



Red Ruffed Lemur

Variegata rubra

Insert Picture.....

Classification *What groups*

does this organism belong to based on characteristics shared with other organisms?

Class: Mammalia
Order: Primates
Family Lemuridae
Genus: Varecia
Species: Variegata rubra

Distribution *Where in the*

world does this species live?

Restricted to the island of Madagascar's northeastern Masoala Peninsula.

Habitat *What kinds of areas does this species live in?*

Red ruffed lemurs live primarily in the top canopy of the tropical, lowland forests of the Masoala Peninsula including the Masoala National Park.

Physical Description *How would this animal's body shape and size be described?*

- Average body weight is 8 pounds (3.6 kg) with females slightly larger than males. Average body length is 20 inches (50.8 cm) with a slightly longer, bushy tail.
- Soft, thick **fur is reddish-brown** with a black face, feet, tail and belly and a white patch on the back of the neck.
- A **neck ruff** or mane hides small ears.
- **Muzzle is pointed** with sensitive whiskers and a moist dog-like nose.
- Strong hind legs are longer than forelimbs.

Diet *What does this species eat?*

In their historic range. Red ruffed lemurs are mostly **frugivores** in the wild consuming fruit, nectar and pollen, but also leaves, seeds and flowers.

At the zoo: Variety of vegetables, greens, starches, and low-starch biscuits. Small amounts of fruit for training purposes.



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Predators *What eats this species?*

Wild predators of red ruffed lemurs are boa constrictors, eagles, hawks, and fossa (a weasel-like animal). Humans also hunt and trap lemurs for food and the pet trade.

Social Organization *How does this animal interact with others of its species?*

Red ruffed lemurs are **diurnal** (active during the day), usually foraging in groups. Social organization varies depending on season and habitat quality. In some areas, groups are small with two to five individuals and in other areas or when fruit is plentiful, larger loose affiliations are formed of up to 32 individuals. Established territories are defended against other groups. Males and females form separate overlapping ranges. Loud, raucous, barking vocalizations allow group members to stay in contact, and serve as warning to intruders and warn of the presence of predators. Scent marking is another means of communicating and defending territory. Females are the central force in groups and dominant to males. Lemurs groom each other for hygiene and to cement social bonds.

Life Cycle *How does this species mate, raise young, grow and develop?*

These prosimians (primates evolving before monkeys and apes) have a life span in the wild of 15 to 20 years but can live more than 30 years in human care. Red ruffed lemurs are **polygamous**, and breeding is seasonal in the wild between May and July. Ruffed lemurs are one of only a few primates that have litters. Litter size is typically two to three but can be up to six, and mothers can nurse six simultaneously. Typical gestation is 100 days. Births take place in well-concealed tree nests, unusual for diurnal primates. Young are removed from the nest after a week or two. Mothers will carry each in her mouth rather than on her back like other lemur species. Weaning occurs at about 4 months and sexual maturity at about two years. Males will protect young.

Adaptations *What physical and behavioral characteristics enable this animal to survive and thrive?*

- **Quadrupedal** and mostly arboreal but will occasionally walk on the ground. Movement in trees is by leaping, clinging, and suspending by back feet.
- Six bottom teeth known as a **tooth comb** and a long claw on the second toe are used for grooming long, thick fur.
- A **long muzzle** allows for collecting pollen from flowers without harming the flower.
- Large range of **12 vocalizations** aids in communication.
- **Thick bushy tail** serves as a visual signal when threatened and as a balancing tool.
- **Soft, broad fingers** with flat nails aid in grasping and grooming.



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Collection Connection

- **Mego** (male) DOB 4/20/04. Mego can be easily recognized by the white ring around the base of his tail. He enjoys sleeping in the sun and showing off his “hanging” behavior (behavior you would see in the wild). Mego is Penny’s father and came to the Zoo in 2014 from The Duke Lemur Center in North Carolina.
- **Sixpence** (female) DOB 6/3/98. Sixpence enjoys sleeping under heat lamps and trying to find alone time away from her daughter Penny. Sixpence was born at the Zoo.
- **Penny** (female) DOB 4/25/17. Penny is very active and enjoys jumping on her parents to get them to play. She also loves interacting with various enrichment items by jumping on them and in them (i.e. blankets, trash cans, hanging tubs).

Conservation Status *Is this animal at risk for extinction and why?*

IUCN Status: Critically Endangered since 2012

Declines in both habitat area and quality continue due to human encroachment and an upsurge of illegal logging since 2009. Frequent cyclones (hurricanes) also contribute to significant declines because of the concentration and severe fragmentation of remaining populations.

Resources and Where to Learn More

IUCN Red <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22920/16121712>

Smithsonian’s National Zoo <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/red-ruffed-lemur>

Duke Lemur Center <https://lemur.duke.edu/discover/meet-the-lemurs/red-ruffed-lemur/>

Univ. of Wis. Natl. Primate Research Center https://pin.primate.wisc.edu/factsheets/entry/ruffed_lemur

Lemur Conservation Foundation <https://lemurreserve.org/lemurs/red-ruffed-lemur/>