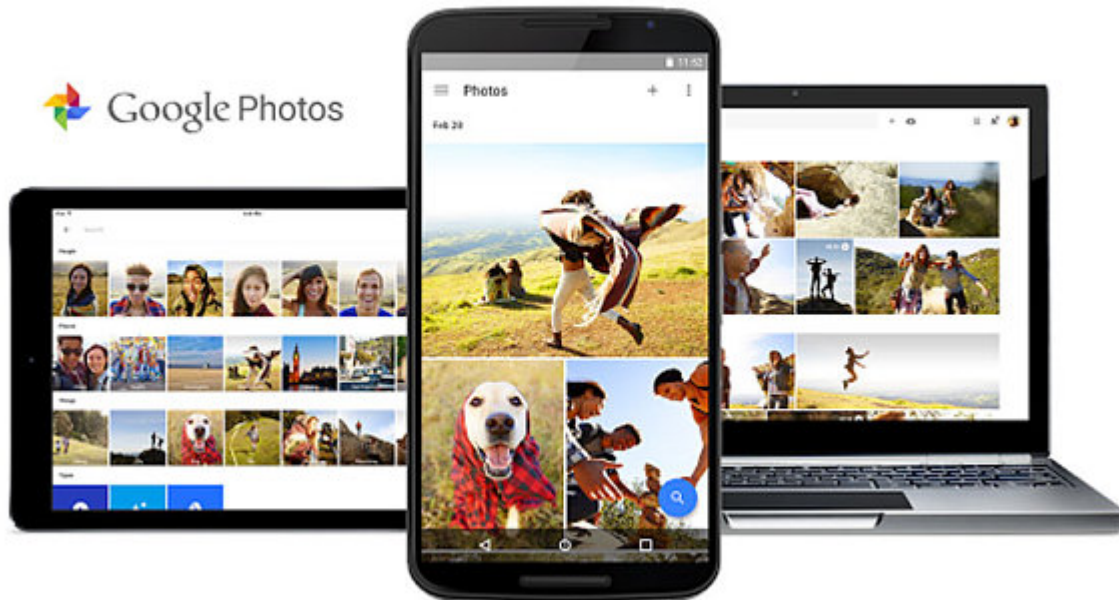# Google Photos labels black people as 'gorillas'

Google has removed the 'gorilla' tag from its new Photos app, after it was found to be misidentifying images of black people

The Google Photos app launched in May

By Sophie Curtis

11:20AM BST 01 Jul 2015

Google has removed the 'gorilla' tag from its new Photos app, after a user noticed it had filed a number of photos of him and his black friend in an automatically generated album named 'gorillas'.

The affected user, computer programmer Jacky Alciné, took to Twitter to post proof of the Google Photos error, along with the question: "What kind of sample image data you collected that would result in this son?"

jackyalciné is about 40% into the IndieWeb. @... Jun 29, 2015
Replying to @jackyalcine
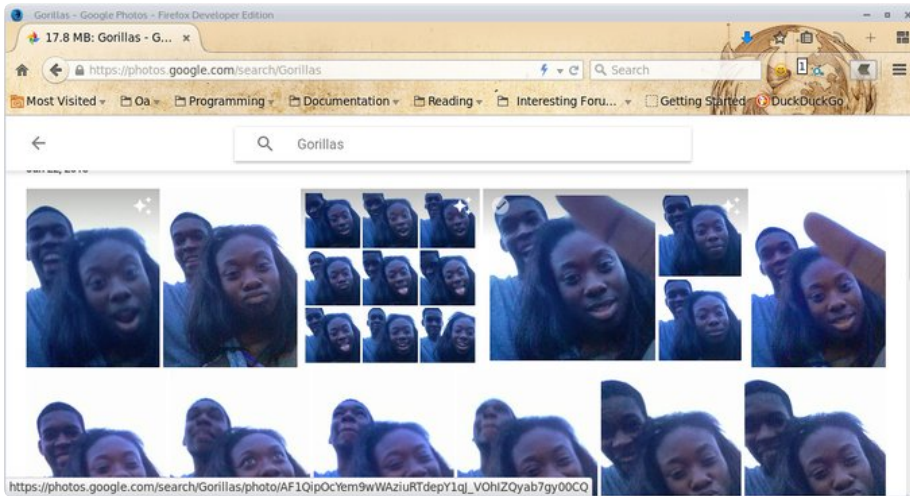What kind of sample image data you collected that would result
in this son?

jackyalciné is about 40% into the IndieWeb.

@jackyalcine

And it's only photos I have with her it's doing this with (results truncated b/c personal): pic.twitter.com/h7MTXd3wgo

3:32 AM - Jun 29, 2015

115　　　187 people are talking about this

Alciné quickly received a response from Google's chief social architect, Yonatan Zunger, who aplogised profusely and admitted: "This is 100% Not OK."

He requested permission to examine the data in Alciné's account, and then promised to roll out a fix. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to tweak the algorithm, Google removed the tag from the app's database altogether.

(((Yonatan Zunger))) @yonatanzunger　　　Jun 29, 2015
Replying to @yonatanzunger
@jackyalcine Quick update: we shouldn't be making piles with that label anymore, and searches are mostly fixed, but they can still turn up..

(((Yonatan Zunger)))
@yonatanzunger

@jackyalcine ..photos where we failed to recognize that there was a face there at all. We're working on that issue now.

8:17 PM - Jun 29, 2015

9　　　See (((Yonatan Zunger)))'s other Tweets

A Google spokesperson echoed Zunger's apologies: "We're appalled and genuinely sorry that this happened. We are taking immediate action to prevent this type of result from appearing," they said.

"There is still clearly a lot of work to do with automatic image labelling, and we're looking at how we can prevent these types of mistakes from happening in the future."

Google launched its new Photos app at its I/O developer conference in May. The app uses image labelling technology to assign tags to objects in photos and arrange them into albums.

The system is based on machine learning, so as more image data gets fed into the system, the technology will improve and get better at recognising objects in the images. However, the technology is still nascent, and Google admits it is nowhere near perfect.

For example, April Taylor from iTech Post noted in May that pictures of her dogs had been mislabelled as horses by Google Photos.

Engineers at Google's research labs also recently ran various pictures through its "neural network", asking the software to identify patterns in the images and then alter that image to exaggerate the patterns.

The experiment returned some bizarre results. In this case the neural network had largely been trained by pictures of animals, so any image sent through the feedback loop was returned as a collage of animal faces.

On Thursday, Google released the software to the public, leading the nightmarish images to flood the internet.

Google allows users of its Photos app to remove results when images are labelled incorrectly. This helps train Google's systems so they can improve over time.

To remove a tag, simply click on the photo and delete the label, the system will be trained not to include this in a search over time.