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Contact: Sheelah Medved, 253-404-3636 or sheelah.medved@tacomaparks.com

Animal Avenue –Neighbor Bios

Meerkat

Scientific name – *Suricata suricata*

Protection status – least concern

Type – mammal

Diet – omnivore

Hometown – southern Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - Meerkats live in elaborate underground homes also known as burrows. Their burrows have many entrances, tunnels and rooms. Meerkats sometimes convert old termite mounds into a new home. Meerkats build and share their burrows with other meerkats. Each group, called a mob, might have as many as 30 meerkats in it. Everyone works together to help all of the meerkats in the mob.

Ring-tailed lemur

Scientific name – *Lemur catta*

Protection status – vulnerable

Type – mammal

Diet – herbivore

Hometown – Madagascar

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Ring-tailed lemurs live in the dry forest. They feel at home both on the ground and high up in the trees. These lemurs live in troops of 5 to 30 animals. When they travel together, they stick their tails up in the air like flags to say, "follow me!" Like humans, lemurs live in families. Ring-tailed lemur families have moms, babies, sisters, brothers and dads but the moms are in charge. The moms and their babies get the best of everything: the best food, the best place at the watering hole, and the best sleeping trees.

Black lemur

Scientific name – *Eulemur macaco*

Protection status – vulnerable

Type – mammal

Diet – herbivore

Hometown – Madagascar

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Black lemurs feel at home in the trees of the rainforest. Lemurs hang out with other lemurs in groups called troops. Black lemurs live in troops of 4 to 15 animals. Troops work together to find food and watch for danger. To talk to each other, they howl, growl, bark, scream, and purr. Each lemur in the troop helps the others keep their fur clean and healthy. They have special teeth to help them comb out bugs and loose fur.

Damaraland mole rat

Scientific name – *Cryptomys damarensis*

Protection status – least concern

Type – mammal

Diet – herbivore

Hometown – Sub-Saharan Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – COMMUNITY - Mole rats spend their whole lives in underground burrows. The burrows have different rooms for different activities. There are kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and nurseries. These little diggers have big communities – up to 40 mole rats. Each mole rat has a job to do that helps everyone in their neighborhood.

Golden orb weaver spider

Scientific name – *Nephila clavipes*

Protection status – none

Type – arachnid

Diet – small insects

Hometown – Southeastern USA – North Carolina to Texas

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - Orb weavers build huge webs out of golden silk in forest trees. Some webs are 7 feet across. Each web is a home for one Orb weaver spider. Though Orb weavers don't have roommates, sometimes smaller "thief" spiders hang out to try to steal their meal.

Goliath bird eating spider

Scientific name – *Theraphosa blondi*

Protection status – none

Type – arachnid

Diet – insects, frogs, rodents

Hometown – South America

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - As the world's largest spider, Goliaths live in burrows on the rainforest floor. If the opening to the burrow is covered with a silken web, it is probably at home. If not, the spider may be out hunting for a meal. Either Goliath spiders dig their own home or they move into a deserted burrow left by rodents that have moved on. The only time they spend with other Goliath spiders is when mating or guarding their young.

Emerald tree boa

Scientific name – *Avicularia versicolor*

Protection status – Least concern

Type – reptile

Diet – carnivore

Hometown – South America

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Emerald tree boas live in the trees of South American rainforests. They spend the day coiled over branches – perfectly balanced with their head resting in the center of the coils. They share this trait with Green tree pythons which is a reason people may confuse the two species. Mother emerald tree boas give birth to live babies after 100 to 110 days. They may have as many as 20 at a time. Juveniles are often orange or yellow at birth; as they mature their color changes to emerald green with faint white stripes.

Green tree python

Scientific name – *Morelia viridis*

Protection status – none

Diet – carnivore

Hometown – Indonesia and Australia

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Primarily arboreal, Green tree pythons, are found in Indonesian and Australian rainforests. Like the Emerald tree boa, these snakes loop a coil or two over a branch and rest their head in the middle. Another trait these species share is their bright coloration. In both species moms and dads are bright green and young are bright yellow, orange or red like tropical tree flowers. Green tree python moms lay approximately 12 to 25 eggs. These protective moms incubate the eggs for 40 to 50 days by wrapping around the clutch until they hatch.

Western Bell's hingeback tortoise

Scientific name – *Kinixys belliana nogueyi*

Protection status – none

Type – reptile

Diet – omnivore

Hometown – Sub-Saharan western Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - These tortoises take their home, the shell on their backs with them wherever they go. The hingeback's shell has a special hinge on top that helps the tortoise close the rear of its shell tightly over its back legs and tail. They retract their head into their shell and use their front legs to seal them inside their home. Hingeback males do not like to share their space with other male hingebacks. They get cranky if others come too close.

Pancake tortoise

Scientific name – *Malacochersus tornieri*

Protection status – vulnerable

Type – reptile

Diet – omnivore

Hometown – East Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - These tortoises have a flat shell that is much softer than other tortoises' shells. To stay safe, they hide between rocks. The pancake tortoise squeezes its flat body between the rocks and inflates its body to ensure predators are unable to remove it from the shelter. These tortoises sometimes share their rocky hideouts with other tortoises.

Ornate horned frog

Scientific name – *Ceratophryes ornata*

Protection status – none, but amphibians are threatened worldwide

Type – amphibian

Diet – frogs, lizards, mice, and large insects

Hometown – South America

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - These frogs make their homes on the forest floor. To stay safe, they burrow into the leaves and mud. Ornate horned frogs like their own space, live by themselves and tend not to move much. As a large frog with a mouth as wide as its head and powerful jaws, Ornates will sit and wait to ambush their prey as they walk by.

White's tree frog

Scientific name – *Pelodryas caerulea*

Protection status – none, but amphibians are threatened worldwide

Type – amphibian

Diet – carnivore

Hometown – Australia, New Guinea, and New Zealand

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - The perfect home for tree frogs is up in the trees which is the natural home for White's tree frogs but these frogs also have a habit of living in or near buildings. The very large sticky discs on the ends of its toes help the frog grip surfaces while climbing. These frogs are known for having calm natures and share the forest with many other frogs. They make low slow barking sounds to talk to each other.

Hour glass tree frog

Scientific name – *Hyla ebraccata*

Protection status – none, but amphibians are threatened worldwide

Type – amphibian

Diet – carnivore

Hometown – Central America

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Hour glass tree frogs live high up in the trees of the rainforest. During the rainy season when rain pools are common, mother tree frogs lay 20 to 80 eggs on plant leaves that overhang bodies of water, providing protection from aquatic predators. When the eggs hatch, the tiny tadpoles drop into the water below where they can grow into frogs like regular tadpoles.

Surinam toad

Scientific name – *Pipa pipa*

Protection status – none, but amphibians are threatened worldwide

Type – amphibian

Diet – fish, worms

Hometown – South America

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Surinam toads live on the bottom of warm rivers, streams and murky swamps. They must come to the surface every half hour to breathe. After the mother toad lays 3 to 10 eggs, the father puts them on her back. The eggs sink down into little pockets in the mom's skin where they develop into baby toads over 3 to 5 months emerging as miniature adults. Young toads initially have trouble diving and remain near the surface of the water. After approximately a month, the young toads move to the bottom of their water habitat, having learned how to swim and dive.

Long-legged desert ant

Scientific name – *Novomessor cockerelli*

Protection status – none

Type – insect

Diet – omnivore

Hometown – Southwestern USA and Mexico

Connection to Animal Avenue – HOME - Desert ants live in the desert. They work together to build elaborate underground homes. Worker ants build and maintain the tunnels and rooms by carrying tiny bits of dirt in their jaws out of the home. Like most ant homes, each room has a purpose such as food storage, nursery and first aid. The queen, the largest ant in the colony, has her own room for laying eggs. Most of the eggs she lays develop into workers each having a special job that benefits the colony.

African emperor scorpion

Scientific name – *Pandinus imperator*

Protection status – threatened

Type – arachnid

Diet – carnivore

Hometown – forests of West Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – COMMUNITY - Emperor scorpions live in burrows on the rainforest floor or in termite mounds. Scorpions have huge claws, which they use to dig burrows and hunt for food. Emperor scorpion mothers and babies will sometimes share a burrow. In order to protect their babies, mothers will group together in an area. They can keep their babies safe if they stick together.

Madagascar hissing cockroach

Scientific name – *Gromphadorhina portentosa*

Protection status – none

Type – insect

Diet – omnivore

Hometown – Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - Hissing cockroaches live on the forest floor under leaves and rotting logs. The Madagascar hissing cockroach is believed to be the only insect that can hiss by forcing air through their breathing pores found on their abdomen. Both males and females hiss when disturbed or handled. Two large horns on the male hissing cockroach's head distinguish it from the female. Females attract males by emitting a special scent. The female carries an egg case containing 15 to 40 developing babies inside her abdomen. After approximately 60 days, she gives birth to live babies called nymphs, which stay with her for 6 months.

African cichlids

Scientific name – multiple Lake Malawi species

Protection status – none

Type – fish

Diet – herbivore

Hometown – Lake Malawi, East Africa

Connection to Animal Avenue – FAMILY - These cichlids live in Lake Malawi in East Africa, one of the biggest lakes in the world. Cichlids are excellent parents. Some have special pockets in their mouths where they keep their eggs. When the eggs hatch, the babies stay in their mom or dad's mouth for a couple of weeks. Babies are spit out to find food, eat, then go back into the mom's or dad's mouth until they are mature enough to survive on their own.