

National task force formed to spearhead conservation of primates



A National Primate Conservation Task Force (NPCTF) has been formed to spearhead the conservation of primates in Kenya. Kenya has at least 19 species and 24 sub-species of primates and harbours some of the world's most threatened species. The most threatened species are the Tana River Red Colobus (*Procolobus rufomitratu rufomitratu*) and the Tana River Mangabey (*Cercocebus galeritu*), both endemic to the forests of lower Tana River.

Habitat degradation, loss and fragmentation are the major threats to the primates in Kenya. As human population continues to rapidly grow, primates are pushed into small isolated areas of suitable habitat, thus minimizing their chance of survival. This also increases their level of interaction with humans, thus exacerbating the problem of human-nonhuman primate conflict, which is manifested in crop raiding and livestock predation. Climate changes have further complicated the threats facing primates: the weather patterns have become unpredictable, resulting in changes in food resources. This eventually affects the population status and habitat carrying capacity, thus further threatening the primates.

Despite these challenges facing primates of Kenya, the country lacks primate conservation and management strategies. This was the motivation behind the formation of Kenya's National Primate Conservation Task Force (NPCTF). Expert advice has been sought and resulted in the formation of a panel to advise, help develop and drive the strategy forward. This panel is known as the National Primate Conservation Task Force (NPCTF) and the members are a collection of primate and conservation experts from Kenya and around the world. Members of the NPCTF are:

1. Kenya Wildlife Service represented by Dr. Charles Musyoki

2. Institute of Primate Research, represented by Stanislaus Kivai or Nancy Moinde or Peter Fundi
3. Kenya Forest Service – an officer to be nominated
4. NEMA / Moi University represented by Prof. Geoffrey Wahungu or Duncan Kimuyu (University of Nairobi)
5. University of California / Uaso Ngiro Baboon Project (UNBP) represented by Prof. Shirley Strum or Dr. Debbie Nightingale
6. mboseli Baboon Research Project represented by Prof. Jeanne Altmann or Prof. Susan Alberts or Tim Wango
7. East Africa Primate Diversity & conservation Program represented by Dr. Thomas Butynski or Dr. Yvonne deJong
8. Tana River Primates team represented by Prof. David Mbona or Prof. Julie Wiezowski
9. Ol Pejeta Conservancy represented by Martin Mulama or Dr. George Paul
10. Kakamega Primates Research team represented by Prof. Marina Cords
11. Papio Project, Laikipia represented by Dr. Ryne Palombit

All members of the task force contribute a range of knowledge and expertise, and we are very excited about working together and moving forward to address the following Terms of Reference (TOR):

1. Advise KWS on primate conservation matters including priorities for critical conservation actions for primates in a structured and participatory way.
2. Integrate primate conservation, review primate research activities and advise on research and monitoring programs. This includes collating existing information to create databases on each primate species.
3. Develop policy options for conservation and management of primates.
4. Steer the formulation of national conservation strategies that will ensure the long-term survival of healthy populations of primates and their habitats.
5. Mobilize resources to formulate national primate conservation strategies and management guidelines.
6. Enhance capacity building for primate conservation by Kenyans.

7. Raising the profile of primates through better awareness and public relations and help resolve conflicts and change people's attitudes about primates.
8. Co-opt members outside the Task Force committee based on expertise, funding or other reasons identified by the committee.

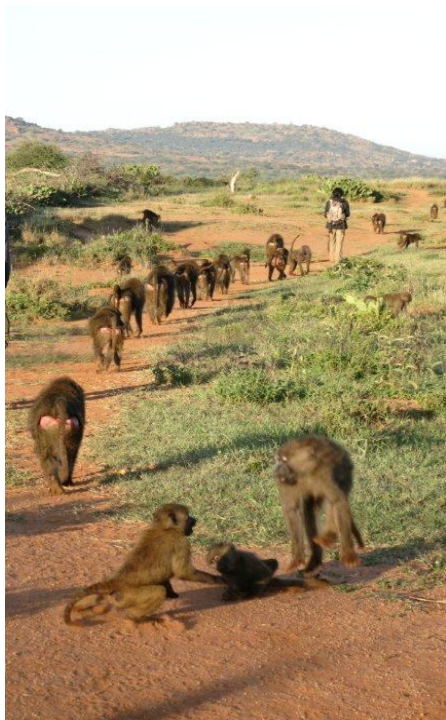
The task force commenced its work by holding an inaugural meeting on January 11, 2013 followed by a second meeting on February 28, 2013. The first meeting discussed the task force TORs, composition and communication. The second meeting discussed key features of the conservation strategies and management guidelines such as primate pest management and national primate diversity and national listing of primate species.

The envisaged strategies will provide national guidance on the conservation of threatened primates and management of relatively abundant primate species that are sometimes problem animals. The guidelines will define the role of government, conservation partners and other stakeholders whilst raising awareness about the plight of primates and the (generally declining) population and distribution trends within Kenya. Kenya clearly has a large role to play in primate conservation Africa-wide, given that it is home to two endemic and threatened primate taxa as well as to a large number of other, less threatened primate taxa.

The task force will hold its third meeting on March 28, 2013 to further discuss the key features of the strategies and guidelines, specific challenges and risk factors facing each of the primate species and sub-species. It is anticipated that the task force will hold a meeting with stakeholders in July 2013 to further consolidate the background information for each species and sub-species and set the stage for a national primate conference during 2014. The conference will provide an opportunity to update distributions and densities of primates in Kenya, as well as incorporate the inputs and views of stakeholders.



Mau Forest guereza *Colobus guereza matschiei* in yellow fever woodland, Lake Naivasha, Kenya. Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski



Baboon monitoring at Chololo, Kenya by Shirley Strum.



Olive baboon mother and juvenile at Chololo Kenya By Shirley Strum



Hilgert's vervet monkey *Chlorocebus pygerythrus hilgerti*, in Acacia woodland, Loita Hills, Kenya. Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski



Eastern patas monkey *Erythrocebus patas pyrrhonotus* in whistling thorn woodland, Ole Naishu, Kenya. Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski



Kenya lesser galago *Galago senegalensis braccatus* in riverine forest, Tana River Primate National Reserve, Kenya. Photograph by Yvonne de Jong & Tom Butynski.