



# COQUEREL'S SIFAKA

PRIMATES

Family: Indriidae

Genus: *Propithecus*

Species: *coquereli*



**Range:** Northwestern Madagascar

**Habitat:** Dry deciduous forest of less than 300', including coastal forest

**Niche:** herbivorous, arboreal, diurnal

**Wild diet:** leaves, flowers, fruit, buds, bark, and dead wood

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** Wild 27 – 30 years, Captivity oldest 31 years

**Sexual dimorphism:** Males can be differentiated from females by their gular (throat) gland

**Location in SF Zoo:** Primate Discovery Center

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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Coquerel's sifakas are medium sized lemurs with dense pelage. They are mostly white on head, body and tail, with chocolate brown patches on the chest, arms and thighs. Its face and prominent ears are bare and black except for a distinctive patch of white fur along the bridge of the nose. The bottom of the lemur's hands and feet are also black and its eyes are yellow.

These lemurs have long tails that are used for balance when leaping around the canopy. Sifakas have pseudo-opposable thumbs, and binocular vision. The big toe is exceptionally long and stout, which provides a strong grip on vertical trunks. They are adapted for vertically clinging and leaping, with long, powerful hind legs and an upright posture.

**Weight:** 7 to 13 lbs

**HRL:** 18 in  
**TL:** 18 in

In order to digest the cellulose from their folivorous diet, Coquerel's sifaka have an enlarged cecum and extremely long colon, which helps facilitate digestion.

Coquerel's Sifaka's have a dental comb like other lemurs; the lower six incisors are elongated and jut forward for self grooming and sometimes scraping fruit off a pit.

Dental formula: I2/2-C1/1-P3/3-M3/3 x 2 =36.

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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Endangered on the IUCN's Red List and Appendix I of CITES. The principal threats to its existence are deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and hunting pressure. Though its populations are thought to be widely distributed, Coquerel's sifaka is found in only two protected areas in Madagascar, which have both been damaged yearly by fires set by nearby farmers for pastureland for their livestock. Trees are also cut for the production of charcoal. Many local Malagasy traditions prohibit hunting of the Coquerel's sifaka, but not all.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Coquerel's sifaka uses a variety of auditory, visual, and olfactory signals to communicate. The Malagasy name 'sifaka' comes from the distinct call this animal makes as it travels through the trees. The " shif-auk " call is used to warn fellow group members of a potential ground predator or to threaten enemies and intruders. When friendly, Coquerel's sifakas will greet by rubbing their noses together. Sifakas also rely heavily on scent for demarcation of their territory; they are highly territorial. Males typically scent-mark using a gland in their throats, which they will rub back and forth along branches. Females are more likely to scent-mark with anogenital glands. Boundary encounters with other groups are rarely aggressive, but rather mutually avoidance.

The sifaka are distinguished from other lemurs by their vertically clinging and leaping mode of locomotion; they maintain a distinctly vertical posture and leap through the trees using just the strength of their back legs. They can propel themselves from tree to tree of distances of 20 – 30 feet. On the ground, these animals use a sideways bipedal hopping.

Coquerel's sifaka live in social groups of between 3 and 10 individuals. Females are dominant, which gives them preferential access to food and their choice of mates. Females often take leadership roles during foraging, and exert their dominance by eating the preferred food or denying the males food until they are satisfied. They often use suspension during feeding.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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A female may choose to mate with only one male, but most often she will mate with several. Males compete for access to sexually receptive females. However, the winner of a fight will not necessarily be the one she selects to breed with.

Females have synchronized estrous during January and February (in southern hemisphere). Infants are born in June and July, during the dry season, after a gestation period of about 162 days. A single infant will cling to its mother's chest until about a month or so after birth, then transfer to her back. Note: breeding may shift 6 mos in northern hemisphere

Estrous:

Gestation: 162 days

# of Mammae: 2 pair

# of Young: 1

Sexual Maturity: 2 – 3.5 yrs

Weaning Age: 6 mos

Weight at birth: 3.5 oz.

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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These lemurs are beneficial to the environment because they aid seed dispersion and serve to populate the plant life.

The lemur on the PBS Kids television program *Zoboosmafoo* is based on a Coquerel's sifaka

### Sources:

Walker's Mammals of the World 6<sup>th</sup> edition Vol I © 1999, R. Nowak p.526 - 529

Mammals of Madagascar © 2007, Nick Garbutt p. 194 - 196

<http://lemur.duke.edu/discover/meet-the-lemurs/coquerels-sifaka/>

<http://eol.org/pages/2925752/details>

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