of 850,000 rods/mm² and a peak cone density of 7,500 to 8,000 cones/mm² in *M. murinus*. Less than 0.2% of the cone population is represented by short wavelength-sensitive (SWS), as opposed to medium to long wavelength-sensitive (MWS), cells. Whereas *M. murinus* do possess a variety of cone types, their density ratio of cones to rods is very low, and SWS cones are irregularly distributed [43]. The irregular distribution and very low number of SWS cones preclude an important role for color vision, even at dusk or dawn [44]. In summary, the pelage color variation that is perceptible to humans is likely to be invisible to mouse lemurs.

Our genetic results demonstrate that coat coloration is not diagnostic of species differentiation at Beza Mahafaly. Indeed, pelage color variation may be problematic as an
indicator of species boundaries for nocturnal primates in general. Why so much intraspecific variation in mouse lemur pelage coloration exists at Beza Mahafaly is unknown. In order to further investigate this phenomenon, we need more systematic data on the degree of coat color variation in populations of mouse lemurs in different geographic regions. We note that at Beza Mahafaly the three pelage types described here are not always discrete. Some individuals show combinations that can be considered intermediate between these types (e.g., gray dorsal fur with no brown fringe or highlights, but with a somewhat distinct dorsal stripe and reversed V).

With the molecular analysis, we determined that there is reciprocal gene flow among the three sampling sites within Beza Mahafaly. The lack of genetic structure and prevalence of dispersal between the parcels in the reserve and Ihazoara is noteworthy given our sampling of individuals on both sides of the Sakamena River, and in habitats separated today by other apparent barriers, such as cleared fields. Multiple studies have recently implicated rivers as important barriers to gene flow in lemur species [27,45,46]. Pastorini and colleagues [46] have determined that the Tsiribihina and Betsiboka Rivers in western and northwestern Madagascar, respectively, greatly hinder gene flow among species in the lemur genera Eulemur, Propithecus, Lepilemur, and possibly Microcebus. It is evident that the Sakamena River fails to do the same for mouse lemurs at Beza Mahafaly. However, the Betsiboka and Tsiribihina Rivers are far more formidable year-round than is the Sakamena and the even-smaller Ihazoara River. The Sakamena River is a tributary to the Onilahy River (to the north, more comparable to the Betsiboka or the Tsiribihina Rivers in size), and the Ihazoara is a much narrower tributary feeding into the Sakamena. The Sakamena and Ihazoara Rivers are dry for eight months every year, and the water is shallow even during the wettest months. Floating vegetation (following a cyclone) may occasionally provide pathways for mouse lemurs, allowing them to cross these narrow rivers, as anecdotal evidence suggests. Moreover, the distribution of forests in the region of Beza Mahafaly prior to the arrival of humans in the region over 2000 years ago [46] is not known. Our genetic data confirm that dispersal is occurring despite the separation of forests by potentially inhospitable space, and regardless of dispersal mechanism. This information is important if we are to construct and test hypotheses regarding dispersal mechanisms and determine the connectivity among forest fragments.

Whatever the mechanisms for geographic dispersal, it is clear that, at Beza Mahafaly, *M. griseorufus* is not limited to spiny-forest habitats, though dispersal patterns may indicate a preference. In contrast to the situation at Berenty where *M. griseorufus* has been described to occupy the spiny forest and *M. murinus* the gallery forest [10], *M. griseorufus* at Beza Mahafaly occupy gallery forests, dry forests, and spiny forests. How this species adapts to the very different microhabitats is the subject of the ongoing behavioral study at Beza Mahafaly by Rasoazanabary. Finally, it is apparent that, despite a lack of genetic structure of populations of mouse lemurs across the microhabitats at Beza Mahafaly, individuals from the spiny forest do differ slightly (but statistically significantly) from individuals in the gallery forest in such features as body length, ear length, and skull length. The developmental basis of this variation will also require further analysis. It is clear, however, that both habitats play an important role in the maintenance and possibly the development of diversity in this species and both should be a priority in future conservation efforts in this region.

**Conclusion**

Using a combination of phylogenetics and population genetic methods, we were able to determine that all mouse lemur individuals sampled at Beza Mahafaly belong to the species *M. griseorufus*, regardless of pelage characteristics. Three pelage-color variants exist in all three forests, in roughly similar proportions. This evidence supports the hypothesis that non-visual cues are paramount in social interactions of individual mouse lemurs, and that, to the extent that vision is important, it does not depend on color discrimination. We also determined that mouse lemurs from ecologically distinct sampling locations display no genetic structuring.

While we are confident in the results produced in this study, it is limited as only a single mtDNA gene was used.
to make inferences. Therefore, we recommend that further work be performed to confirm the results and conclusions made in this study, primarily through the inclusion of nuclear genetic markers.

**Methods**

**Field Methods**

Between April 1 and August 15, 2003, 120 Sherman live traps were set at intervals of 25 m in 7.5-hectare sampling areas in each of the three forests. Sampling was conducted for a total of 23 days in each forest (69 days combined). A total of 89 *Microcebus* were captured (45 in the spiny forest, 21 in the gallery forest, and 23 at Ihazoara). Pieces of banana were used to lure mouse lemurs into the traps. Captured individuals were weighed using a Pesola spring scale and temporarily anesthetized (0.01 ml or less of telazol, depending on body mass). Anesthetized individuals were measured, marked, and released after full recovery from the effects of the anesthesia. Each individual was scored for the presence or absence of a reversed V, the presence or absence of a dorsal median stripe, the color of the fur, and the color of the tail. Skull length, bizygomatic breadth, body length, tail length, ear length and canine height were recorded for each captured individual. Clips (ca. 2 mm²) were taken from each ear, and preserved in 70% ethanol.

**Laboratory methods**

Eighty ear tissue samples were delivered to Yale for molecular analysis; ten of these yielded no DNA or DNA of insufficient quality for analysis. Each had identifying field (or microchip) codes, but, to ensure blind analysis of the DNA, no information regarding location or pelage coloration accompanied the samples. Mitochondrial DNA was extracted using a QIAamp DNA Mini Kit (QIAGEN cat. no. 51306). The full cytochrome b gene region was amplified and sequenced for seventy of the sampled individuals using two pairs of primers L14724/H15261 and L15171/H15726. The PCR protocol was 5:00 min. of 95.0° followed by 35 cycles of 95.0° for 0:45 sec., 52.0° for 0:45 sec., 72.0° for 1:00 min., and a final extension of 72.0° for 5:00 min. PCR products were cleaned with a QIAquick PCR purification kit (QIAGEN cat. no. 28106). The cleaned products were cycle sequenced using a big dye-terminator sequencing kit (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA). The sequences were analyzed by capillary electrophoresis with an Applied Biosystems Prizm 3100 genetic analyzer. Cytochrome b sequences were aligned by eye in Sequencher and exported into MacClade [47] for further editing.

**Molecular Analysis**

Phylogenetic analysis of the molecular data was performed using Bayesian methods, implemented in Mr. Bayes v. 3.1.2 [48] using the model GTR+I+G. The model of evolution was selected with Modeltest v. 3.06 [49] and chosen based on the Akaike information criterion [50]. Identical haplotypes were represented only once in the analyzed phylogenetic dataset. Four Metropolis-coupled MCMC chains were run for ten million generations with trees sampled every 1000 generations. Tracer software 1.2 [51] was used to examine stationarity of log posteriors to estimate a burn, which was discarded.

An AMOVA [52] was performed in Arlequin v. 2.000 [53] to explore hierarchical patterns of population genetic structure between *M. griseorufus* at Beza Mahafaly and Berenty. AMOVA uses the frequencies of haplotypes and the number of mutations between them to test the significance of the variance components associated with various hierarchical levels of genetic structure (within populations, among populations within groups, and among groups) by means of non-parametric permutation methods [52]. Sampling sites were treated as individual populations to test for overall genetic subdivision. Uncorrected pair-wise distances were used to estimate the relative contribution of molecular variance of *M. griseorufus* at Beza Mahafaly and Berenty.

The program MIGRATE v.2.1.3 [54,55], was used to jointly estimate effective population sizes ($\Theta = N_e^*\mu$) and asymmetric dispersal rates ($M = m/mu$) between the three populations of *M. griseorufus* found in the Beza Mahafaly area. Parameters were estimated using the Bayesian search strategy [56], using default priors. MIGRATE runs were replicated to verify consistency, each replicate consisting of 10 short chains and four long chains that were heated (1.0, 2.3, 3.6, 9.0) for 10,000,000 steps excluding 10,000 steps as burn in.

A haplotype network was created using the software package TCS v. 1.21 [57]. The program collapses DNA sequences into haplotypes and calculates the frequencies of haplotypes in the sample. It then calculates an absolute distance matrix from which it estimates phylogenetic networks using a probability of parsimony, until the probability exceeds 0.95 [58].

**Analysis of morphological variation**

We used SPSS Version 14 for our analysis of coat and morphometric characteristics. Pearson chi-square was used to determine the significance of differences in pelage coloration at the three sites. Discriminant function analysis of morphometric variables (body length, tail length, skull length, bizygomatic breadth, ear length, and canine height) was used to determine whether populations at the gallery forest, spiny forest, and Ihazoara could be distinguished from one another on the basis of a set of morphometric variables collected over the entire three-year period. Only first captures (196 individuals) were entered
into these analyses, to avoid repeated sampling of the same individuals. Following Hoaglin and others [59], univariate analyses (ANOVA) were applied in an exploratory sense to determine the magnitude and direction of site differences for those variables found (using Discriminant Function Analysis) to distinguish mouse lemurs at the three sites.

**Authors' contributions**

KLH designed the molecular portion of the study, carried out the molecular work, sequence data manipulation, and phylogenetic and population genetic analyses, and drafted the manuscript. ER designed the morphological portion of the study, collected field data, morphometric data, and conducted morphometric analyses. EM conducted the work generating DNA sequences. LG aided in the design of the morphological portion of the study, conducted morphometric analyses, and contributed to the manuscript draft. ADY aided in the design of the molecular work. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

**Acknowledgements**

We are grateful for the help of numerous people who made the fieldwork possible, including the Department of Agronomy (Water and Forest section, Dr. Joelisa Ratsirarson) at the University of Antananarivo, Madagascar; ANGAP (Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées) in Antananarivo and Toliarana; the chiefs (Jeanicq Randriaranaiso and Raddison Ramanantsoiny), scientific director (Yousouf Jacky), various assistants (Edidy, Enafa, Elahavelo, and Rigobert), ANGAP agents (Eric, Ralaivao, Olivier, Mano, and Desire) and local guides (Edabo, Euida, and Sandratra) at Beza Mahafaly Special Reserve, as well as student assistants (Roger Ramarokoto from the U. Antananarivo, Madagascar and Ruth Steel from Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA). Darren Godfrey prepared Figure 1. The molecular work was supported by a NSF-CAREER award Biodiversity Leadership Award from the Bay & Paul Foundations to A.D.Y. The field research was supported by grants from the Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation, Primate Conservation, Inc., and the American Society of Primatologists. Morphometric analysis was supported by the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (to E. Rasoazanabary).

**References**

1. Ambrose L: Three acoustic forms of Allen’s galago (Primates; Galagonidae) in the Central African region. Primates 2003, 44:25-39.
2. Anderson MJ, Ambrose L, Bearder SK, Dixson AF, Pullen S: Intraspecific variation in the vocalizations and hand pad morphology of southern lesser bush babies (Galago moholi): A comparison with G. senegalensis. Int J Primatol 2000, 21:537-555.
3. Bearder SK, Ambrose L, Harcourt C, Honess P, Perkin A, Pinley E, Pullen S, Svoboda N: Species-typical patterns of infant contact, sleeping site use and social cohesion among nocturnal primates in Africa. Folia Primatol 2003, 74:337-354.
4. Groves CP: The genus Cheirogaleus: Unrecognized biodiversity in dwarf lemurs. Int J Primatol 2000, 21:943-962.
5. Niemitz C: Vocal communication of two tarsier species (Tarsius bancanus and Tarsius spectrum). Biology of Tarsiers 1994:129-141.
6. Nietsch A, Kopp M-L: Role of vocalization in species differentiation of Sulawesi tarsiers. Folia Primatol 1998, 69:371-378.
7. Ravaorimanana IB, Tiedemann R, Montagnon D, Rumpler Y: Molecular and cytogenetic evidence for cryptic speciation within a rarer endemic Malagasy lemur, the Northern Sportive Lemur (Lepilemur septentrionalis). Mol Phylogenet Evol 2004, 31:440-448.
8. Rumpler Y: What cytogenetic studies may tell us about species diversity and speciation of lemurs. Int J Primatol 2000, 21:865-881.
9. Yoder AD, Rasoloarison RM, Goodman SM, Irwin JA, Atsalis S, Ravosa MJ, Ganzhorn JU: Remarkable species diversity in Malagasy mouse lemurs (Primates, Microcebus). Proc Natl Acad Sci USA 2000, 97:11325-11330.
10. Yoder AD, Burns MM, Génin F: Molecular evidence of reproductive isolation in sympatric sibling species of mouse lemurs. Int J Primatol 2002, 23:1335-1343.
11. Zimmermann E, Vorobieva E, Wrogemann D, Hafen TG: Use of vocal fingerprinting for specific discrimination of gray (Microcebus murinus) and rufous mouse lemurs (Microcebus rufus). Int J Primatol 2000, 21:963-1019.
12. Rasoloarison RM, Goodman SM, Ganzhorn JU: Taxonomic revision of mouse lemurs (Microcebus) in the western portions of Madagascar. Int J Primatol 2000, 21:633-639.
13. Boughman JW: How sensory drive can promote speciation. TREE 2002, 17:571-576.
14. Endler JA: Signals, signal conditions, and the direction of evolution. Amer Nat 1992, 139:S125-S153.
15. Jones G: Acoustic signals and speciation: The roles of natural and sexual selection in the evolution of cryptic species. Adv Study Behav 1997, 26:317-354.
16. Zimmermann E: Differentiation of vocalizations in bushbabies (Galaginae) and the significance for assessing phylogenetic relationships. Z Zool Syst Evol Res 1990, 28:217-239.
17. Zimmermann E: Acoustic communication in nocturnal prosimians. In Creatures of the Dark Biology of Nocturnal Primates Edited by: Alterman L, Doyle GA, Izard K. New York: Plenum Press; 1995:311-331.
18. Zimmermann E, Bearder SK, Doyle GA, Andersson A: Variations in the vocal patterns of Senegal and South African lesser bushbabies and their implications for taxonomic relationships. Folia Primatol 1988, 51:87-105.
19. Perret M, Schilling A: Sexual responses to urinary chemosignals depend on photoperiod in a male primate. Physiol Behav 1995, 63:633-639.
20. Hafen T, Neveu H, Rumpler YL, Wilden I, Zimmermann E: Acoustically dimorphic advertisement calls separate morphologically and genetically homogenous populations of the grey mouse lemur (Microcebus murinus). Folia Primatol 1998, 69(Suppl 1):342-356.
21. Zimmermann E, Hafen TG: Colony specificity in a social call of mouse lemurs (Microcebus spp.). Am J Primatol 2001, 54:129-141.
22. Martin RD: A preliminary field study of the lesser mouse lemur (Microcebus murinus J.F. Miller 1777). Z Tierpsychol 1972, 40:83-89.
23. Tattersall I: The Primates of Madagascar New York: Columbia University Press; 1982.
24. Schmid J, Kappeler PM: Sympatric mouse lemurs (Microcebus spp.) in western Madagascar. Folia Primatol 1994, 63:162-170.
25. Zimmermann E, Capoq S, Rakotoarison N, Zietemann V, Radespiel U: Sympatric mouse lemurs in north-west Madagascar: A new rufous mouse lemur species (Microcebus ravelobensis). Folia Primatol 1998, 69:106-114.
26. Pastorini J, Martin RD, Ehresmann P, Zimmermann E, Forstner MRJ: Molecular phylogeny of the lemur family Cheirogaleidae (Primates) based on mitochondrial DNA sequences. Mol Phylogenet Evol 2001, 19:45-56.
27. EE Louis, MS Coles, R Andriantompohavana, JA Sommer, SE Engberg, JR Zaanarivelio, MI Mayor, RA Brenneman: Revision of the mouse lemurs (Microcebus) of eastern Madagascar. International Journal of Primatology 2006, 27:347-389.
28. Rasoazanabary E: A preliminary study of mouse lemurs in the Beza Mahafaly Special Reserve, southwest Madagascar. Lemur News 2004, 9:4-7.
29. Nicoll ME, Langrand O: Madagascar: Revue de la Conservation et des Aires Protegées Gland, Switzerland: World Wide Fund for Nature; 1989.
30. Mittermeier RA, Tattersall I, Konstant WR, Meyers DM, Mast RB: Lemurs of Madagascar Washington, DC: Conservation International; 1994.

31. Goodman SM, Langrand O, Raxworthy CJ: Food habits of the Madagascar long-eared owl Asio madagascariensis in 2 habitats in Southern Madagascar. Ostrich 1993, 64:79-85.

32. Goodman SM, Langrand O, Raxworthy CJ: The food habits of the barn owl Tyto alba at 3 sites on Madagascar. Ostrich 1993, 64:160-171.

33. Yoder AD: The use of phylogeny for reconstructing lemuriform biogeography. Biogeographie de Madagascar 1996:245-258.

34. Hapke A, Fietz J, Nash SD, Rakotondravony D, Rakotosamimanana B, Ramanamanjato JB, Randrisia GFN, Zischler H: Biogeography of dwarf lemurs: Genetic evidence for unexpected patterns in southeastern Madagascar. International Journal of Primatology 2005, 26(4):873-901.

35. Braune P, Schmidt S, Zimmermann E: Spacing and group coordination in a nocturnal primate, the golden brown mouse lemur (Microcebus ravelobensis): the role of olfactory and acoustic signals. Behav Ecol Sociobiol 2005, 58:587-596.

36. Génin F, Perret M: Photoperiod-induced changes in energy balance in gray mouse lemurs. Physiol Behav 2000, 71:315-321.

37. Schilling J: Daily torpor in free-ranging gray mouse lemurs (Microcebus murinus) in Madagascar. Int J Primatol 2001, 22:1021-1031.

38. Perret M, Auclair F: Regulation by photoperiod of seasonal changes in body mass and reproductive function in gray mouse lemurs (Microcebus murinus): Differential responses by sex. Int J Primatol 2001, 22:5-24.

39. Perret M: Change in photoperiodic cycle affects life span in a prosimian primate (Microcebus murinus). J Biol Rhythms 1997, 12:136-145.

40. Schilling A, Richard JP, Serviere J: Duration of activity and period of circadian activity-rest rhythm in a photoperiod-dependent primate, Microcebus murinus. C R Acad Sci, Serie III – Sciences de la Vie – Life Sciences 1999, 322:759-770.

41. Bearden SK, Nekaris KA, Curtis DJ: A re-evaluation of the role of vision in the activity and communication of nocturnal primates. Folia Primatol 2006, 77:50-71.

42. Dominy NJ, Lucas PW, Osorio D, Yamashita N: The sensory ecology of primate food perception. Evol Anthropol 2001, 10:171-186.

43. Dikshit S, Benyash-Kolev O, Ahearn MA, DeGrip WJ, Cooper HR: Short and mid-wavelength cone distribution in a nocturnal Strepsirhine primate (Microcebus murinus). J Comp Neurol 2001, 438:490-504.

44. Kawamura S, Kuboetora N: Ancestral loss of short wave-sensitive cone visual pigment in lorises and prosimians, contrasting with its strict conservation in other prosimians. J Mol Evol 2004, 58:314-321.

45. Pastorini J, Thalmann U, Martin RD: A molecular approach to comparative phylogeography of extant Malagasy lemurs. Proc Nat Acad Sci USA 2003, 100:5879-5884.

46. Perez VR, Godfrey LR, Nowak-Kemp M, Burney DA, Ratsimbazafy J, Vasy N: Evidence of early butchery of giant lemurs in Madagascar. J Hum Evol 2005, 49:722-742.

47. Maddison DR, Maddison WP: MacClade: Analysis of phylogeny and character evolution, 4.06th edition. Sunderland, Massachusetts: Sinauer Associates; 2003.

48. Hulsenbeck J, Ronquist: MRBAYES: Bayesian inference of phylogenetic trees. Bioinformatics 2001, 17:754-755.

49. Posada D, Crandall KA: Modeltest: testing the model of DNA substitution. Bioinformatics 1998, 14:817-818.

50. Akaike H: New Look at Statistical-Model Identification. Transactions on Automatic Control 1974, AC19(6):716-723.

51. Rambaut A, Drummond J: Tracer. Dept. Zoology, University of Oxford; 2004.

52. Excoffier L, Smouse PE, Quattro JM: Analysis of molecular variance inferred from metric distances among DNA haplotypes – Application to human mitochondrial-DNA restriction data. Genetics 1992, 131:479-491.

53. Schneider S, Roessli D, Excoffier L: Arlequin: A software for population genetics data analysis. 2.00th edition. Genetics and Biometry Lab: Dept. of Anthropology, University of Geneva; 2000.

54. Beerli P, Felsenstein J: Maximum-likelihood estimation of migration rates and effective population numbers in two populations using a coalescent approach. Genetics 1999, 152:763-773.

55. Beerli P, Felsenstein J: Maximum likelihood estimation of a migration matrix and effective population sizes in subpopulations by using a coalescent approach. Proc Nat Acad Sci 2001, 98:4563-4568.

56. Beerli P: Comparison of Bayesian and maximum-likelihood inference of population genetic parameters. Bioinformatics 2006, 22:341-345.

57. Clement M, Posada D, Crandall KA: A computer program to estimate gene genealogies. Molec Ecol 2000, 9:1657-1659.

58. Templeton AR, Crandall KA, Sing CF: A cladistic-analysis of phylogenetic associations with haplotypes inferred from restriction endonuclease mapping and DNA-sequence data. 3. Cladogram estimation. Genetics 1992, 132:619-633.

59. Hoaglin DC, Mosteller F, Tukey J: Fundamentals of Exploratory Analysis of Variance. John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY; 1991.