

# Episode 6: Mongoose Lemurs

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Hi! Faye here. Before we go down and meet the lemurs, I'm going to put on a mask. This is going to help me make sure that I keep the lemurs nice and safe.

Hi! I'm really excited to introduce you to these awesome mongoose lemurs. In this enclosure we have Bonita, the female mongoose lemur—she's the one with the white chin. And then on—oh! they switched places!—this is Mico, the male, with the orange chin.

You can see that male and female mongoose lemurs have different coloration. We call this **sexual dichromatism**.

In the wild in Madagascar, mongoose lemurs are typically found in northwestern dry deciduous forests. In these forests they can find all kinds of wonderful things to eat, like leaves, fruit, flowers, and nectar.

Since most lemurs primarily eat fruits, vegetables, leaves, and flowers in the wild, their diet here at the Duke Lemur Center looks pretty similar. They're going to get a variety of fruits and veggies every day, and those will change daily. If a lemur has a favorite fruit or veggie, they just need to wait for their favorite day of the week.

Lemurs will also get enrichment items based on their individual diets, and that might include insects or other forms of protein, nuts, flowers, or browse. "Browse" is another word for fresh leaves.

In addition to their fresh produce, lemurs also get a primate chow biscuit. If you have a pet at home and you feed them a kibble or chow, it's pretty much the same thing, but designed specifically to be healthy and nutritious for our lemur friends.

Mico is a six-year old lemur while Bonita is only four years old. But for lemurs, that means they are already fully grown and sexually mature. Lemurs typically in the wild might live anywhere between 15 and 18 years, but here at the Duke Lemur Center their lifespan can be up to 30 years and sometimes even beyond. Typically, lemurs at the Lemur Center are living into their mid to late 20s, but we do have some super seniors here that are already in their early 30s.

Because lemurs live so much longer here at the Duke lemur Center, we have to make sure that we take good care of our senior citizens. Sometimes when lemurs start to get old, they might start to lose their hearing or their vision. And they might start to lose some of their tooth power. So we have to make sure that their diet reflects their needs in that way. A lot of our older lemurs will get their vegetables cooked so they're nice and soft, or they might get extra soft foods like applesauce or even baby food.

At the Duke Lemur Center we have **diurnal** lemurs, who are active in daytime; and **nocturnal** lemurs, who are active at nighttime. We also have **cathemeral** lemurs. Cathemeral lemurs can change their activity cycles so they can be active during the day sometimes and during the night sometimes. This is really beneficial for animals that live in deciduous forests, like the mongoose lemurs. During the dry season in Madagascar, the leaves will fall off the trees. In that time of year, there isn't as much to eat and it's easier for predators to spot the lemurs in those leafless trees. So to keep themselves safe and healthy, those lemurs will switch to a nocturnal activity cycle to avoid predators and to come out at night when there's less competition for food. Then when the wet season comes back around and food is plentiful, they can switch back to a diurnal activity cycle and hang out during the daytime.



Unfortunately, due to deforestation, mongoose lemurs are Critically Endangered in Madagascar. The Duke Lemur Center's efforts to protect lemurs here and in the wild are funded by donations from Duke University, from grants, and from donations from people like you.

Thanks so much for learning about mongoose lemurs with me today. Bye, Mico!

