

Episode 7: Crowned Lemurs

Anna: Hi, I'm Anna! I'm so excited to be showing you around some of my favorite lemurs today. To keep those lemurs nice and safe and healthy, I'll be taking extra precautions and wearing a mask when I'm down near them. Let's go!

Hi! I'm so excited for you to meet this family of crowned lemurs. In here we have three individuals. They're all just hanging out in the back right now, but you can see a gray female, her name is Sanura and she is the mother of this group. She lives in here with her son Shezmu and the smallest individual with orange fur is little brother Nedjem.

Crowned lemurs live in the northern edge of Madagascar, where they live in the deciduous forest and in limestone rocky outcroppings called **tsingy**. There they eat leaves, fruits, flowers, and occasionally insects.

Crowned lemurs are named for the triangular crowned-shaped markings on their foreheads. This is a **sexually dichromatic** species, so the females are gray with a bright orange crown, while the males are orange with a darker black crown.

Each of our species has a specific naming theme, so all individuals born in that species match all of the other individuals who already live here. The crowned lemurs at the Duke Lemur Center are all named after Egyptian gods and pharaohs.

Until about 40 years ago, mongoose lemurs and crowned lemurs were considered the same species. The number of lemur species has gone up in the last few years, and now we think there are more than 100 different types of lemurs in Madagascar. Madagascar is a big island with lots of ecosystems, which means lemurs can figure out different ways to live in each of those ecozones, leading to the diversity of lemurs we see here at the Duke Lemur Center and in Madagascar today.

Because the lemurs in Madagascar live in areas that are really inaccessible to humans, there may be even more species in Madagascar that we have yet to discover, making it even more important for us to protect these forests.

Here at the Duke Lemur Center, we have a **species survival plan** for each species to make sure that we are only breeding individuals that are really genetically diverse. That establishes who gets paired up and looks at things like those genetic differences as well as the mother's health, reproductive status, and age of all of the individuals in a family group.

The arrival of an infant is an exciting time in the lives of everybody here at the Duke Lemur Center. During the first few weeks of the baby's life, our veterinarians will weigh and assess the individual every other day or so to make sure it's growing and eating as much as it should. These appointments will get less and less frequent as the baby grows up strong and healthy. One of our most recent crowned lemur babies is seen in this enclosure, little baby Nedjem.

Visiting and supporting facilities with a responsible breeding program like the Duke Lemur Center is a great way to make sure we are protecting this endangered species in the wild in Madagascar.

