

Episode 8: Crowned Lemurs



Anna: Hi! I'm so excited for you to meet this family of crowned lemurs. 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 here with her son Shezmu and the smallest individual with orange fur is little brother Nedjem.

Crowned lemurs live along 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 insects. Crowned lemurs are named for the triangular crown-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.

Until about 40 years ago, mongoose lemurs and crowned lemurs were considered the same species.





With more research, the total number of lemur species has gone up in the last few years, and now we know of 108 different species of lemur in Madagascar. Madagascar is a big island with lots of ecosystems. Lemurs have different adaptations to survive in each of these ecosystems, which leads to the diversity of lemurs we see here at the Duke Lemur Center and in Madagascar.

Because many lemurs in Madagascar live in areas that are forested, mountainous, or otherwise 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.

Another way we protect lemurs is through **conservation breeding**. Here at the Duke Lemur Center, we have a Species Survival Plan for each species to make sure that we are only breeding healthy individuals that are really genetically diverse from one another. Those genetic differences as well as the mother's health, reproductive status, and age of all of the individuals in a family group establishes who gets paired up for breeding.

Each of our species has a specific naming theme. The names of 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.

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.





While babies are cute, they are also important for the future of so many of our endangered and critically endangered lemurs. Visiting and supporting facilities with a responsible breeding program like the Duke Lemur Center is a great way to help us protect them for years to come.

Learn more at lemur.duke.edu/conservation-breeding.

