

# Episode 10: Nocturnal Prosimians

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Hi, there! My name is Megan, and I'm going to be introducing you to some of our nocturnal primates today. Before I head down there, I do want to let you know that to keep my fellow staff members and the lemurs safe, I am going to be putting on a mask for the rest of the video.

Alright, I hope you're excited to learn about our nocturnal primates living here at the Duke Lemur Center! Now before we learn all about the nocturnal lemurs and the bush babies living here, I thought I might explain what a nocturnal animal is. A **nocturnal animal** is any animal that is awake at night and asleep during the day.

That would be a pretty rough life for most of us humans, because we can't see very well at night—we can't see where we're going without the assistance of lights and other things around us. But if you're a nocturnal lemur or a bush baby, you have a very special adaptation called a **tapetum lucidum**—a very special part of the eye that's an extra layer of tissue. When they pull in the little bits of light they can see in the dark environment around them at night, that extra layer of tissue reflects that light and amplifies it so they can see even more detail in the woods and forests around them. Just enough detail to do things like catch their favorite food (which tends to be insects) or to find a nice tasty flower or something else to eat.

Another very important thing about nocturnal primate is, they tend to be a little bit different from the other primates of the world. Nocturnal lemurs tend to be solitary. They prefer to live alone, rather than to live in the groups like you normally see in other primates; and generally they also prefer to sleep in a nest of some kind because the sun's really bright during the day. If you're trying to get some sleep during the day, you want to find somewhere that's nice and quiet and dark and safe so you know you'll be able to nap and sleep through the day successfully.

Now that begs the question: "Why am I expecting to see any nocturnal lemurs right now? We're outside during the day!" Well, we're going to be going inside to show you our nocturnal animals. When we go inside the buildings, we have them on what's called a **reverse light cycle**. That means that when it's nice and bright out here when we [humans] are going about our day, it is nice and dark inside our Nocturnal Building.

We use red light to allow us to see the animals and what they're doing, but that red light doesn't bother the animals' eyes; it doesn't hurt their eyes like bright white light would. Then tonight, when it gets nice and dark out here and everybody leaves the Lemur Center and goes home and sleeps, that's when the lights inside the Nocturnal Building are going to get nice and bright like it's daytime in there—because [inside the Nocturnal Building,] the nocturnal animals sleep during the day. That way they're awake when we're here and taking care of them, and they're asleep when we're at home asleep.

