



# RED-FRONTED BROWN LEMUR

## PRIMATES

Family: Lemuridae

Genus: *Eulemur*

Species: *rufifrons*



**Range:** West: Betsiboka River south to the Fiherenana river near Tulear. East: Mangoro River south to the Andringitra massif

**Habitat:** dry lowland forests, southeast moist forest

**Niche:** arboreal, herbivorous, and cathemeral (western populations primarily diurnal - less so in dry season. Eastern populations show less dichotomy)

**Wild diet:** varies with season but dominated by fruit also eats leaves, seeds, nectar and flowers

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild) 20 – 25 years  
(Captivity)

**Sexual dimorphism:** sexually dichromatic with variations between individuals and between east and west populations

**Location in SF Zoo:** Lemur Forest

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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The red-fronted brown lemur is medium sized with a long tail, gray coat and black face, muzzle and forehead, plus a black line from the muzzle to the forehead, with white eyebrow patches. Males are gray to gray-brown and have white or cream colored cheeks and beards with a reddish crown. Females are reddish-brown and have rufous or cream cheeks and beards that are less bushy than males. The ears are not prominent, and their eyes are usually orange-red.

They have a horizontal posture, which is suited to its predominantly quadrupedal mode of transportation in the upper layers of the forest canopy. Fingertips are broad and padded to provide sure grip on branches. Semi-opposable thumbs are present along with a grooming claw on the second toe of the hind foot. The long fox-like snout indicates a great reliance on smell for gathering food and information.

**Weight:** 4.4 – 5.3 lbs.

**HRL:** 14 -19 in.

**TL:** 18 - 20 in.

Red-fronted lemurs have six lower teeth that stick straight out from their jaw, forming a dental comb that the animals use to groom their fur and the fur of other members of their social group.

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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Forest destruction is the primary threat to the survival of red-fronted lemurs. In the west, forests are being cleared for pasture, while in the east, the forests are burned for slash-and-burn agriculture and cut for charcoal production. The red-fronted lemur is protected in at least ten Madagascar Reserves and is not thought to be seriously threatened. It is classified as Near Threatened (NT) on the IUCN Red List and is listed on Appendix I of CITES.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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They live in sociable, permanent groups usually of 4 to 18 individuals with an average of 7-8 and include several adults of both sexes. Males disperse from the group on reaching sexual maturity. As the group moves through the forest, they stay together by way of a regular series of grunts and contact calls. They are not particularly territorial and live in very small home ranges, eating mostly leaves, fruit and flowers. Western populations tend to have smaller home ranges and higher population densities than eastern populations, although group size tends to be fairly consistent.

Red-fronted lemurs are one of the few lemur species that is not female dominated and without a noticeable hierarchy. Social bonds within the group are established and reinforced by grooming. As with all true lemurs, olfactory (smell-oriented) communication is extraordinarily important, used in such capacities as transmitting physical state, locomotion, and individual recognition.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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In western populations one male usually monopolizes all the females in the group, while in eastern populations such monopolization is less typical. Mating habits are very seasonal with mating occurring usually throughout June and July. Infants are born in the fall, between September and November. Infant red-fronted lemurs show male coloration for the first three to four months of life. They are initially carried on the female's belly for the month and thereafter on the female's back. They are born with their eyes open. At 6 months it is 1/3 the adult size and is chased off by the mother to become independent. Males have been known to assist the females with child rearing.

Estrous: seasonally polyestrous	
Gestation: 120 d	Sexual Maturity: 2 years
# of Mammae: 1 pr.	Weaning Age: 4-5 mos.
# of Young: 1	Weight at birth:

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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"Lemur" is Latin for "ghostlike," coined by Linnaeus because faces of lemurs appear ghostlike when peering through the branches in the forests of Madagascar. Until 2001, the red-fronted brown lemur was considered a subspecies of the common brown lemur, *E. fulvus*. In 2001, *E. fulvus* was split into several separate species, including *Eulemur rufus*, in which this species was included. In 2008, *E. rufus* was split into two species, the red lemur (*E. rufus*) and the red-fronted lemur (*E. rufifrons*). Red-fronted brown lemurs are important seed dispersal agents and spend most of their time in the upper layers of the forest.

### Sources:

Walker's Mammals of the World 6<sup>th</sup> edition © 1999, R. Nowak p.517 - 521

Mammals of Madagascar © 2007, Nick Garbutt p.160-162

Mittermeier, R., et al. (December 2008). "Lemur Diversity in Madagascar" *International Journal of Primatology* **29** (6): 1607–1656.  
<http://lemur.duke.edu/>

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