

Genetic analysis supports elevating Cape Parrot to new species

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A male Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*). Credit: Cyril Laubscher

In support of previous research, the Cape Parrot should be elevated to the species level, according to a new genetic analysis study published August 12, 2015 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Willem Coetzer from University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and colleagues.

The Cape Parrot is currently considered a *Poicephalus robustus* sub-[species](#), along with *P. r. fuscicollis* and *P. r. suahelicus*, but based on morphological, ecological, and behavioral assessments, some scientists believe the Cape Parrot should be a [distinct species](#). In this study, researchers investigated these recommendations using DNA analyses. They genotyped over 130 specimens from five *Poicephalus* species and sequenced two mitochondrial and one nuclear intron marker.

The author's data analysis identified the Cape Parrot as genetically distinct from the other *P. robustus* subspecies. Their analysis places the most recent common ancestor between the Cape Parrot and *P. r. fuscicollis* and *P. r. suahelicus* at about 2 million years ago. The authors suggest their results support previous recommendations to elevate the Cape Parrot to species level, which may facilitate better planning and implementation of international and local conservation management strategies for the Cape Parrot.

More information: Coetzer WG, Downs CT, Perrin MR, Willows-Munro S (2015) Molecular Systematics of the Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*): Implications for Taxonomy and Conservation. *PLoS ONE* 10(8): e0133376. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0133376](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0133376)

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