



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Health & Environment
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PRESS RELEASE

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New research into macaques: National Geographic Crittercam comes to Gibraltar

Increased knowledge of the behaviour and movements of the Gibraltar macaques is vital if their impact on built up areas is to be effectively reduced. To this end, this week sees a major stepping up of research into Gibraltar's macaques, with the most intense monitoring programme ever, taking place over Easter.

A team led by Professor Agustin Fuentes, Professor of Anthropology at Notre Dame University in Indiana, USA, and Dr Lisa Jones-Engel, of the National Primate Research Center, University of Washington, will together with the Gibraltar Macaque teams from the Ornithological & Natural History Society and the Veterinary Clinic, be working intensely on the macaques during this time.

Up to 30 macaques will be trapped under scientific research licenses. Up to 21 of these (approximately 10% of the population) will have samples taken for health and physiological tests. This will serve to review the health status of the animals.

Three individual macaques will have High Definition (HD) cameras attached to them, part of the internationally acclaimed National Geographic crittercam project. This work will be funded by National Geographic who will also be in Gibraltar to cover the initiative.

In addition, GPS tracking collars will be attached to another 6 individuals. This will allow remote tracking of their movements for several months, which will be downloaded onto a computer programme.

The information on movements provided both by the "monkeycams" and the GPS collars will be used as part of the University of Notre Dame/GONHS collaborative study of ranging and management of the macaques.

This type of information is vital in proper management, as it will determine continuously for the first time ever, all the movement of monkeys from selected groups. This will reveal the routes they use, where they sleep, where they forage, and how much time they spend in different areas. In the case of groups that spend time in built-up areas it will help establish where they could be intercepted in regular movements, etc. Clearly the information is also of scientific interest in relation to increasing knowledge of the biology of this species.

All macaques trapped will be held for no longer than 2-3 hours. All animals will be monitored for 2-3 days post-trapping. The three HD cameras will be removed after 48 hours via automatic drop-off mechanisms and the GPS collars will drop off after 4 to 6 month periods via programmed drop-off mechanisms. Previous deployment of similar collars in other studies has unequivocally demonstrated no harm to macaques and no impingement of any movement or social actions.

All trapping will be conducted in collaboration with GONHS and the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic personnel using the same methodologies as in previous collaborations. This includes portable traps which are being brought over for the purpose.

This project, and its methods, have been vetted and approved by the University of Notre Dame Animal Care and Use Committee (ND-IACUC) and Office of Research and is supported by the National Geographic Waitt Fund and the University of Notre Dame.

As part of this initiative, and plans to increase local knowledge of the biology of our monkeys, there will be a public talk on the macaques on Wednesday 3rd April at 7pm at the Rock View Room of the O'Callaghan Elliott Hotel.

The talk will consist of four parts:

(a) Why do these monkeys matter? Gibraltar macaques in context: The distinctive nature, and global importance, of the Barbary Macaque; by Agustin Fuentes (U of Notre Dame)

(b) Can we all get along? macaques, management, and the future; also by Agustin Fuentes

(c) Why you don't want a monkey on your head: Primates, pathogens and what it all means; by Lisa Jones-Engel (U of Washington and National Primate Research Center)

(d) Cameras on monkeys? Crittercams and seeing the world through the eyes of animals; by Greg Marshall (National Geographic Remote Imaging) .

This session will be of tremendous interest as it will be presented by some of the world's top experts in macaque biology and natural history filming.

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Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes, stated, "We are very excited at having these top professionals working in Gibraltar with our own team. The information they will gather is vital, and we are using top of the range monitoring equipment. We must remember that our macaques are an important resource. This work will help us understand them better, which will in turn help us to reduce the nuisance factor. Once we have done this, we can start enjoying and being proud of them once again."

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