

# Finding a New Monkey for East Africa

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Adult male Mount Kenya guereza (*Colobus guereza kikuyuensis*) at Subukia, central Kenya. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

Knowing which animals live where is critical to planning effective conservation. To help set up good programs in Uganda, we set out to confirm whether one particular subspecies of monkey, the Dodinga Hills guereza, was calling this country home. Here's what we found.

## The Background

Many “non-human primate” studies have been conducted in East Africa over the last 30 years, most of which focused on one or a few species at one or a few sites. Far less research has been conducted on primates across landscapes and countries. In fact, at the country-level, the distribution, abundance, and conservation status of most of East Africa’s non-human primates remains poorly known.



Adult male patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*) in Kidepo Valley National Park, north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

Since 2003, we have conducted field research over large parts of Kenya and Tanzania to better understand what the distribution and conservation status is of each primate taxon.

With the support of a grant from the National Geographic Society we are now focusing our research on the primates of Uganda. The goal of this project is to contribute towards the long-term conservation of these primates by obtaining the scientific information needed for setting conservation priorities and making recommendations for the management of the more threatened taxa and populations.





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First light over Kidepo Valley National Park, north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)



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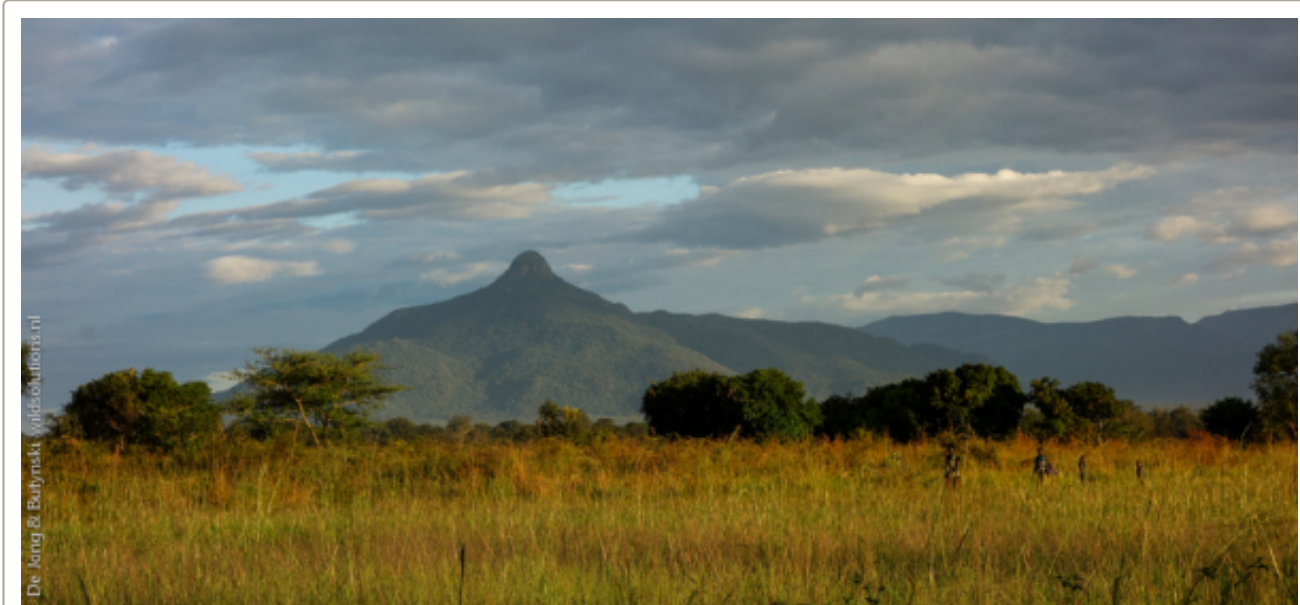
Adult male olive baboon (*Papio anubis*) crossing the Kidepo River near the South Sudan-Uganda border in Kidepo Valley National Park, north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

### The Primates We Expected to Find

Of the 25 genera and 93 species of primate Africa harbours, Uganda supports no fewer than 15 genera, 23 species, and 19 subspecies. One of the most characteristic of the species is the arboreal black-and-white colobus or “guereza” (*Colobus guereza*). Eight subspecies are recognized for this monkey, five of which occur in East Africa (East Africa is taken here to comprise Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda).

The Dodinga Hills guereza (*Colobus guereza dodinga*) is believed to be endemic to the Dodinga Hills and Imatong Mountains of south-east South Sudan. Since the Imatong Mountains extend into extreme northern Uganda, we wondered if the Dodinga Hills guereza reached Uganda and, thus, East Africa.

During the second half of October 2014, we conducted the first of our series of primate surveys in north-eastern Uganda. For 17 days we explored the region, starting at the Kenya-Uganda border north of Mount Elgon, moving northwards through Pian Upe Game Reserve to Kidepo Valley National Park, then westwards to the Agoro-Agu Forest.



Southern foothills of the Imatong Mountains, central north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

In Kidepo Valley NP, long-time employees reported occasional sightings of guereza within and near the Park. No guereza were, however, encountered by us during five days of survey in the Park.





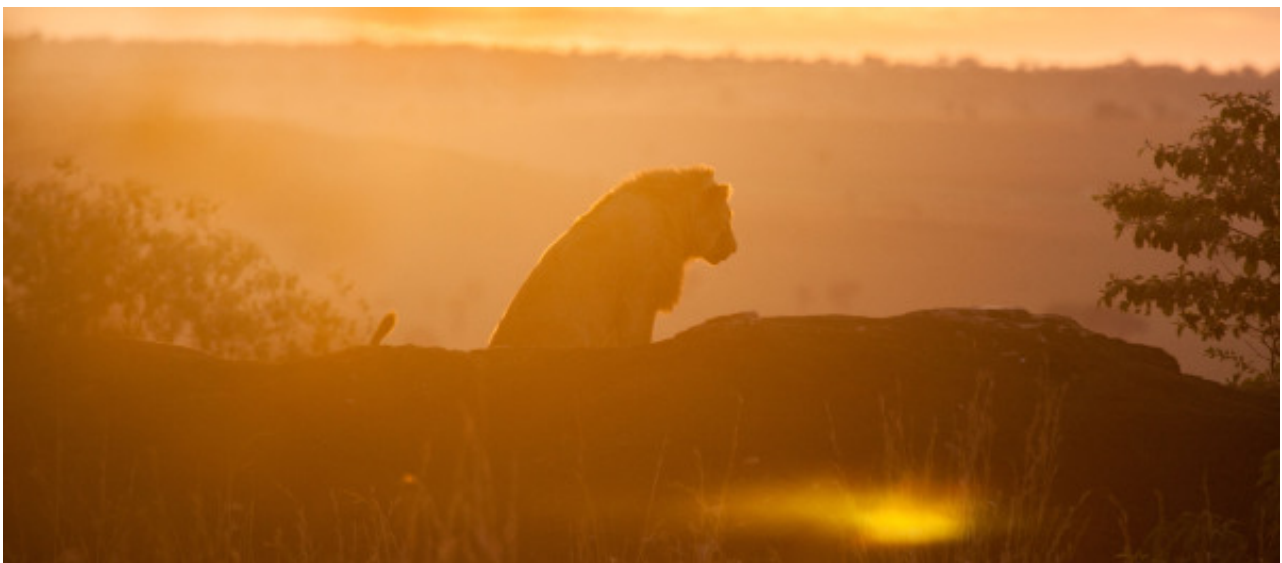
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Adult Clapperton's francolin (*Francolinus clappertoni*) in Kidepo Valley National Park. In East Africa, this species is only found in north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)



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Adult African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) in Kidepo Valley National Park, north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)



'Lion in the morning sun' in Kidepo Valley National Park, north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)





Abyssinian ground-hornbills (*Bucorvus abyssinicus*) in Kidepo Valley National Park, north-eastern Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

## First Encounter

It was near the edge of Agoro-Agu Forest Reserve, in the Ugandan portion of the Imatong Mountains, that we first encountered the Dodinga Hills guereza.

The day before we had driven challenging dirt tracks and walked steep paths to a site 4.3 miles (7 km) from the border with South Sudan. Our camp was located on a small bit of relatively level ground on an otherwise very steep mountain side. At 4:45am, on 28 October 2014, we heard the loud-calls or “roars” of at least three groups of guereza.

Due to the extremely rugged terrain and limited time, we were not able to see these monkeys to confirm the subspecies of guereza. Two colobus skins were, however, shown to us by people living in Lomwaka Village on the edge of Agoro-Agu Forest. The skins were in good condition and provided confirmation that the Dodinga Hills guereza occurs in Uganda. It is thus evidence of a new primate taxon for East Africa.





Joseph Owali (center) and Tom Butynski (right) near the edge of Agoro-Agu Forest, southern Imatong Mountains, central north Uganda. This is the site at which evidence for the presence in Uganda of the Dodinga Hills guereza (*Colobus guereza dodingae*) was obtained. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)



Adult male (bottom) and juvenile Dodinga Hills guereza (*Colobus guereza dodingae*) skins in Lomwaka Village near Agoro-Agu Forest, central north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)





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Yvonne de Jong measuring Dodinga Hills guereza (*Colobus guereza dodingae*) skins in Lomwaka Village near Agoro-Agu Forest, central north Uganda. (Photograph by Tom Butynski)

### What It Means

The presence of the Dodinga Hills guereza in the Uganda portion of the Imatong Mountains (and probably also in and near Kidepo NP) is no surprise—indeed, it was expected.

These are, however, important findings for primate conservation in Uganda and East Africa as this adds a subspecies to the primate lists of Uganda (now 20 subspecies) and East Africa (now 48 subspecies). This also reduces the list of endemic primate subspecies in South Sudan by one. These findings close an important natural history knowledge gap, yielding information required to effectively conserve the primate diversity of Uganda and East Africa.





Adult male Stuhlmann's blue monkey (*Cercopithecus mitis stuhlmanni*) in Agoro-Agu Forest. This species was only encountered twice during our three days on the edge of the Agoro-Agu Forest, southern Imatong Mountains, central north Uganda, but is said to be common farther into this forest. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)





Senegal lesser galago (*Galago senegalensis senegalensis*) in Kidepo Valley National Park, north-east Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

## Dangers for Everyone

The pressure on forests, and the biodiversity they support, is high in Uganda, as in all other countries in East Africa. This is mainly due to the fast growing human population, which doubles about every 20 years.

Most, if not all, forests in northern Uganda are expected to suffer from degradation, encroachment, and fragmentation. In addition, the primates of northern Uganda are hunted for bushmeat or killed in response to crop raiding.

Although additional surveys are needed to determine the range and abundance of the Dodinga Hills guereza in Uganda, there can be no doubt that this is one of Uganda's most threatened primate subspecies. Based on the area of suitable habitat available, the geographic range of this subspecies in Uganda is unlikely to be more than 115 square miles (300 square km).



Daybreak at Agoro-Agu Forest, southern Imatong Mountains, central north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)



Adult Senegal coucal (*Centropus senegalensis*) near Agoro-Agu Forest, Imatong Mountains, central north Uganda. (Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski)

For additional images of the primates of East Africa, visit our project's website at [wildsolutions.nl](http://wildsolutions.nl).

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