

British photographer David Slater is known for his work with critically endangered crested black macaques on Sulawesi island. During a trip to photograph these distinctive monkeys, Slater set up his camera on a tripod, enabling the curious macaques to interact with it. In a now-famous turn of events, one macaque snapped a series of selfies, capturing captivating images that quickly went viral and brought global attention to the species' plight. By ingeniously setting up this interaction, Slater not only highlighted his innovative approach to wildlife photography but also sought to use the attention to advocate for the conservation of these animals.

The "monkey selfie" photos spurred controversy when Wikimedia Commons published them, asserting that they were not subject to copyright because they were taken by a non-human creator. This sparked a legal battle involving Slater, Wikimedia, and later PETA, which argued that rights should be assigned to the monkey. The discourse raised questions about authorship, creativity, and the boundaries of copyright law. Ultimately, the court decided that non-human entities cannot hold copyright, leaving Slater without legal grounds to claim the images as his own. However, many legal scholars have proposed alternative interpretations that might have recognized the complexities of authorship in this scenario.

The fallout from the case has been profound for Slater, both emotionally and financially. He has reportedly faced significant income loss due to the image's public domain status, impacting his professional practice. The situation might also deter photographers from pursuing similarly creative interactions with wildlife, fearing their work could be deemed unprotectable. Under a revised model of copyright authorship, such as a percentage allocation system, David might hold 50% ownership for his foundational role in the creative setup, while the macaque's crucial interaction might account for the other 50%. This framework respects David's influence while acknowledging the monkey's role in the creation. Hence, the outputs of Slater's process remain **unfixed**, multitudinous in their possibilities until snapped into reality by the playful intervention of his unexpected collaborator.