

Study highlights new mammal species for promoting conservation fundraising

May 17 2012



Images of tigers and elephants are among the most common threatened mammals used by conservation organisations as ‘flagships’ to promote fundraising – but new research led by the University suggests that other threatened ‘Cinderella species’ could prove equally effective.

The new study, by a team led by Dr. Bob Smith of the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), is the first to research what [species](#) are used by international conservation NGOs in their on-line fundraising campaigns. Dr. Smith’s team included researchers from the Institute of Zoology and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

At the moment, only 80 flagship species are used by these NGOs, and more than 60% of their campaigns only raised funds for that species itself, the study found. These flagship species tend to have a high body mass and forward-facing eyes – because people find large animals with a human-like face more appealing.

But, by using a similarity score approach, the researchers identified that there are other species which, like Cinderella in the children's story, share this aesthetic appeal but are currently overlooked.

Dr. Smith said that the study findings suggested that promotional marketing concerns are driving the campaigning process.

"The approach of NGOs remains overly conservative, so that only a few well-known species receive the bulk of the money raised. In response, we have shown that there are a number of currently neglected mammal species that are both highly threatened and potentially appealing to the public," he said.

Professor Kate Jones, of the Institute of Zoology, said: "We also found that the flagships currently used are not the most threatened species. Since most campaigns raise money directly for the species used as a flagship, this is troubling."

Dr. Nick Isaac, of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, said: "Good examples are Pennant's Red Colobus, a monkey from central Africa, and the Pygmy Raccoon from Mexico. Our analyses suggest there's untapped potential for using these Critically Endangered [mammals](#) to raise funds for conservation, not just for the species itself, but for other species in the region."

Diogo Verissimo, of DICE, said: "We would argue that NGOs need to adapt such novel techniques to broaden [conservation](#) benefits and

develop a more systematic approach to identify, publicise and conserve new priority species."

Provided by University of Kentucky

Citation: Study highlights new mammal species for promoting conservation fundraising (2012, May 17) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-highlights-mammal-species-fundraising.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--