

Monkeys take 'selfies,' sparking copyright dispute

August 7 2014, by Sylvia Hui

Monkey see, monkey do. But when a monkey takes a selfie, who owns the copyright?

A series of self-portraits taken by Indonesian monkeys has sparked a copyright dispute between Wikipedia and a British wildlife photographer, who wasn't amused that the popular images are being used for free.

Photographer David Slater complained Thursday that Wikipedia rejected his requests for the images to be removed from the website. He said he owns the copyright to the images of crested black macaque monkeys, which were taken in the Indonesian jungle in 2011.

Slater told the BBC that although the monkeys pressed the button, he had set the self-portraits up by framing them and setting the camera on a tripod.

"It wasn't that the monkey stole the camera, went behind the bush and photographed it all by itself. It required a large input from myself," he said.

But Wikimedia Foundation, the group behind the free information-sharing site, argued that Slater didn't own the copyright to the photos because he didn't take the images.

It said no one owned the copyright to the images, because under U.S.

law, "copyright cannot vest in non-human authors"—the [monkeys](#) in this case.

"We take these requests very seriously, and we thoroughly researched both sides of the claim," the group said in a statement. "When a work's copyright cannot vest in a human, it falls into the public domain. We believe that to be the case here."

Wikimedia's spokeswoman Katherine Maher said Slater requested the photos' removal in January, but the case captured public attention after the group included it in its first transparency report, published Wednesday.

The images are currently free for use and downloading at Wikimedia Commons, the group's database of [images](#) and video clips. Slater said [copyright](#) laws should be updated to address cases like his.

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