

This silverback pulls up swamp plants to eat.



Into the Swamp

Scientists have mostly studied the silverbacks. Scientists think the males make all the decisions. I had another **hypothesis**.

I thought that the females make decisions, too. I went to Africa to prove my hypothesis. I joined some other scientists. They were studying a silverback named Kingo.

Part of my **method** was to observe. I followed the gorillas through the jungle. I got covered in mud. Bees swarmed around my face. I waded through swamps full of bloodsuckers.

At one point, a nest of ants dropped on my head. Ants were crawling all over me. Suddenly, a female gorilla screamed. Kingo raced to her.

I raced after Kingo. It turns out nothing was wrong. She got Kingo to come to her.

The next day, I saw the females lead Kingo to the swamp. They sat in the sun. Kingo sat in the water, eating plants. Even though I needed more **observations**, this was my first bit of **evidence**. My **conclusion** could be the males do not make every decision.

Being Strong

Sometimes my job requires a lot of strength. I must also be able to survive hardships. In South America, I faced a big challenge. It was the flat-topped mountains. They are very tall. Some rise above the clouds.

I wondered what lived on these mountains. I had a hypothesis. There could be unknown species there. To find out, I would have to climb.

My team and I cut a path through the jungle. We didn't rest much, even at night. Chirping sounds filled the air. We followed the sounds. The chirps led us to a plant.

The plant had pools of water between its leaves. A blue-bellied tree frog sat in one of the pools. We followed other chirps. Then we found a bright yellow frog. Maybe these were plants and animals no one had seen before.

Tiny frogs like this one chirp loudly all night in the jungle.



Finding a Lost World

We got closer and closer to the tallest mountain. I am afraid of heights. Yet I needed to climb more than 2.7 kilometers (9,000 feet) straight up.

We couldn't reach the top in one day. I spent the night in a hanging tent. A single pin held it to the cliff. Inside my tent, I found a huge spider. I barely slept that night.

The next morning, I began climbing again. I saw a bird with shiny green feathers. It was perched right in front of me. I saw a black scorpion. She had tiny, baby scorpions on her back.

To the Top

Finally, I reached the top. I studied the black rocks there. Something moved. It was a toad with bumpy skin. This "pebble toad" didn't hop. It walked like a dinosaur. It walked right onto my hand.

My team and I collected plants. We took photos of animals. We carried the photos and plants back home. There, we studied them. Our hypothesis was right. Some of the frogs were new species! Once again, my curiosity led me to one of the coolest places on Earth.



This mountain is flat on top and rises above the clouds.



Mireya camps out on the side of one of the mountains.

Looking for Lemurs

Sometimes a great discovery happens by accident. That's what happened to me in Madagascar.

Madagascar is an island near Africa. Lemurs live there. It's the only place where you will find them in the wild. They are one of my favorite animals.

In Madagascar, I studied lemurs called indris. Indris are the island's largest primates. They look like teddy bears. I wanted to find out how they live. Each day, I followed them through the jungle.

Lots of Life

As I followed the indris, I wrote down everything they did and ate. I saw other animals there, too. There were bright red tomato frogs. There were colorful chameleons. I even saw a leaf-tailed gecko.

Leaf-tailed geckos are hard to spot. Their skin blends in with tree trunks. Some even seem to grow moss on their backs. This helps them hide.

One night, a pair of red eyes looked out at me from the jungle. Was it another gecko? To find out, I would have to catch it.



Mireya saw many kinds of chameleons in Madagascar. This panther chameleon is catching an insect.

Surprise!

My team had a trap for small animals. It's like a tiny cage. I put tasty bits of banana inside. An animal wandered in. The door closed.

We checked the trap. I couldn't believe my eyes. A tiny lemur looked up at me. It could fit in the palm of my hand. I put it in my pocket and raced back to camp.

I studied its features. I measured it. Then I let it go. The lemur only weighed 56 grams (2 ounces). I had discovered the smallest lemur in the world! All I did was ask a simple question. "What is that?"

Mireya: Scientist

There are all kinds of scientists in the world. What kind of scientist would you like to be? Think about what makes you curious.

I've always been curious about animals. After all this time, I am certain about one thing. Being an explorer isn't what I do. It's who I am.

See Mireya Mayor tracking gorillas. Go to <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/wild/talent-mireya-mayor>

Mireya and her team discovered this tiny mouse lemur.



WORDWISE

conclusion: an opinion formed after careful research and thinking

evidence: information that supports a conclusion

hypothesis: an idea that has not been proved

method: a step-by-step plan to try to prove a hypothesis

observation: the act of gathering information by looking at something closely



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