

**Primate Communication, Primate Linguistics, and the Evolution of Language:  
Current Advances and Future Directions**  
*Tuesday 30, 2:30 to 4:30pm*

**Speakers (to confirm):**

Mélissa Berthet  
Joseph Mine  
Luca Pedruzzi  
Aurélie Le Fur  
Elliot Howard-Spink  
Remo Nitschke  
Stuart Watson  
Klaus Zuberbühler  
Katie Slocombe  
Adrien Meguerditchian  
Cathy Crockford  
Angèle Lomprey  
Chiara Zulberti

**Overview :**

Understanding the evolutionary foundations of human language requires rigorous comparative research on the communicative systems of our closest living relatives. In recent years, research on primate communication has increasingly shifted toward probing the linguistic and cognitive underpinnings of signalling behaviour. Building on decades of foundational work, the field now explores the principles that guide how primates produce, interpret, and coordinate communicative acts across vocal, gestural, and multimodal channels. This symposium brings together both leading and emerging scholars to provide a state-of-the-art synthesis of what primate data can reveal about the origins of key linguistic capacities and offers a critical assessment of the current limitations and open challenges in primate linguistics. The symposium will begin with an introductory overview, proceed with a series of focused flash talks, and culminate in a roundtable aimed at identifying future research priorities. The session will address core domains central to language evolution, including intentional communication, semanticity, pragmatic inference, turn-taking organisation, and emerging evidence for combinatorial and compositional structure. By integrating findings spanning the primate phylogenetic tree, the symposium will highlight both shared features and lineage-specific trajectories in communicative complexity. A second goal is to examine the methodological and theoretical challenges that accompany this shift toward “primate linguistics.”

The symposium will highlight advances in experimental design, multimodal signal integration, large-scale corpora, and computational approaches that allow for increasingly precise characterisation of communicative structure. We will also discuss how frameworks from formal linguistics, including syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, can be productively applied to non-human communication while avoiding anthropocentric assumptions. By fostering dialogue across ethology, linguistics, psychology, and cognitive science, this symposium aims to chart a roadmap for the next generation of comparative research on language evolution. It will offer a comprehensive overview of current evidence while identifying conceptual bridges, methodological standards, and collaborative opportunities necessary to push the field forward.

**Organizers:** Maël Leroux, Alban Lemasson, F Levréro