



# Primate-Watching and Primate Life-Listing

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## Introduction

Birdwatching and bird life-listing, which are carried out by millions of people around the world, have contributed to avian research and conservation, and become a multi-billion-dollar industry. Primate-watching can similarly benefit the global scientific community, local tourism industry, local communities living close to primate habitats, and of course, the primates themselves. Primate life-listing refers to keeping and updating a personal list of the species that you have seen in the wild, with the aim of seeing as many species as possible. Fellow primate-watching enthusiasts may view life-listing as a competition, while others may keep track just for personal pleasure. Currently, IUCN recognises 532 species of primates (722 species and subspecies). The principal intent of primate-watching and primate life-listing as a hobby is to encourage people to travel around the world to see primates in the wild - searching for them in habitats where there are native populations, documenting them with photos, videos, or field notes, and sharing their observations with the wider community.

Aside from counting all the primates you see, there are several ways to achieve goals in sub-categories, for instance, trying to see all 81 genera of primates in the wild, trying to see all species or subspecies of a particular genus (e.g., all snub-nosed monkeys *Rhinopithecus*, all spider monkeys *Ateles*, etc.), or all of the primates in a particular country. This can make the competition or accomplishment more manageable, and satisfying goals more readily achievable.

New information provided by primate-watchers, such as the occurrence of a primate population in an area previously undocumented, contributes towards species monitoring efforts. Visits by primate-watchers bring in revenue to the tourism industry and local communities, especially if local field guides are hired and local accommodation such as locally run hotels and homestays are chosen. Primate-watchers also contribute by generating interest in and awareness of the primates, which in turn helps to drive the appreciation and conservation of the species and their habitats.

Overall, we believe that primate-watching and primate life-listing can be an important tool to encourage non-primatologists to contribute toward primate conservation and has the potential to become a significant form of conservation investment.

## Introduction

1. Only species seen in the wild can be counted. “Wild” can refer to:
  - Those in their natural habitats such as forests, savannahs, rocky shores.
  - Those in a human-altered landscape, which includes agricultural land (e.g., plantations) and urban areas in close association with humans (e.g., around residential houses; temples).
2. Species seen in the wild under the following conditions can be counted if:
  - You locate the species on your own.
  - You are shown the species by someone (e.g., a guide; a colleague).
  - You locate the species at a site where the primates are provisioned with food, for cultural, research or conservation purposes. (See below and incidental primate tourism.).
  - The primates were reintroduced into their natural habitats from which they were once extirpated.
  - Primates are attracted by using playback for those species that respond to territorial calls.
3. Species seen under the following conditions cannot be counted:
  - Primates in captivity (e.g., in zoos; research/education facilities, etc.).
  - Primates in traps (for research, by hunters, or in wildlife trade/markets).
  - Primates used as photo props in tourist sites.
  - Pet primates.
  - Dead primates (e.g., killed on the road, obtained by the local community).
  - Primates photographed by a wildlife trail camera, but not actually seen by you.
  - Primates located by food provisioning which is specifically for the purposes of attracting tourists.
  - Primates introduced to an area in which they did not naturally occur (e.g., long-tailed macaques on Mauritius; rhesus macaques in the Florida Everglades).

4. Only species you actually see count towards your list. Vocalisations alone are not sufficient. (This differs from birdwatching, where vocalisations alone are often counted).
5. Primate life-listing involves keeping a record of the primate species seen, location and date. Photos and/or videos supplement the sighting.
6. While keeping track of primates below the subspecies level (i.e., different unnamed populations) may be difficult, it is useful, as some of them display significant physical variation. Colour morphs within a species should also be noted.
7. Primate life-listing works on an honour system. There is no official channel for rankings, so it is for your own tracking and reference.

## Further Reading

[www.primate-sg.org/primate-watch](http://www.primate-sg.org/primate-watch)

[www.primatewatching.com](http://www.primatewatching.com)