

Ring-tailed Lemur (*Lemur catta*)

Habitat and Distribution: Forests (rainforest, subalpine, deciduous, gallery, spiny bush) of south and southwestern Madagascar.

Size: 15-18 inches tall, 5-8 lbs.

Wild Diet: Fruit (especially tamarind), leaves, flowers, sap, bark and occasionally birds and insects.

Predators: Raptors, fossas, domestic dogs and humans.

Life Span: 15-18 years (up to 27 years in captivity)

Reproduction: Females are sexually mature at about 3 years, males at 2½. Breeding season extends from mid April through June, and females are capable of breeding annually. During the breeding season males will “stinkfight” with each other, wiping secretions from glands in their wrists onto their tails and then flicking their tail at an opponent until one gives up. After a 4 ½ month gestation one (sometimes two) infants are born. The infant weighs about 2½ ounces, and will hang on to its mother’s stomach for at least 2 weeks, and then will move to riding on her back. At around 2½ months the young begin exploring on their own and eating solid foods. Babies are weaned at about 5 months.

Behavior: Ring-tailed lemurs live in female dominated social groups of up to 24 individuals. Males will move between troops, but the females usually stay in the group they were born into. Lemurs engage socially by grooming, sunbathing, using a complex set of body postures and vocal communications. Females will switch infants, baby-sit, or form playgroups with the young of other females and have been seen to even allow those infants to nurse. Ring-tailed lemurs are active during the day, and spend most of their time in trees, however more time on the ground than other lemur species.

Conservation Connection: Currently listed as CITES, Appendix I, meaning that they are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade of this species for commercial reasons. Ring-tailed lemurs are threatened by loss of habitat due to logging and livestock ranching.

Interesting Facts: The tamarind tree is one of the most important food sources for ring-tailed lemurs. The tamarind produces fruits and leaves at alternating times of the year which provides a constant food source for the lemurs. The tamarind is considered a keystone resource for the ring-tailed lemur because it can provide up to 50% of the total food consumed during the year.



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