

Conservation plan could help endangered primates in Africa

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A project co-led by the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), Bristol Zoo and West African Primate Conservation Action is set to protect nine species of primate found across Africa. A five-year

plan that will be sent to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and which begins in 2020, sets out measures to protect the endangered Mangadrills.

Mangadrills include nine groups of African monkeys: seven within the genus *Cercocebus*, also known as mangabeys, and three within *Mandrillus*, including the mandrill and the two sub-species described as drills. These primates inhabit an area that stretches from Senegal and Gabon in West Africa, all the way to the Tana River Delta in Kenya. Yet despite the wide range of their habitats, they are among some of the world's most threatened monkeys.

Dr. David Fernandez, senior lecturer in [conservation science](#) at UWE Bristol who is co-leading the project, said: "These species are one of the least known primates, as there are very few people working on them. They are classed as endangered, except one critically endangered and one vulnerable by the IUCN. Although we know that in most cases their numbers are going down, for many we still don't know exactly where the populations are or how many are left."

The plan lists a set of actions that could help conserve these monkeys, which live in forest areas. Although the measures are still being finalized, one could be to protect the Bioko drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus poensis*) species from hunters on Bioko Island, in Equatorial Guinea, by blocking off access routes to protected areas, which are used by hunters.

Said Dr. Fernandez: "Most hunters enter the Caldera de Luba Scientific Reserve, a protected area in the South of Bioko where most Bioko drills live, using the only existing paved road. Setting up a checkpoint on it would help control poaching in that area and might constitute a plan that is achievable and could be highly effective."

Another suggested action is to go into communities where primates raid

sugar cane crops and are sometimes killed in retaliation. A solution, as set out in the plan, is to help communities to build appropriate fences to prevent this from happening.

As well as identifying what needs to happen to protect these animals, another goal of the action plan is to highlight the existence and plight of these animals.

One action is to set up ecotourism tours in locations like Bioko Island, where the primates have their habitats. Tourists would be able to spend the night in a tropical forest and go with local guides to view the monkeys up close.

Dr. Grainne McCabe, head of Field Conservation and Science at Bristol Zoological Society, said: "This action plan is a genuine step forward in trying to save Mangadrill monkeys and we are really pleased to be working with the University of the West of England.

"Together we hope to promote awareness of these threatened species and encourage researchers, conservationists and governments to take the necessary actions to protect them."

Provided by University of the West of England

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