



MOVE OVER, CURIOUS GEORGE

What makes you think, Wow? For the Yak, it could be anything: an exciting new scientific discovery, a beautiful artwork, an amazing building, a bizarre rock formation, a wild idea that's fun to think about, even a delicious new taste sensation. Look for things that make the Yak go "Wow!" in this new, occasional column.

Where would the Yak like to be right now? In Madidi National Park, hiking through the lush Bolivian rainforest with British biologist Rob Wallace.

It would be early morning and the steamy jungle would just be coming alive with animal sounds: Chirp, chirp, buzz, buzz, rivet, rivet, ka-blurp, ka-blurp.

Suddenly, Rob would stop and listen to one sound in particular. Looking up, he would smile and point. High in a tree, the Yak would spot two colorful fur balls, hugging and singing: Lu-ca, lu-ca, lu-ca. Lu-ca, lu-ca, lu-ca.

Hello, *Callicebus aureipalatii*! That's the scientific name for the world's newest primate, commonly known as the golden palace monkey.

The palace part is a little strange — the monkey was named for a casino, whose



British biologist Rob Wallace discovered the new monkey.

owners raised \$650,000 to protect Madidi. But the golden part fits. The shy fruit eater has a fiery crown, orange-ish cheeks and an orange-ish throat and chest.

The rest of its body is brown, providing camouflage against eagles, hawks, snakes and cats.

"It's extremely good-looking, quite fluffy, almost like a teddy bear," Rob said in a recent phone interview from his office in La Paz, the Bolivian capital.

"The bright colors are basically to make them more attractive to each other."

After spotting the monkey five years ago, Rob was able to observe it closely and film it. He also wrote several scientific papers convincing his peers of the monkey's uniqueness. The monkey is only now becoming known to the public, a year after being officially recognized.

So is Madidi, which is the size of New Jersey and "the most biologically diverse protected area in South America," Rob said. So far, more than 900 bird species have been identified, "and we fully



Photos courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society

Meet our newest New World primate, the golden palace monkey. Adults weigh about two pounds and are about 16 inches long, not counting their white-tipped tails.

expect to reach 1,000," he said.

The list includes the Andean condor, which has a 10-foot wingspan. Thousands of animal species, including jaguars and river otters, live in five different climate zones and many different habitats, including grasslands, gorges, rivers, mountains and cloud forests.

The isolated park is also home to three groups of native people: the Tacana, the Lecos and the Esse-Eja.

The new monkey is a titi, a type of monkey that lives in small family groups of two to five animals.

There are about 30 species in South America, Rob said.

They all sing a form of lu-ca, lu-ca, lu-ca, which basically means "Don't come here, this is still our territory."

Most smallish monkeys in Madidi, such as squirrel monkeys and capuchins, live in much larger groups. There are a lot of animals on the lookout for predators, "so they can make a lot of noise," Rob said.

Titis have a different strategy.

"They have to be quite secretive. They don't make a lot of noise. They don't draw attention to themselves except when they sing, early in the morning. It's a very distinctive noise and it's quite loud."

Lu-ca, lu-ca, lu-ca.

By Patricia Chargot

Yak fact: Wet, tropical forests draped with clouds and mist are known as cloud forests. They often occur near peaks of coastal mountains, such as the Andes.



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Yak fact: There are about 205 species and subspecies of monkeys and other primates in South America, said Anthony Rylands, a primate specialist at Conservation International in Washington, D.C. Twelve have been discovered since 1990, making Rob Wallace's discovery of the golden palace monkey "Lucky 13, it seems," Rylands said.