

Is this the real life? Hipster monkey with a Freddie Mercury-style handle bar moustache is found to be an entirely new species

- Blue Nile patas monkeys have been identified as a unique species, says expert
- The primates have a 'handlebar moustache' and are found in Sudan and Ethiopia
- For nearly 100 years the monkeys have been wrongly identified

By [JOE PINKSTONE FOR MAILONLINE](#) 

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A new species of monkey with a white 'handlebar moustache' similar to Queen lead singer Freddie Mercury has been identified in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Blue Nile patas monkey was long thought to be a member of the patas monkey species, but has now been found to be a separate group.

Patas monkeys are found in Ethiopia and Sudan, and it is hoped the increased attention to the small range will improve conservation efforts in the region.



Blue Nile patas monkeys (left) sport an impressive moustache much like Queen lead singer Freddie Mercury (right) and have been found to be a completely separate species to other patas monkeys

The group can move at speeds of up to 34mph (55km/h), putting them among the fastest-moving ground-dwelling monkeys.

Dr Spartaco Gippoliti of the Virginia-based Primate Specialist Group - a collection of scientists attempting to improve primate conservation efforts - looked at the appearance and range of the moustachioed monkeys.

The genus *Erythrocebus* that all the monkeys belong to was thought to contain only one species - the patas monkey.

Dr Gippoliti looked at past literature, animal behaviour and physical traits to 'disentangle some questions concerning the taxonomy of *Erythrocebus* in northeast Africa'.



The black faces and noses of the Blue Nile patas monkey reveals the identity of this monkey. Previously, the animal was thought to be the same species as other patas monkeys

He found that the patas monkey is in fact divided into two species, including the newly identified Blue Nile patas.

Dr Christoph Schwitzer, a conservation expert at the University of the West of England in Bristol, told the MailOnline: 'The original, widely distributed single species of patas monkey is thus now split into two species, with the resurrected Blue Nile patas monkey occupying only a relatively small distribution range.'

The move to split the genus into two separate species goes back over 150 years to 1862 when the Blue Nile patas was first proposed.



The large handlebar moustache is a clear giveaway of the patas monkey. They are one of the fastest of all monkeys and can move at up to 34 mph (55 km/h).

The scientific name 'Erythrocebus poliophaeus' for the mustachioed primates was removed in 1927 as all patas were wrongly considered to be the same.

Dr Gippoliti found that in fact, the genus should be once again split into two groups - defined by a lack or presence of facial hair, among other things.

As well as a noticeable moustache, the Blue Nile patas monkeys have black faces and noses.

They are also distinguishable from the other patas monkeys by their lack of a band between the ear and eye of their cousins.



Blue Nile patas monkeys can run at up to 34mph (55km/h) and can be told apart from regular patas monkeys as they tend to have black faces and noses as well as a lack of a band between their eyes and ears

Dr Gippoliti wrote in his study: 'I resurrect *Erythrocebus poliophaeus* as a valid species that is found along the Blue Nile Valley.'

As well as breathing new life into the old latin name, Dr Gippoliti suggested two common English names: Heuglin's patas monkey (Heuglin was the famous German explorer who discovered it) or the Blue Nile patas monkey.

Members of the new species are physically separated from other patas monkeys by Sudan's Sudd swampy region and the Ethiopian highlands.

The new species has a much smaller range than originally thought.

'For conservation, this means that both of these species may be more threatened than originally thought, but this is yet to be evaluated,' Dr Schwitzer said.



The scientist suggested two common English names for the new species of monkey: Heuglin's patas monkey (Heuglin was the famous German explorer who discovered it) or the Blue Nile patas monkey



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With the moustache, black face and black nose, this monkey is one of the newly discovered species Blue Nile pats monkey. The discovery means the conservation efforts needs to be reassessed in their small region of Sudan and Ethiopia