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## ***Black Lemur Fact Sheet (5/1/94)***

### **Black Lemur** (*Eulemur macaco*)

**Description:** The black lemur is a primitive primate about the size of a house-cat with a long bushy tail and a fox-like muzzle. One of its most remarkable features is that the male is solid black in color while the female varies from reddish to golden brown. There are two subspecies of black lemur: Eulemur macaco macaco has reddish-brown eyes with tufted ears which are black in males and white in females. E. m. flavifrons lacks ear tufts and has bluish-grey eyes.

**Range:** Black lemurs are only found on the northwestern tip of Madagascar and the two adjacent small islands of Nosy Komba and Nosy Be.

**Habitat:** Black lemurs are tree dwellers. A recent three month survey conducted by Josephine R. Andrews revealed that black lemurs can be found in four habitats: primary rain forest, secondary forest, timber plantations and food crop plantations.

**Diet:** Black lemurs feed on fruit and leaves, and the amount of each varies with seasonal availability.

**Social Organization:** No systematic, long-term field study has been carried out on black lemurs; consequently, information on their social organization is sparse. They are known to live in groups of multiple males and females, which vary in size from 2 to 15 individuals. Black lemurs are seasonal breeders, and young are born after a gestation of between 120-129 days. One offspring is usually born, although twins are not rare.

**Conservation Status:** All lemurs are listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and are protected under Appendix I of CITES. Black lemurs are listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red Data Book. Estimates indicate their numbers are in decline.

**Threats to Survival:** Deforestation of Madagascar is the primary threat to all lemur species. Recent satellite surveys have indicated that forested areas are declining at an alarming rate. Although protected by law, black lemurs are sometimes poached for meat or are persecuted in some areas as a crop pest.

**Zoo Programs - SSP:** The SSP population of E. m. macaco stands at around 137 individuals. Because all lemur species are endangered and captive habitat is limited, the Black Lemur Masterplan has suggested that this species be managed on a worldwide basis. E. m. flavifrons is the more rare subspecies and only a few individuals are found in North America at the Duke University Primate Center. Efforts through the SSP and the Madagascar Fauna Interest Group are working to increase the population to a self-sustaining level.

**Conservation:** Research on the reproductive behavior and physiology of captive black lemurs is underway. A field study by Josephine Andrews on the ecology of black lemurs in primary versus converted forest habitats is ongoing. Another field study on the sociology of black lemurs was recently completed by Ian C. Colquhoun.

**Education:** In conjunction with her field study, Josephine Andrews is also planning a conservation education program to increase public awareness in Madagascar, Europe and the U.S. Her plans include presenting slide talks to Malagasy school children and providing booklets and posters describing native wildlife. Information concerning the project and newsletters from Madagascar will be made available to North American and European zoos and schools interested in developing conservation education programs.

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