

New spy cameras reveal surprising behaviors of chacma baboons

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An ingenious new camera collar has offered researchers from our Anthropology department an unprecedented glimpse into the secret lives of wild baboons in South Africa.

The pioneering devices have captured baboons engaging in surprising behaviors that have never before been documented.

Cameras catch baboons eating antelope poop

Miniature video cameras concealed within collars recorded [footage](#) showing baboons carefully selecting and consuming the feces of antelope species like kudu, impala, and duiker.

This unusual eating habit, known as coprophagy, appears to allow baboons to gain vital nutrients when wild fruits and [vegetables](#) are scarce in the dry winter months.

This opens up new questions about how [baboons](#) exploit different food resources.

Intimate encounters with wildlife

The covert cameras also documented rare close encounters with animals like mongoose, impala, and nyala.

These species normally flee at the sight of human observers.

Spurring new research avenues

The research team collaborated with the BBC Natural History Unit to develop the camera collar prototype for the documentary series 'Animals with Cameras'.

The researchers believe the collar cameras have vast potential for primate research, including studies of social behavior, mate selection, attention patterns, and reactions to human presence.

The study is [published](#) in the *International Journal of Primatology*.

More information: Ben J. Walton et al, On-primate Cameras Reveal Undocumented Foraging Behaviour and Interspecies Interactions in Chacma Baboons (*Papio ursinus*), *International Journal of Primatology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1007/s10764-024-00423-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10764-024-00423-9)

Provided by Durham University

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