



# BLUE-EYED BLACK LEMUR

## PRIMATES

Family: Lemnridae

Genus: *Eulemur*

Species: *flavifrons*



Male black (left) and Blue-eyed black lemurs (right).  
Notice lack of ear tufts in blue-eyed black lemur.

**Range:** Extremely isolated to Northwestern Madagascar on Sahamalza Peninsula and narrow strip of forest on adjacent mainland.

**Habitat:** Subtropical moist and dry forests.

**Niche:** Arboreal, diurnal, occasional night activity varies with lunar cycle, mainly frugivorous

**Wild diet:** fruits, leaves, flowers, and occasional insects, fungi and small vertebrates.

**Zoo diet:** monkey chow, dog chow, bananas, apples and oranges.

**Life Span:** (Wild) 18 years

(Captivity) 20-25 years

**Sexual dimorphism:** Males are solid black in color, with the hairs sometimes tinged brown at the roots. Females are reddish-brown in color with their underside and outline of their face a lighter tan.

**Location in SF Zoo:** Lemur Forest

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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These medium sized lemurs have blue to blue-gray eyes and are the only primate besides humans with blue eyes. Males are solid black in color, with the hairs sometimes tinged brown at the roots. Females are reddish-brown in color with their underside and outline of their face a lighter tan. This species can be differentiated from the black lemur by their blue eyes and lack of prominent ear tufts, while the black lemur has orange-red eyes and long, spiky cheek hairs.

Blue-eyed lemurs have long tails, which are often carried high in the air as the animals move. These lemurs move through trees mainly by walking and running on all fours and using their powerful legs to leap between branches up to 26 feet.

<b>Weight:</b>	4 - 5 1/2 lbs
<b>HRL:</b>	15 -18 in
<b>TL:</b>	20 - 26 in

Lemurs have eyes in front of their heads and are considered among the first animals with stereoscopic vision. The mouth region is elongated into a fox-like snout. The hind legs are longer than the front legs, and the second toes have strongly curved grooming claws. The lower incisors and canines project forward and somewhat upward forming a toothcomb, which lemurs use to groom themselves and each other.

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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Critically Endangered. They are not found in any protected areas in Madagascar, and they are severely threatened by hunting, trapping and forest destruction (especially from slash and burn agriculture). It is thought that there are probably less than one thousand individuals of this subspecies left in the wild.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Lemurs have a large repertoire of calls for contact, greeting, territorial expression, threats and alarm. Like most prosimians, blue-eyed lemurs use olfaction as another method of communication. Scent marking is done by rubbing their anogenital region on their surroundings. In addition males also mark with scent glands located on their hands and wrists and the top of their head.

Black lemurs live in groups with 2 to 15 members, with a dominant female. Groups are flexible, and membership changes from time to time. These lemurs are cathemeral (active during several periods spread throughout the day and night).

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Blue-eyed lemurs are seasonal breeders. In Madagascar, the breeding season ranges from April to June. During breeding season, both males and females experience physiological changes. By the time the females are approaching estrous, the testicle size of the males has become notably larger, and the males are becoming more aggressive towards and less tolerant of their fellow males. Each female is in estrus (in heat) for only a single day during breeding season. In the end, though, females choose their own mates. Some breed with just one male, while others take more than one mate.

In the wild, females give birth between September and November and usually to a single baby, though twins are not rare. After successfully giving birth, mothers might immediately become very aggressive to other members of their group, threatening them and lunging at them if they come too close. After a few days or a week of guarding the infants, Juveniles are typically granted first access to the newborns, followed by the father, and later the other adult females in the group.

Infant blue-eyed lemurs are born with the same dark brown to black coloration. They cling to their mothers' bellies for the first month then move to her back. Infants begin to explore solid food at 4-6 weeks of age, sampling bits of whatever their mothers or other nearby group members are eating. Nursing continues, but with a steady decline in importance in the infant's diet, until the infant is weaned at 5 – 6 months of age.

Estrous 1 day, breeding season	# of Young: 1, occasional twins
Gestation: 120 - 129 days	Sexual Maturity: 2 years
# of Mammae: 1 pair	Weaning Age: 5 – 6 mos

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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"Lemur" is Latin for "ghostlike," coined by Linnaeus because it has a ghostlike face and it is active at night. Until 2008, the blue-eyed black lemur was considered a subspecies of the black lemur. [Mittermeier]

### Sources:

Walker's Mammals of the World © 1999 p.93 by R. Nowak  
Mammals of Madagascar © 2007 p.168-170 by Nick Garbutt  
Lemurs of Madagascar © 1994 Conservation International  
<http://lemur.duke.edu/>  
<http://www.philadelphiazoo.org/>

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Mittermeier, R. A. et al. (2008). "Lemur Diversity in Madagascar". *International Journal of Primatology* **29** (6): 1607–1656.