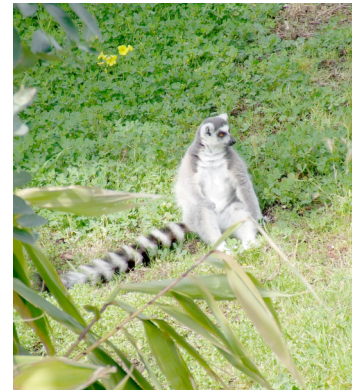




# Ring-tailed Lemur

**PRIMATES**  
**Family: Lemuridae**  
**Genus: *Lemur***  
**Species: *catta***



**Range:** South and southeastern Madagascar

**Habitat:** prefer gallery forests and Euphorbia bush habitat, but they also live in many other types of forests

**Niche:** semi-terrestrial, diurnal

**Biomes:**

**Wild diet:** fruits, leaves, flowers, bark and sap

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild) c. 27 years  
(Captivity) record 33+ years

**Sexual dimorphism:** none

**Location in SF Zoo:** Lemur Forest

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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With a fox-like face and dense fur this is the most terrestrial of the lemurs spending up to (15%) more time on the ground. Back usually warm rosy brown, rump and limbs a light gray or gray-brown and crown and neck a dark gray. Under parts white or cream and lightly haired, with dark skin showing beneath. Tail ringed black and white with black tip (generally 13-14 black and 12-13 white rings). Forehead, cheeks, ears, and throat white with dark gray or black rings around the eyes. Gland secretions used for marking territories arise from ischial and brachial (arm) glands. They forage and travel at all levels of the forest, running along branches or leaping between them, landing in such a way that their powerful hind legs touch first. The tail serves as a balancing rod in leaps. With outspread arms and tail hanging down, they can easily balance on a slender swaying branch.

**Weight:** 5-7.5 lbs

**HRL:** 13.8 inches

**TL:** 18.9 inches

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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***Lemur catta*** are listed on CITIES Appendix II, due to habitat loss from fires, overgrazing by livestock, and tree cutting for charcoal production.

Since there are large number of Ring-tails in captivity, the SSP calls for only a few breeding pairs of animals each year so that captive breeding space can be utilized by the rarer species of lemurs. It is felt that this species can act as a flagship species for the flora and fauna of Southern Madagascar.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Because their sounds are reminiscent of the purring of cats, they are sometimes called cat lemurs. Excited individuals utter bark-like cries as warnings. The cry of fear and infant signals of abandonment are a shrill scream. Before going to sleep there is always a hooting cry, audible over long distances.

Social animals, they consist of groups of 3-24 individuals of both sexes have a well defined dominance hierarchy, with females dominant over males. Females remain in their natal area while males transfer between troops. They have well-defined non-overlapping territories within their home ranges. Fights among males range from a threatening stares, through lunging and cuffing to hair pulling and serious biting, to 'stink fights' wherein males impregnate their tails with scent from armpit glands and then shake and quiver the tail over the head at the object of the display. Territorial encounters tend to consist of opposing groups of females running at each other and uttering threatening calls until one group retreats. Diurnal but may be moderately active at any time of the night.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Mate from April-June with births in August-October, and since females are fertile for only a very short interval at a time, all the babies in a group are born within a few days. Newborn are about 4 inches in length with adult coloration. The infant initially clings to its mother's front lengthwise; within 3 days of birth it is moving around actively on its mother and by about 2 weeks of age is regularly riding on her back. At 2 ½ months it explores and climbs in trees and bushes while it is still carried by its mother when the troop moves. The young are raised by the entire group. Mothers will exchange babies and even adapt orphans from other groups.

Estrous:

Gestation: 134-8 days

# of Mammae:

# of Young: 1 - 2

Sexual Maturity: F 2 yrs

Weaning Age: 5 months

Weight at birth: 2.49 oz

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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In the Berenty Reserve in southern Madagascar, ring tails inhabit 3 different types of forest. Ankoba forest, consists of *Pithosolobium* trees and a few tamarinds, figs, and *Melia*; Malaza forest, which consists of *Tamarindus indicus*, tall figs, *Celtis*, and *Creteva*. (The sub-canopy of this forest type consists of *Rhinorhea* and *Celtis*, with great numbers of peppers and sometimes capers.); and Berenty Reserve, which is a spiny forest with *Alaudia* trees and *Euphorbia*, that look like cacti. *Kalanchoe*, *Aloe*, and *Xerisicyos* are also found in the area.

### Sources:

Last Revision: 5/96

Present Revision: 1/08

IUCN Red Data Book; Grzimek; Kavanagh; Tattersall; Walker; Napier

<http://lemur.duke.edu/animals/bnwruffed/>

[http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Lemur\\_catta.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Lemur_catta.html)