

Black and White Ruffed Lemur

Varecia variegata



Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Mammalia
Order Primates
Family Lemuridae

Native to: Madagascar.

Status: Critically Endangered

Lemur populations are declining because of human destruction of its forest habitat, and commercial exportation. Lemurs are the most primitive of primates, they once ranged throughout the world, now the only place in the wild they are found is on the island of Madagascar.

Appearance & Lifespan

Both males and females look the same, with black and white markings and a ruff or fringe of long white fur around their ears and neck. Lemurs have big round yellow eyes that glow reddish in the dark. The Ruffed Lemur is the largest of the lemur family, it can measure four feet in length including its two foot tail and weight between 7-10 pounds. Its fur is long and soft and the ears are hidden by a ruff of hair. The colour pattern on the body is unique to each lemur and may not be symmetrical.

The lifespan of this lemur is around 20 years; it can be expected to live a little longer in captivity but usually less in the wild.



Behavior & Reproduction

Black and white ruffed lemurs live in groups of two to five individuals, usually as a family. Grooming each other is a form of greeting. They mark their territory by screaming and scent, they rub leaves, branches or fruit with their palms to leave a distinctive odor. Lemurs like to curl up in a tree and sleep during the day, they are most active at dusk and during the first part of the night. Lemurs are very good climbers, they can run across the branches and leap from tree to tree.

In the fall females build a nest in a hole in a tree or forked branch and line it with fur. They give birth to one to three young after a gestation period around 100 days. Over half of the births are twins. By five weeks of age the young can climb to the tops of trees. They start eating solid food around four months of age. Females can reach reproductive maturity at 20 months old.

Ecology & Habitat

Lemurs are a forest species found in humid rain forests. Black and white lemurs are native to the island of Madagascar, where they inhabit eastern rainforests. Lemurs are vegetarians and live on a variety of fruits and vegetables. They are especially fond of bananas. Although the lemur eats mainly fruit it sometimes eats leaves, nectar and seeds.

In the Zoo, the lemurs are fed a high fiber primate chow, a variety of fruits and vegetables, beans, rice, raisins, apple and willow tree browse, and a multivitamin daily.

Did You Know?

1. A female lemur carries her newborn in her mouth until the baby is able to cling to the fur on mother's stomach or back.
2. All lemur species have modified teeth for social grooming of troop members.
3. Lemurs usually use their teeth rather than their hands to pick up food.

