



Where are Kenya's Pottos?

Although the Potto (*Perodicticus potto*) is Kenya's most unusual primate, it is also one of the country's least known and least frequently observed primates. In a recent article in *Swara* ('Night Crawler', Vol. 27:1, pp. 32-33, 2004) the natural history of the Potto is summarised and photographs of a young Potto are presented. An adult Potto is shown in the photograph accompanying this note.

We are in the process of documenting the distribution of the Potto in Kenya. Our detailed search of the literature and of museum records indicates that within Kenya the Potto is known for certain to occur only in the Kakamega and Nandi Forests of western Kenya, with one (unsubstantiated) report apiece from Mount Elgon and the Mau Forest.

Of particular interest to us is the question of whether the Potto occurs east of the Eastern Rift Valley?... that is, to the east of Lakes Naivasha, Elementeita, Nakuru, Bogoria, and Baringo... in the forested highlands represented primarily by the Aberdare Range and Mount Kenya. For many of Kenya's primates, the Rift Valley has long proved a barrier to dispersal. Is this also the case with the Potto?

We have two intriguing records of the Potto from the east of the Rift Valley: one from Muguga, near Nairobi, and the other from Mount Kenya. Substantiation of these records is badly needed.

A major problem in documenting the distribution of the Potto in Kenya is that it is at least sometimes, probably often, confused in the field with the Small-eared Greater Galago (*Otolemur garnettii*) and with the Southern Tree Hyrax (*Dendrohyrax arboreus*). All three of these species are of similar size, forest dwelling, arboreal, and nocturnal. These species can most readily be distinguished in the field using the following characters:

Small-eared Greater Galago (body weight: 0.6 – 1.2 kg): Large ears, tail at least as long as the body (30 – 44 cm). Can move rapidly. Eyes glow strongly in torchlight.

Southern Tree Hyrax (body weight 1.5 – 4.5 kg): Small ears, tail absent. Can move rapidly. Eyes glow weakly in torchlight.

Potto (body weight 0.8 – 1.6 kg): Small ears, tail short (4 – 10 cm). Usually moves slowly. Eyes glow strongly in torchlight.

We are now compiling our map of the distribution of the Potto in Kenya. So, if you have observed the Potto at any site in Kenya, we should very much like to obtain a record of your sighting. If possible, the following information should be provided: date (or year), name of nearest village or town, latitude, longitude, and elevation (if available), along with any other details of the sighting that you can recall.

Please send your record by email to < tbutynski@aol.com >, or by post to: Tom Butynski; Conservation International, c/o IUCN Eastern Africa Regional Office; P O Box 68200; 00200 City Square; Nairobi, Kenya. The source of all accepted records will be acknowledged in the data file for the distribution map.

We thank you for any information you may be able to provide to this project.

– by Tom Butynski and Yvonne de Jong