



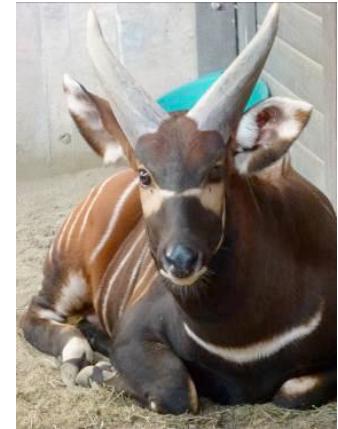
BONGO

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Family: Bovidae

Genus: *Tragelaphus*

Species: *eurycerus*



Range: *T. e. eurycerus* in West Africa and Democratic Republic of the Congo to the southern Sudan; *T. e. isaaci* in isolated populations in Kenya

Habitat: Dense tropical jungles with dense undergrowth up to an altitude of 12,800 ft.; *T. e. eurycerus* reside in lowland forests, *T. e. isaaci* reside in montane or highland forests.

Niche: Terrestrial, herbivorous browser, primarily nocturnal

Wild diet: Leaves, shoots, and grasses

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild)

(Captivity) Up to 19 years

Sexual Dimorphism: males slightly larger than females and have longer, more massive horns

Location in SF Zoo: Yard next to black rhinos opposite the lion house yards

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Bongos are among the largest of the African forest antelope species. They are the only spiral-horned antelope in which both sexes have horns; female's are usually thinner, shorter, and more parallel. Coats are a deep chestnut color with 10-15 white stripes on their sides to help camouflage them from predators. The number of stripes on each side is rarely the same. Coats of male bongos become darker as they age, while the coats of females are usually more brightly colored than those of males. Their muzzle is black, topped by a white marking between the eyes and where the neck meets the chest, and two large white cheek spots. The ears are large, edged with white on the inside. There is a black and white dorsal crest.

The large ears are to sharpen hearing, and the distinctive coloration may help bongos identify one another in their dark forest habitats. Bongos have no special secretion glands and so rely less on scent to find one another than do other similar antelopes. Bongos use their prehensile tongue to grasp the vegetation they feed on. A suitable habitat for bongos must have permanent water available where they wallow frequently in mud, afterwards rubbing the mud against a tree, polishing their horns.

Weight: F 330–518 lb M 490–893 lb
HL: 5.6-8.3 ft
SH: 3.6-4.3 ft
TL: 18-26 in
Horn L: 30-40 in

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Of the two subspecies of bongos the western or lowland bongo (*T. e. eurycerus*) is considered to be at lower risk and classified as near-threatened by the IUCN red list and on CITES Appendix III. The eastern or mountain bongo (*T. e. isaaci*) is considered to be critically endangered. In 2000, the USA AZA upgraded the bongo to a Species Survival Plan Participant.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Bongos have a wide range of vocalizations, including grunts, snorts, a weak mooing contact call, and a bleat-like alarm call. They are seldom seen in large groups. Males, or bulls, tend to be solitary while females with young live in groups of 6 to 8. Bongos have seldom been seen in herds of more than 20. When young males mature and leave their maternal groups they most often remain solitary only seeking females during mating time.

Bongos are shy and easily frightened will disappear quickly into the surrounding forest where they stand still and alert. Bongos are great high jumpers but prefer to go under or around obstacles. They will tilt their chin up to lie their horns flat against their back in order to maneuver swiftly through the dense forest. Older bongos often have bald spots on their back from the tips of their horns rubbing away the fur. After fleeing they face away from the disturbance and turn their heads from time to time to check on the situation as their hindquarters are less conspicuous than the forequarters, and from this position the animal can quickly flee.

Adult males tend to avoid one another. Occasionally they meet and spar with their horns in a ritualized manner. Serious fights are discouraged through visual displays, in which the males bulge their necks, roll their eyes and hold their horns in a vertical position while slowly pacing back and forth in front of the other male.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Most mating tends to occur between October and January. Calves are left alone after birth for about a week, lying still in the in dense vegetation to avoid detection by predators. The mother returns to her calf to nurse throughout this period. The calves grow rapidly and can soon accompany their mothers in the nursery herds. Their horns grow rapidly and begin to show in 3.5 months.

Estrous:

Gestation: 9.5 months

of Mammae:

of Young: 1

Sexual Maturity: ~ 20 months

Weaning Age: ~ 6 months

Weight at birth:

MISCELLANEOUS

Bongos require salt in their diet and regularly visit natural salt licks. They have been known to eat burned wood after lightning storms. This behavior is believed to be a means of getting salts and minerals into their diet.

Sources:

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Walker's Mammals of the World Vol II © 1999 by Ronald M. Nowalk, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p 1142-1143

Behavior Guide to African Mammals ©1992 by Estes, R.D. p 185-7

http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Tragelaphus_eurycerus.html

http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Tragelaphus_eurycerus.html

<http://www.internationalbongofoundation.org/>