

Ring-tailed Lemur

Lemur catta



Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Primates*

Family: *Lemuridae*

Characteristics: Ring-tailed lemurs are best known for their long, thick, black-and-white striped tails that can measure over 2 feet in length. The ring-tailed lemur's body is usually a light reddish gray or light gray color with darker rumps. They have white bellies, hands, feet, ears, and faces. They usually have dark brown or black patches around light brown eyes. Males and females tend to be similar in size with captive lemurs weighing slightly less than 6 pounds on average. ([Primate Info Net](#)) Their bodies are about 18 inches from head to rump. ([National Geographic](#))

Behavior: Ring-tailed lemurs usually form large family groups, called troops, with up to 30 individuals. Each group has a well-developed social hierarchy with the alpha female at the top. Females will stay with the same group for a lifetime, but males will migrate to different groups. Ring-tailed lemurs use constant [vocalizations](#) to keep group members together. These are the most terrestrial of lemurs, spending a majority of their time walking on all fours on the ground. ([Duke](#))

Reproduction: In family troops, the females will usually all come into estrous within 2 weeks of each other. This will lead to a high level of synchronized births within the troop. The gestation period for the ring-tailed lemur is 4 to 4.5 months. Most often the female gives birth to a single young, but twins are possible. The young grasp to the female's underside for about 2 weeks, then move to cling to the mother's back. The young are weaned at 5 months of age. Females are responsible for most of the [offspring's care](#). ([Animal Diversity](#))

Diet: Wild: Fruit, leaves, flowers, bark, sap, insects, and small vertebrates. ([Arkive](#))

Zoo: Leaf-eater biscuit, fruits, vegetables, and greens.

Conservation: [IUCN Redlist](#) of endangered species currently lists the ring-tailed lemur as endangered. The lemur population has decreased for this species by greater than 50 percent in 36 years and is still decreasing. Major threats to ring-tailed lemur populations include habitat loss and hunting. The forested habitat where this lemur lives is constantly being converted to livestock pastures. Ring-tailed lemurs only exist in a few protected areas. The AZA also participates in the SSP for ring-tailed lemurs, and they are very successful captive breeders.

FYI: The ring-tailed lemur is the most common primate in captivity with over 2,500 lemurs in zoos alone. They are also the most researched lemur species.



Range & Habitat:

Found in the dry forests and bush of southern and southwestern Madagascar exclusively.



Lifespan: up to 35+ years in captivity, 19 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Males have a specialized scent gland on their wrists that they use in "[stink fights](#)" with other males.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Endangered

