
MONGOOSE LEMUR 98 Fact Sheet (7/1/98)

Mongoose Lemur (*Lemur mongoz*)

Description: The mongoose lemur is a prosimian primate weighing approximately 1.5 kg. Body length is 349 mm and tail length 482 mm. Both males and females have brownish-grey bodies, but males have rust colored heads and necks, while females have white necks and black heads.

Range: The mongoose lemur is native only to Madagascar, and was introduced to the Comoro Islands of Moheli and Anjouan approximately 1000 years ago. Its range on Madagascar is restricted to a section of the northwest, although the southern and western limits have yet to be determined.

Habitat: The mongoose lemur occupies both humid and dry forest. Habitat type appears to play a role in behavioral variation in the species, which has been observed to be diurnal in humid forests and nocturnal in drier forests.

Diet: Mongoose lemurs have been observed to feed almost exclusively on nectar during the summer months in Madagascar, but the extent of this dietary specialization is unknown. Fruits, leaves and flowers make up the bulk of their diet. In captivity, mongoose lemurs occasionally prey on insects and even birds which become trapped in their cages.

Social Organization: The mongoose lemur has been found both in family groups consisting of an adult pair with one or two offspring, and in larger groups of up to 8 animals. Groups have been noted to occupy areas of about 100 ha. Observations in captivity support the notion that the species is monogamous.

Conservation Status: There is no estimate of the size of the wild population of mongoose lemurs, but numbers are certainly declining in all parts of its range. It is listed as an Appendix I species by CITES, as endangered by USFWS, and as a priority for conservation efforts by IUCN.

Threats to Survival: Although the mongoose lemur is protected by Malagasy law, it only exists in one protected area on Madagascar, and is probably hunted outside the area. Habitat destruction is the biggest threat to the species. On the Comoro Islands the species essentially has no

protection.

Zoo Programs -- SSP: There are 70 mongoose lemurs in held in the U.S., and 38 outside the U.S. There is an EEP for the species in Europe and international studbook was published in 1995. Fortunately the genetic history of almost the entire U.S. captive population is well known, as most breeding occurred from founders imported by the Duke Primate Center in 1982. There is little inbreeding in the population at this point.

Conservation (in situ): There are currently no conservation activities directly associated with the mongoose lemur in Madagascar or the Comoro Islands. Surveys of population sizes and distributions are desperately needed. Two graduate students have recently completed long-term field studies of the behavior and ecology of the mongoose lemur on Madagascar.

Education: Education of the local Malagasy and Comoran residents will be an important part of conservation efforts. Hunting is particularly prevalent in the Comores.

Reintroduction: There are no immediate plans to reintroduce the mongoose lemur. Before any such plans can be developed, surveys are needed to determine the status of the species in the wild both on Madagascar and in the Comores. Since the captive population descends from the Comoro Island population, genetic work will be needed to determine whether the two populations should remain separate in captive programs.

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