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Z. Füsün ERTUĞ

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	iii
Organizers of ICEB 2005	xi
A Brief History of the ICEB	xii
Panel and Workshop Descriptions	xiii
Foreword and Acknowledgements	xvii
 PLENARIES	
Montserrat GISPERT CRUELLES	
A novel approximation to the alimentary culture from an ethnobotanical perspective	1
Vernon H. HEYWOOD	
Biodiversity, global change and human health	9
Ghilleán T. PRANCE	
Some current challenges facing the indigenous peoples of South America	21
Nancy J. TURNER	
Lessons from the grandmothers: Women's roles in traditional botanical knowledge and wisdom in Northwestern North America	27
 PANEL 1: Ethnobotanical Studies of Wild Plant Foods	
Achille Ephrem ASSOGBADJO, E. DE CALUWÉ, Brice SINSIN, J.T.C. CODJIA, Patrick VAN DAMME	
Indigenous knowledge of rural people and importance of baobab tree (<i>Adansonia digitata</i> L.) in Benin	39
Manuel PARDO-DE-SANTAYANA, Javier TARDÍO, Ana Maria CARVALHO, Juan José LASTRA, Elia SAN-MIGUEL, Emilio BLANCO, and Ramón MORALES	
Diversity and selection of wild food plants in six regions of Northwestern Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal)	49
Nancy J. TURNER	
From the roots: Indigenous root vegetables of British Columbia, their management and conservation	57
Gisella CRUZ GARCÍA	
Children's knowledge and valuation of wild food plants: The influence of an educational program with tribal and non-tribal children in Western Ghats, India	65
Luís S. DIAS and Alexandra S. DIAS	
Herbs and spices in traditional recipes of Alentejo (Portugal)	69
M. en C. Argelia DÍAZ RICO	
Ethnobotany of nourishing plants cultivated and utilized by the ethnic group Mixteco in Tepunte, Guerrero State, Mexico	73
Judith ESPINOSA-MORENO, Dora CENTURION-HIDALGO, Jaime Gabriel CAZARES-CAMERO	
Edible weeds associated to agricultural plots in Tacotalpa, Tabasco, Mexico	77
Ian C. FITZPATRICK	
A study of recognition, transmission, and use of wild-food plants in two Wichí communities of the Argentine Chaco	79

Peter GIOVANNINI Management, biology and cultural importance of a wild food species in the Tehuacán Cuicatlán Valley, Mexico: The case of <i>Enterolobium cyclocarpum</i>	83
Müberra KOŞAR, Mehmet KOYUNCU, and K.Hüsnü Can BAŞER Folk use of some wild and cultivated <i>Allium</i> species in Turkey	87
Şinasi YILDIRIMLI and Aslı DOĞRU KOCA Uses of some Turkish <i>Asparagus</i> and <i>Tamus</i> species as food	91
Ersin YÜCEL and Gülçin YILMAZ Consumption ways of some <i>Rumex</i> species as food in Turkey	93
PANEL 2: Ethnobotanical Studies on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants	
Paul HERSCH-MARTINEZ Current challenges and scenarios regarding the integration of medicinal plants popular knowledge and formal health systems in Mexico	95
Narayan P. MANANDHAR Native phytotherapy among rural population of Nepal	101
María Rosa MARTINEZ, María Lelia POCHETTINO, Marta CRIVOS, Carolina REMORINI, and Anahí SY Gathering and circulation of medicinal plants in a pluricultural context (Misiones, Argentina)	107
Muhammad Ibrar SHINWARI and Maryum Ibrar SHINWARI Ethnobotany of medicinal and aromatic plants in Pakistan: An Overview	115
Paolo Emilio TOMEI, Rita Elisabetta UNCINI MANGANELLI, Serena TRIMARCHI, and Fabiano CAMANGI Ethnopharmacobotany in Italy: State of knowledge and prospect in the future	123
Duygu F. ALPARSLAN and Ertan TUZLACI The folk medicinal plants of the European part of Turkey	129
Kemal Hüsnü Can BAŞER, Gülendamar TÜMEN, Hulusi MALYER, and Neşe KIRIMER Plants used for common cold in Turkey	133
Rachid BELHATTAB, Georgios KALANTZAKIS, and Dimitrios BOSKOU Antioxidant activity and total phenolic content of two plants belonging to the Lamiaceae family: <i>Origanum glandulosum</i> Desf. and <i>Marrubium vulgare</i> L.	139
Gülşah ÇOBANOĞLU, Cenk SESAL, Yıldız AYDIN, Müşerref ÖZEREN MORGAN, and Zeki SEVEROĞLU The antimicrobial and the antifungal effects of some lichens with a potential medical and economic use in Turkey	143
Burcu ELÇİ-TARIKAHYA, Sadık ERİK, and Ziver BERKMAN Some anticarcinogenic plants and their usage in the Güdül District (Ankara-Turkey)	147
José Salvador FLORES GUIDO, Rita VERMONT-RICALDE, and Jesús KANTÚN Aromatic plants and their application in traditional medicine at the Mayan communities of the Yucatan Peninsula	151
Paolo Maria GUARRERA and Maria Lucia LEPORATTI Analogies and divergences in the use of medicinal plants in different areas of Central and Southern Italy	155
Maria Lucia LEPORATTI and Kamel GHEDIRA Popular phytotherapy in Italy and Tunisia, a preliminary comparison	159
Emi OKUYAMA, Samir Kumar SADHU, Shunsuke YAMAMOTO, Haruhiro FUJIMOTO, Masami ISHIBASHI, and Erdem YEŞİLADA Prostaglandin-inhibitory and antioxidant components of <i>Cistus laurifolius</i> , a Turkish medicinal plant	163

Serap ÖZ AYDIN, Tuncay DİRMENCİ, Gülendam TÜMEN, and Kemal Hüsnü Can BAŞER Plants used as analgesic in the folk medicine of Turkey	167
Johanna PUTSCHER and Christian R. VOGL An ethnobotanical survey on herbal medicine in Quito markets	173
Erika RIVERA-ARCE, X. LOZOYA, R. ALVARADO, E. ZÁRATE, J. AGÜERO, M. CHÁVEZ, and M. GATTUSO Ethnobotany and pharmacognosy of the Mexican Plant Drug: <i>Mimosae tenuiflorae</i>	177
G. Maria SALUD PÉREZ, Miguel A.S. ZAVALA, Daniel M. ZAVALA, and Cuauhtemoc G. PÉREZ Anti-diarrhoeal activity of <i>Chysactinia mexicana</i>	181
G. Maria SALUD PÉREZ, Miguel A.S. ZAVALA, Cuauhtemoc G. PÉREZ, and Daniel M. ZAVALA Anti-diarrhoeal effect of different extracts of <i>Bidens odorata</i>	185
Chandrakant B. SALUNKHE and N.K. DRAVID Little known medicinal uses of some flowering plants of Maharashtra, India	189
Cristina P. SÁNCHEZ ROJAS, M. Reyes GONZÁLEZ-TEJERO, José M. RAMIRO GUTIÉRREZ, M. CASARES PORCEL, and J. MOLERO MESA Ethnobotany in Sierra de Huelva (South Spain): Medicinal plants	193
Sara SANTOS, Ana I.D. CORREIA, A. Cristina FIGUEIREDO, Luís S. DIAS, and Alexandra S. DIAS The use of herbal remedies in urban and rural areas of the Setúbal Peninsula (Portugal): A study among elders	197
Fatih SATIL, Tuncay DİRMENCİ, and Gülendam TÜMEN The trade of wild plants that are named as <i>Thyme (kekik)</i> collected from Kazdağ	201
Muhammad Ibrar SHINWARI and Maryum Ibrar SHINWARI Ethnobotanical study of medicinal and aromatic plants of moist temperate Himalayas in Pakistan	205
Mitra TAGHIZADEH, Mohamad Reza SALEHI ALEA, and Mahshid TAGHIZADEH The efficacy of a herbal mouthwash on the control of gingivitis	209
Zeynep TUNALIER, Neşe KIRIMER, and K. Hüsnü Can BAŞER Demise of a 60-year old Turkish herbal medicine: Lityazol Cemil	213
Gülendam TÜMEN, Hulusi MALYER, K. Hüsnü Can BAŞER, and Serap ÖZ AYDIN Plants used in Anatolia for wound healing	217
PANEL 3: Plant Use of Farmers and Pastoralists	
Patricia C. ANDERSON Non-mechanised processing and storage of cereals, grasses and pulses used for fodder, fuel, food and crafts: Examples from N. Tunisia, Atlas Region, Northwestern Tell	223
Christian Christian BERTSCH, R. VOGL, and Carolina Joana DA SILVA Ethnoveterinary medicine for cattle and horses in the Northern Pantanal Matogrossense, Brazil	233
Jeanne T. GRADE and Patrick VAN DAMME Goat's self-medication against internal parasites in Karamoja, Uganda	241
Natesan PUNNIAMURTHY Ethno Veterinary Medicine (EVM): Use of fresh herbal extracts under field conditions for primary veterinary health care in India	249
Tedje VAN ASSELDONK and Helen BEIJER Herbal folk remedies for animal health in the Netherlands	257
Manuela MANCA and Tania MANCA Uses of plants by shepherds in working process of milk in the village of Bitti (Sardinia, Italy)	265
Jose MARTÍNEZ GONZÁLEZ and Juan Jose LASTRA MENÉNDEZ Ethnobotanical study of the cattle farmers profile in the Aller Valley (Asturias, Spain)	269

Antonio C. PERDOMO-MOLINA The use of local fig tree varieties (<i>Ficus carica</i> L.) for animal feed purposes in the Canary Islands (Spain)	273
Ila SHRESTHA and Keshab SHRESTHA Medicinal plants in ethnoveterinary practices in Langtang National Park, Nepal	277
Lucia VIEGI, Simonetta BULLITTA, and Giovanna PILUZZA Traditional veterinary practices in some rural areas of Sardinia (Italy)	281
Lucia VIEGI, Ignazio CAMARDA, and Giovanni PIRAS Some aspects of ethnoveterinary medicine in Sardinia (Italy)	285
PANEL 4: Reproduction and Transmission of Botanical Knowledge and Technology in Basketry and Plaited Artifact	
Belle ASANTE Reviving sustainable plant-based crafts when recent trends favor synthetic fiber usage: Stylistic vicissitudes of Harari baskets in Ethiopia	289
Z. Füsün ERTUĞ An overview of the plaited crafts of Turkey (Anatolia and Thrace)	297
Dario NOVELLINO Weaving traditions from Island Southeast Asia: Historical context and ethnobotanical knowledge	307
Dario NOVELLINO An account of basket weaving and the use of fibre plants in the Mount Aurunci Regional Park (Central Italy)	317
Sonia A. VOUGIOUKALOU Weaving knowledge and weaving plants: What will survive the 21st century?	327
Ana Maria CARVALHO, Manuel PARDO-DE-SANTAYANA, and Ramón MORALES Traditional knowledge of basketry practices in a Northeastern Region of Portugal	335
Giovanni PIRAS Plant-derived utensils employed in traditional agro-pastoral activities in Northwest Sardinia, Italy	339
José M. RAMIRO GUTIÉRREZ, M. Ramirez GONZÁLEZ-TEJERO, and Cristina P. SÁNCHEZ-ROJAS Ethnobotany in Huelva province (Spain): Basketry and woodcarving	343
Javier TARDÍO, Laura ACEITUNO, and Ramón MORALES The use of plant-based brooms in the province of Madrid (Spain)	347
PANEL 5: Biodiversity and Genetic Resources	
Francisco BASURTO, Virginia EVANGELISTA, Myrna MENDOZA, and Miguel Angel MARTINEZ ALFARO Food fruits of home gardens and coffee plantations in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico	351
Nina L. ETKIN Wild plant management in rural Hausaland: Local ecological knowledge contributes to the conservation of biodiversity	359
Vernon H. HEYWOOD Human use of plant resources - the knowledge base and conservation needs	365
Amin U. KHAN Demonstrating the forgotten values of a threatened thorn forest community at an archaeological site: The case for popularizing values in an illustrative manner	373
Miguel Ángel SERRATO CRUZ and Juan Saúl BARAJAS PÉREZ <i>Tagetes filifolia</i> Lag.: A Mexican genetic resource	377

Rosa María FLORES-SERRANO, J. Salvador FLORES, Rosario ITURBE, and Guillermina PÉREZ Plant diversity and soil contamination (hydrocarbons and metals): A case study in Ciudad Madero, Tamaulipas, Mexico	383
PANEL 6: Continuity and Change in Food and Medicine: Archaeobotany and the Written Record	
Sabine BECKMANN Root, resin, red and ritual purification - The role of terebinth in Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age cult	387
Aylen CAPPARELLI, M. Lelia POCHETTINO, Andreoni DIEGO, and Rubén D. ITURRIZA Differences between written and archaeological record: The case of plant micro remains recovered at a Northwestern Argentinean Pipe	397
Patricia A. CLARK Iatrosophia and oral traditions: A case study in Crete's Amari valley	407
Tracey LU The exploitation of Taro in South China	413
Peter J. MATTHEWS Written records of Taro in the Eastern Mediterranean	419
Fragkiska MEGALOUDI Kollyva and funeral bread offerings in Greece: The example of Thasos Island	427
Rolando M.D. NERI-VELA The Badianus Codex and Ophthalmology	431
Alexandra LIVARDA and Georgia KOTZAMANI Plant lore in 'Dark Age' Greece: Archaeobotanical evidence from Lefkandi, Euboea, literal sources and traditional knowledge combined	435
Emel OYBAK DÖNMEZ Plant use at Early Bronze Age Gre Virike (Şanlıurfa, Turkey)	439
PANEL 7: Capturing Local Perceptions and Priorities of Ethnobotanical Resources	
Lilian GONZALEZ-CHEVEZ and Paul HERSCH-MARTINEZ Medicinal ethnobotany and meaning construction. A semiotic analysis of plants through representations and practices of some illnesses from the Nahua culture of Guerrero, Mexico	443
Ramón MORALES, Manuel PARDO-DE-SANTAYANA, and Javier TARDÍO The perception of plants in the complete works of Cervantes, particularly "Don Quijote"	451
Manuel PARDO-DE-SANTAYANA and Elia SAN-MIGUEL The gender of plants according to popular nomenclature in the North of Spain	461
Miguel Ángel SERRATO-CRUZ <i>Cempoalxochitl</i> : A Mexican flower symbolizing the human	467
Barbara FRUTH and Musuyu MUGANZA Traditional use of wild rainforest plants by the Nkundo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	471
PANEL 8: Gender Issues in the Ethnobotanical Research	
Erika FRIEDL Old plants and new woman in the Zagros Mountains, Iran	475
Martina Aruna PADMANABHAN Governing the use and conservation of agricultural biodiversity: Institutional and gender analysis of rice cultivation in South India	483
Begum SHAHEEN and Mohammad Adnan SAHIBZADA Role of women in collection, processing and marketing of medicinal plants in Roringar Valley, Swat, Pakistan	491

Nancy J. TURNER “Those Women of Yesteryear”: Woman and production of edible seaweed (<i>Porphyra abbotiae</i>) in Coastal British Columbia, Canada	499
PANEL 9: Conservation and Development: Ethnobotanical Discipline at Ethical and Professional Crossroads	
Anil K. GUPTA Ethical issues in accessing people’s knowledge and innovations for developing low cost health technologies	507
Sarah-Lan MATHEZ STIEFEL and Madyo D.N. COUTO Linking applied ethnobotany to social learning: A participatory tool for the promotion of indigenous plants use in Matutuíne, Southern Mozambique	517
PANEL 10: Theory and Methodology in the Study of Ethnobotany	
Montse RIGAT, M. Àngels BONET, Sònia GARCIA, Teresa GARNATJE, Joan VALLÈS Ethnobotanical studies in the High River Ter Valley (Pyrenees, Catalonia, Iberian Peninsula)	523
Ignazio CAMARDA Ethno-systematic of Sardinian flora as a scientific system	527
Dora CENTURION-HIDALGO, Jaime Gabriel CAZARES-CAMERO, Judith ESPINOSA-MORENO, and Alberto MAYO-MOSQUEDA Ethnobotanical study of Arecaceae of Tabasco’s Sierra of Mexico	531
Melissa CEUTERICK and Patrick VAN DAMME Indigenous use, nomenclature and classification of plants in a Nahuatl-speaking village in the Balsas-Basin, Guerrero, Mexico	533
César del C. LUNA-MORALES Science, traditional knowledge and ethnobotany	537
Maryum Ibrar SHINWARI and Muhammad Ibrar SHINWARI Nomenclatural ambiguity found about herbal crude drug material used in <i>Unani</i> Medicines of Pakistan ...	541
PANEL 11: Transmission, Contact and Exchange of Plant Resources and Knowledge Between Regions: Historical and Contemporary Approaches	
Amélia FRAZAO-MOREIRA Arabic Gum: From its historical importance in the global markets to its contemporary significance in the local context of Mauritania	545
Stefanie KLAPPA Sago and the settling of Sahul: how present patterns of plant use may illuminate subsistence prehistory ...	551
Carlos R. RAMIREZ SOSA Quantitative ethnobotany in El Salvador, Central America: A model to study ethnobotanical knowledge dynamics	557
Özge SAMANCI Vegetable Patrimony of the Ottoman Culinary Culture	565
BROAD SPECTRUM STUDIES	
Hugo J. DE BOER and Anneleen KOOL Ethnobotany at Uppsala University	571
Ali A. DÖNMEZ and S. Olga BAYRAKTAROĞLU Plants of the <i>İnce Memed</i> : A novel written by Yaşar Kemal	573
Ali A. DÖNMEZ, Emel OYBAK DÖNMEZ, and Serap IŞIK Cultivation of the saffron (<i>Crocus sativus</i> L.) in Türkiye and saffron stories	577

Gizem EMRE BULUT and Ertan TUZLACI An ethnobotanical study in Bozcaada (Çanakkale-Turkey)	581
Fatma GÜNEŞ The ethnobotanical importance of some <i>Lathyrus</i> (Fabaceae) species	585
İbrahim İlker ÖZYİĞİT, Nermin GÖZÜKIRMIZI, and Belma D. SEMİZ <i>Agrobacterium</i> -mediated transformation of cotton: <i>Gossypium hirsutum</i> L. “Çukurova 1518” from Turkey	589
Veerambakkam S. RAMACHANDRAN and Jaya VIJAYAN Contribution to the knowledge of non-timber products from tropical forests: A case study from Walayar Range, Palakkad district, Kerala, India	593
Parviz REZVANI MOGHADDAM and Motlagh AHMADZADEH Agronomical studies of black cumin (<i>Nigella sativa</i>) as a new crop in dry and semi dry agricultural system of Iran	597
Daiva SESKAUSKAITE Plants in Lithuanian Folk Songs	601
Serdar Gökhan ŞENOL, Özcan SEÇMEN, and Emin UĞURLU Some ethnobotanical uses in the rural areas of Ödemiş, Tire, Kiraz (İzmir-Turkey)	605
Tedje VAN ASSELDONK and Arend De HAAS Spontaneous foraging behavior of primates in outdoor enclosures	609
Şinasi YILDIRIMLI, Aslı DOĞRU KOCA, and Muhittin DİNÇ The Turkish folk plant names and some uses	613
CATALOGUE OF THE BASKETRY EXHIBITION	617
Dario NOVELLINO and Z. Füsün ERTUĞ General Introduction “Baskets of the World” the Social Significance of Plaited Crafts	619
Dario NOVELLINO An introduction to basketry in Island Southeast Asia	621
The Philippines (Oriental Mindoro)	626
The Philippines (Southern Palawan)	628
The Philippines (Northern-Central Palawan)	631
Borneo-Indonesia (West/Central Kalimantan)	634
Rajinda K. PURI Indonesia (East Kalimantan)	636
Rachel CHUA Eastern Malaysia (Sabah)	638
Roy F. ELLEN Indonesia, the Moluccas (South Central Seram)	640
Sonia VOUGIOUKALOU An introduction to basketry in Polynesia	643
Polynesia, South Pacific (The Cook Islands)	645
Mary BUTCHER An introduction to basketry in Japan	646
Japan (Kyushu Island)	648

Belle ASANTE	
An introduction to basketry in Africa	649
Africa (Ethiopia)	653
M. El HAOUZI and Gary J. MARTIN	
Africa (Morocco)	655
Maurice BICHARD	
An introduction to basketry in the Mediterranean	658
Dario NOVELLINO	
Central Italy (Maranola)	664
Francesco MINONNE, Concetta MELE, Antonella ALBANO, and Silvano MARCHIORI	
Salento (Apulia), Southern Italy	668
Ana Maria CARVALHO	
Northeastern Portugal (Trás-os-Montes)	669
José M. RAMIRO GUTIÉRREZ, M. Reyes GONZÁLEZ-TEJERO, and Cristina P. SÁNCHEZ ROJAS	
Spain (Huelva Province)	671
Z. Füsün ERTUĞ	
Turkey	673
Turkey (Aksaray)	677
Turkey (Buldan-Denizli)	678
Turkey (Bodrum-Muğla)	679
Mesut KIRMACI, Zahide ŞAHİN, and Serhat MANAV	
Turkey (Aydın)	680
Hasan AKAN	
Turkey (Mardin)	682
Josephine POWELL	
Turkey (Anatolia)	683
Mary BUTCHER	
An introduction to basketry in Eastern and Central Europe	684
Daiva ŠEŠKAUSKAITĖ	
Lithuania (Sargeliai)	688
Index of the Authors and Organizers	691

Spontaneous foraging behavior of primates in outdoor enclosures

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Key words: *Lagothrix lagotricha*, zoopharmacognosy, animal self medication

In 1995 there was media attention in the Netherlands for the spontaneous use of medicinal plants by woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagotricha*). These plants were planted by the keepers in their outdoor enclosure in the zoo Apenheul. The Dutch Institute for Ethnobotany and Zoopharmacognosy instigated field studies in this Zoo during 1996 and 1997. In both years a group of about 20 woolly monkeys (females, infants and juveniles) had free range during the day (and mixed with visitors) within the enclosure (Van Asseldonk and De Haas 1997).

During the years 1998-2002 we observed the foraging behavior of Bolivian squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri boliviensis*), both in Apenheul and in the French Vallée des Singes.

Study group and methods

Preliminary studies included an inventory of the vegetation and an estimate of the bite size for woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagotricha*) and several observational ad libitum and scan sampling studies (Altman 1974). The woolly monkeys we studied in Apenheul Primate Park were part of a group of 18 females with two babies that was free ranging between visitors. In the spring of 1996 we observed 8 adult females for ten days by focal animal sampling (8x10 observer days). We observed 4 individuals in a 20x4 days spread through the opening season in 1997. An inventory of the vegetation was made and compared to the consumption.

The Bolivian squirrel monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis*) groups in Apenheul primate park (NL) consisted of about 100 and the group in Vallée des Singes (France) of about 50 free ranging individuals.

The enclosures that we studied are each about 10,000 m², several vegetation plots divided by asphalt walking roads.

To study the foraging behavior for *Lagothrix lagotricha* focal (continuous) sampling was used (Altman 1974). For *Saimiri boliviensis* we applied ad libitum (continuous and location fixed) sampling. The statistics we used were summarizing and descriptive.

Results

In the woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagotricha*) area, we found 123 different plant species (some could not be specified beyond genus level), belonging to 53 plant families. To make this quantitative, and comparable to the consumption, we estimated of all plants present the amount of bites that were available for eating. To estimate the size of a bite three observers imitated the monkeys foraging behavior, carrying out 10x10 samples for each item.

Adult:	Grass (and alike)	3.9 (st dev 1.8) g
	Herbs	2.3 (st dev 0.8) g
	Tree/shrub (leaf)	1.6 (st dev 0.5) g
Juvenile:	all kinds	0.9 (st dev 0.4) g

The total amount of available bites present for *Lagothrix lagotricha* we estimated to be a total of 25,215,468 bites (6090 kg).

The squirrel monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis*) enclosures were not quantified for the vegetation. They were rather new plots and the list of plants present was available in Apenheul. There were over 97 different species planted, and in the area's used for observation we noted the presence of 46 species.



Fig. 1 Woolly monkey family foraging on nettle (*Urtica dioica*) plants in Apenheul zoo.



Fig. 2 Female woolly monkey foraging on mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) flowers.

For the woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagothricha*) in 1996 the consumption of 43 (and in 1997 of 44) plant species from the wild was reported (Fig.1 and 2). There were large differences in plant choice between individuals and between specific days. About 25% of the plant consumption in both years we found to be of the Fagaceae family. Equally available were *Quercus rubra* and *Fagus sylvatica*. Yet consumption of *Quercus* was 3 fold (in 1997) to 10 fold (in 1996) that of *Fagus*. There was also a substantial consumption of *Berberis* spp. (10-15%). The preference in the consumption of trees, shrubs and grass appeared to be rather consistent amongst the group members. There was more animal specificity in the choice of dicotyledone herbs. Summarizing we noticed specific herb preference for plants of the Asteraceae, Caryophyllaceae, Boraginaceae and Urticaceae families. These are plant families with relatively many medicinal herbs in the Netherlands (Van Asseldonk 2001). The dosage of the incidental bites is proportional to the human dosage when using these herbs as a food supplement or a home remedy. Herbs we noticed to be consumed included amongst others: *Taraxacum officinale*, *Matricaria chamomilla*, *Urtica* spp., *Plantago* spp., *Impatiens parviflora*, *Rumex* spp., *Aegopodium podagraria*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Trifolium* spp., *Fragaria vesca*, *Myosotis arvensis* and *Polygonum* spp. The average plant consumption in both years was about 7 g/animal/hour (22 bites/hour); additional 4-6 insects/hour and 2 bites of sand, pebbles or clay were consumed every hour.

With Bolivian squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri boliviensis*) consumption was seen of 17 (2000); 19 (2001) and 16 (2002) different plant species. A great deal of the foraging behavior concerned catching of insects: about 8 % (2000); 10 % (2001); 12 % (2002) of the total amount of bites. These monkeys have a preference for grass, flowers and flower- and leaf buds (*Rosa* spp., *Silene dioica*) and nuts and other parts of *Fagus sylvatica*. We noted about 10 bites an hour.

Discussion

Specific cases of sick animals that use bitter herbs as reported by Huffman (2005) we did not find because for obvious reasons sick animals were not allowed to mix with visitors. The woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagothricha*) seem to make a selection from the available plant species within the outdoor enclosure. Certain plant species like barberries, oak and grasses are frequently eaten by all the individuals, probably as a food item. Other plant species are consumed incidentally by some individuals. It is possible (however it will be difficult to establish) that a health benefit is gained from this. The dietary supplement achieved through spontaneous foraging included an unexpected large amount of animal prey. This has given rise to an increase of protein (eggs, insects) supplied in the woolly monkeys zoo diet. Additional to the consumption of plants and insects both monkey species under study frequently ate inorganic material like sand, earth and pebbles.

Table 1. Summary of items consumed by *Lagothrix lagothricha* (observed during 3 hours a day).
1 bite (adult) is about 0,23 g (herb) or 0,16 g tree-leaf or 0,39 g grass

Summary of foraging by <i>L. lagothricha</i>	1996: june	1997: jun-oct
Items only mentioned if eaten by > 1 individual or eaten >9 bites	8 individ x 10 days	4 individ x 20 days
Items consumed	nr of bites	nr of bites
Animal	1347	1107
Anorganic (in 1996 data of 1 individual missing)	501	896
PLANTS		
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	1212	844
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	113	413
<i>Berberis</i> spp.	563	880
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	102	3
<i>Poa</i> spp.	291	412
<i>Rubus</i> spp.	30	268
<i>Urtica urens/dioica</i>	48	103
<i>Acer campestre/ pseudoplatanus</i>	77	106
<i>Impatiens parviflora</i>	4	55
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	228	64
<i>Trifolium</i> spp.	10	20
<i>Rumex</i> spp.	0	54
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	10	9
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	8	6
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	8	53
moss species	7	0
<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	32	0
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	10	0
<i>Juncus effuses</i>	4	0
<i>Matricaria recutita</i> (chamomilla)	5	5
<i>Picea abies</i>	26	0
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	11	0
<i>Plantago major</i>	8	0
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	23	19
<i>Persicaria</i> (<i>Polygonum persicaria</i>)	2	33
<i>Pulmonaria</i> off	21	0
<i>Quercus robur</i>	40	0
<i>Stellaria media</i>	82	18
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	2	3
<i>Arundinaria japonica</i>	0	6
<i>Betula pendula</i>	0	7
<i>Cardamine</i> spp.	0	7
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	0	34
<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	0	3
<i>Helianthus annuus</i> (intr 97)	0	13
<i>Phragmitis australis</i>	0	22

<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	0	8
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	0	3
	4825	5474
including incidental bites		
total of bites	4924	5611
nr of plantspecies	43	44
average of bites/individ/day	64,8	71,0

The spontaneous foraging in the zoo is an interesting supplementary diet factor, that could be health promoting, both by offering additional micro nutrients (for example minerals or antioxidants, that are present in 'wild vegetables', compare Pieroni et al. 2002), and by allowing the animals to make adaptive individual-specific corrections to the supplied zoo diet.

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