

New African monkey species identified

September 12 2012



Adult pelage coloration. Portraits are of a captive adult male *Cercopithecus hamlyni* (upper left), photo by Noel Rowe, with permission; and captive adult male *Cercopithecus lomamiensis* (upper right). Credit: doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0044271

Researchers have identified a new species of African monkey, locally known as the lesula, described in the Sep. 12 issue of the open access journal *PLOS ONE*. This is only the second new species of African monkey discovered in the last 28 years.

The first lesula found was a young captive animal seen in 2007 in a school director's compound in the town of Opala in the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#). The young monkey bore a resemblance to the [owl](#)

faced monkey, but its [coloration](#) was unlike that of any other known species.

Over the following three years, the study authors located additional lesula in the wild, determined its genetic and anatomical distinctiveness, and made initial observations of its behavior and ecology, as reported in the [PLOS ONE](#) paper.

The new species' range covers about 6,500 square miles in central DRC, in what was one of Congo's last biologically unexplored forest blocks. Although its range is remote and only lightly settled at present, the lesula is threatened by local bush meat hunting.

"The challenge for conservation now in Congo is to intervene before losses become definitive," say John and Terese Hart, who led the project. "Species with small ranges like the lesula can move from vulnerable to seriously endangered over the course of just a few years."

More information: Hart JA, Detwiler KM, Gilbert CC, Burrell AS, Fuller JL, et al. (2012) Lesula: A New Species of Cercopithecus Monkey Endemic to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Implications for Conservation of Congo's Central Basin. PLOS ONE 7(9): e44271. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0044271](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0044271)

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