

Observations on the Unusual States in the Normal Patterns of Primate Behaviour During the Total Solar Eclipse

M D Parthasarathy

Primatologist, Bangalore 4

A G Kulkarni

Astronomer, P E S , College, Bangalore 50

Abstract

Systematically planned observations conclusively reveal that sudden and large natural changes in the ambient light conditions during a total solar eclipse for a few minutes, initiates and cause marked alterations in the normal behaviour pattern of the primates. Observations on the individual as well the group dynamical behaviour among the red faced Bonnet monkeys and the black faced Hanuman Langurs in the thick forested area near Ankola in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka during the total solar eclipse are reported here.

The pall of gloom continued for the remaining part of the afternoon, and the sub groups merged together into single well knit group. The groups moved towards their sleeping trees which are their usual roosting places for the night's rest. The altered behaviour among the primates is explained in terms of the perceived danger and consequent confusion for the duration of the reduced light levels.

Bewilderment and the cognitive failures may lead to the terminal behaviour of the group, clearly demonstrated by the splitting of the same into sub groups and the movements of these subgroups into almost tangential directions to enhance the chances of survival and thus prevent total annihilation of the group. Sub-groups contained males and females, as well as juveniles and mothers with infants. Concomitant to the unusual situation the sub groups started to merge back to the original well knit group, as the normal light conditions reached within half an hour after totality.