

## **Mandrill**

*Mandrillus sphinx*

**Fingers and Toes** - Mandrills have an opposable first digit on their hands and feet. These opposable digits aid in foraging for food throughout the day as they pick up fruits and seeds and turn over rocks and debris to find food. Mandrills walk plantigrade (flat-footed) on their back feet, but when on their front feet walk on their fingers.

**Carry-out Please** - Mandrills have large cheek pouches that open beside their lower teeth and extend down the sides of their neck. These pouches can contain nearly a full stomach load of food when fully distended. When competing for food or foraging in a dangerous place, mandrills can quickly cram food into the cheek pouches then retreat to a safe place to eat. They use the back of their hand to push food out of the pouches and into their mouth.

### **Classification**

Class: Mammalia  
Order: Primate  
Family: Cercopithecidae  
Genus: *Mandrillus*  
Species: *sphinx*

### **Distribution**

The mandrill ranges through Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Congo West Africa.

### **Habitat**

Dense tropical rainforests and coastal forests, montane and thick secondary forests as well as thick bush.

### **Physical Description**

- Male mandrills average 32 inches (81 cm) in length with a three to five-inch (7-12 cm) tail: females are about 22 inches (55 cm) long.
- Males weigh up to 60 pounds (27 kg); females weigh about 27 pounds (12 kg).
- Mandrills have dark brown to gray fur with lighter fur underneath.
- Males have yellow beards, bright red and blue snouts, colorful red and blue rumps, and bright red genitals.

### **Diet**

What Does It Eat?

*In the wild:* Fruits, seeds, leaves, greens, roots, fungi, ants, spiders, worms, bird eggs and small vertebrates.

*At the zoo:* Monkey chow plus fruits, vegetables, greens, seeds, nuts and eggs.

What Eats It?

Predators of the mandrill include leopards, crowned hawk-eagles, and snakes.

### **Social Organization**

Mandrills are social animals living in groups of 20 or more animals, most often consisting of a dominant adult male, multiple adult females and juveniles. Super troops of several hundred mandrills may gather when food is readily available. Many adult males live alone, only joining large groups during the breeding season when they fight for breeding rights. Mandrill troops stay together for years.

### **Life Cycle**

Females reach sexual maturity at four to five years but males are usually several years older before they are strong enough to win breeding rights. Females have a prominent estrus swelling that clearly identifies their reproductive status. Gestation is about six and a half months resulting in a single offspring weighing one to two pounds (.4-.9 kg). Mandrill infants are born covered with fur, and with their eyes open. They cling to the mother's belly or back as she moves through the forest. Only females care for the infants, and they are weaned at six to 12 months. Selection of appropriate foods is behavior youngsters learn from their mothers. Females remain with their mother throughout their life but males leave the group when they reach maturity. Mandrills can live up to 30 years in the wild and up to 40 years in captivity.

### **Adaptations**

### **Colorful Markings**

Adult male mandrills are very colorful. The thick ridges along their noses are purple and blue. Their noses and lips are bright red and they have golden beards. These bright colors are thought to be attractive to females. But those bright colors also show up on the mandrills' rear ends that may enhance visibility in thick vegetation as troops move through the forest. Their rumps range in color from deep reds to pinks to bright blues and lilac. Their genitals are also bright red. The coloration of dominant males is brighter than juvenile or non-dominant males. Adult females have very dull coloration on their faces.

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### **Fingers and Toes**

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### **Conservation Connection**

*IUCN Status: Vulnerable.*

Mandrills are threatened due to habitat destruction and hunting. Logging is destroying forest habitat and logging roads provide easy access for hunters into the forests where mandrills live. Bush meat hunting has become a critical concern for the survival of mandrills, as the demand for bush meat has increased not only to feed growing populations in Africa, but also to feed the export market in Europe.

### **Fun Facts**

- Mandrills are the largest of all monkeys.
- Mandrills have unique fingerprints that can identify individual animals.
- Although they are adapted to live on land, mandrills seek shelter in trees at night.
- In the movie "Lion King" the character "Rafiki" is a mandrill.