

Ring-Tailed Lemur

Scientific Name: *Lemur catta*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Primates

Family: Lemuridae



Head and body length is 15 to 18 inches; Tail length is 21 to 25 inches; Weight can range up to 6 lbs. This is the most common of the lemur family. They have black rings around their otherwise gray tail, hence the name. The body is gray with the undercoat lighter and the extremities white. There are black rings around the eyes, and the muzzle is black. Lemur catta have nonacute “nocturnal” eyes, with blue-yellow but not red-green color vision. They are committed to diurnal life. They move at night only in bright moonlight, and habitually range out of the forest into the glaring sunlight.

Range

Southeast and southwest Madagascar

Habitat

Rocky mountains and deciduous forests

Gestation

132 to 143 days

Litter

1

Behavior

Ring-tailed lemurs are very gregarious animals, and it is interesting to note that in a group of lemurs the males must be in the majority to ensure a healthy social and reproductive environment. However, the troop is headed by one or more females, making it a matriarchal society. Adult females are 100% dominant over males. Males are inhibited from attacking females, whereas females supplant, cuff, or chase males with impunity. A viable troop consists of 3 to 4 males, 1 or 2 females, and the young. When a ring-tailed lemur eats juicy food it bites off pieces with the molars, so that the juice runs directly into the mouth and does not wet the fur. They are fastidiously clean and groom constantly, using grooming digits on the hind feet. These animals possess a hairless glandular region on the inside of each lower arm above the wrist. Males have an additional gland on the upper arm which secretes a strong-smelling fluid. Every foreign object in the lemur's territory or cage is marked with this glandular secretion. Ring-tails jump quite effortlessly, even vertically up 10-foot walls. During sleep they curl up, burying their heads and arms between their legs, and wrapping the long tail around the body vertically. They can make soft purring sounds or piercing screams.

Reproduction

The young are cared for by the mother, but all the troop members will play with and help care for the infant. In the wild most births occur in August and September. Maturity is reached in from 2 to 5 years. Females usually have multiple mates, though there is a priority of conception for the first male to mate.

Wild Diet

Vegetables, fruit, leaves, flowers