

SURVEY OF THE PATAS MONKEY IN LAIKIPIA

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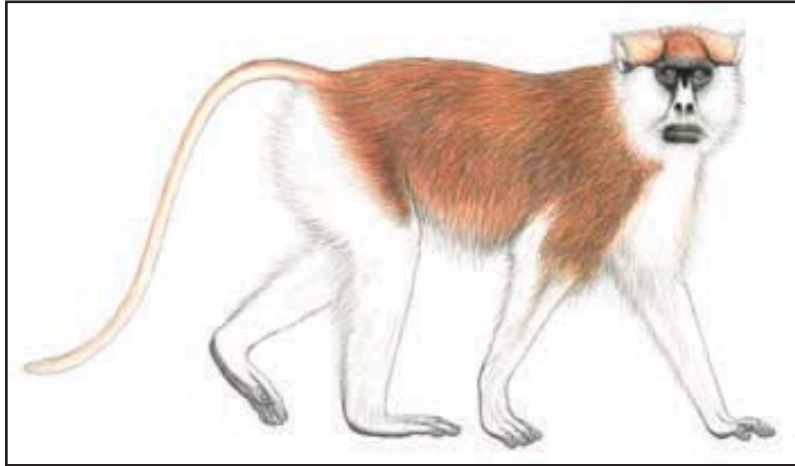
The Laikipia Plateau supports a small population of the eastern patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas pyrrhonotus*). This represents the largest population of patas in Kenya.

Patas are large, shy, semi-terrestrial, have large home ranges (ca. 30 km²) and live in groups of 2 to 74 individuals. The low density at which patas occur in East Africa makes them particularly prone to local extinction. The ca. 48,200 km² range of patas in Kenya has declined by roughly 54% since 1996 and is highly fragmented.

In Laikipia, however, patas numbers remained stable during 1979-2000 at 300-500 individuals. Patas are readily recognised by the brick red upper parts and long, white limbs. The blackish face, with a white nose and moustache, is unlike that of the western patas (*E. p. patas*) or southern patas (*E. p. baumstarki*), which have an all black face. The adult male, which is approximately the size of an adult goat, is about twice the size of the adult female. The geographical range of the eastern patas extends from western Ethiopia, southern Sudan, and northern Democratic Republic of Congo, through northern Uganda to western, central and southern Kenya.

Why is the patas population in Laikipia not declining as appears to be the case elsewhere in Kenya? The answer seems to be tied to livestock ranching, which is an important economic activity in Laikipia.

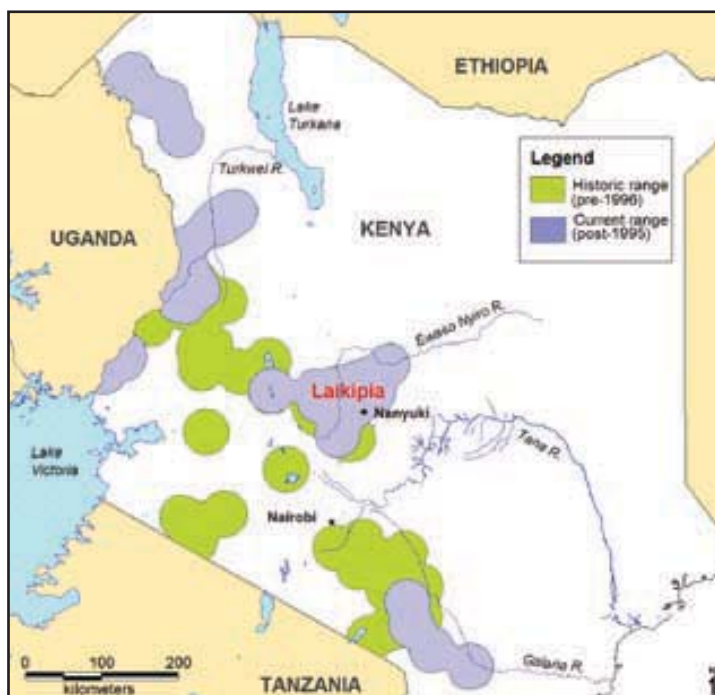
Unlike almost all other agro-ecosystems where primates occur, well-managed rangelands maintain (sometimes even create) favorable habitats for patas. The survival of patas in Laikipia can be explained, not surprisingly, by the perennial availability of food and water. Patas in Laikipia depend largely on (1) extensive areas dominated by whistling thorn (*Acacia drepanolobium*) woodlands, and on (2) year around sources of drinking water. Large ranches provide well



maintained sources of water and continue to provide good habitat for patas.

However, in some parts of Laikipia, elephants, giraffes and rhinos over-browse the whistling thorn to such an extent that adequate food and sleeping sites for patas are not available. In addition, as for much of Kenya, large areas of Laikipia are being unsustainably used by livestock keepers and charcoal makers, or transformed to cropland. The resultant loss of natural habitat increasingly threatens patas and, of course, many other species.

To conserve Laikipia's patas population, it is important to monitor changes in its distribution and size. Now, 12 years after the last survey of patas in Laikipia, it is time for another survey. All land owners/managers are being invited to take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. If you are not a landowner/manager, but have encountered patas in Laikipia (or Samburu, or elsewhere in Kenya) we would appreciate learning more about your observation(s). Please fill in the online form at www.wildsolutions.nl/patas.htm, or write to us using the contact details.



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