

COLOBUS MONKEY

Phylum: Chordata, Class: Mammalia, Order: Primate, Family: Cercopithecidae; Subfamily: *Colobinae*
Colobus guereza

Colobus are the largest of the African colobines, or leaf-eating monkeys. The black-and-white species is the most striking of several species, with long white mantles and shiny coats.

Head and body length: 11/2-21/2 ft.

Tail length: 1-3 feet

Weight: up to 26 pounds.

Lifespan: 25-30 years

Habitat: Uppermost branches of tropical forests, woodlands and wooded grassland (where it may travel on the ground), including lowlands and high elevations; most abundant in secondary forest or along rivers.

Range/distribution: West central and east Africa: eastern Nigeria to Ethiopia and Tanzania.

Status: Fairly common throughout equatorial Africa. Listed as a lower risk animal by the IUCN. Over-hunting in the nineteenth century depleted the overall population. Their numbers are fairly stable, but loss of habitat threatens them.

Diet in the wild: Digestive system designed to process leaves, but will occasionally eat flowers, twigs, buds, seeds and shoots. Fruit makes up about a third of the diet

Special Features:

- The name "colobus" is derived from a word meaning "mutilated one", because unlike other monkeys, they have reduced thumbs. Reduced thumbs and unusually long fingers make it possible for them to swing through trees in search of food.
- Excellent climbers, most colobus species spend the majority of their time in the trees eating and sleeping, rarely touching the forest floor.
- Their specialized digestive system, a chambered-ruminant stomach, allows them to eat leaves other primates cannot.

Behavior:

Diurnal and arboreal. troop size is usually 6-9, with one or more adult males. Home range is about 40 acres. This species has a preferred area within its home range from which other groups are chased, but not permanently excluded. Visual and vocal displays occur when groups meet, and loud nocturnal and dawn choruses by adult males serve to space out groups.

Breeding and Caring for Young:

Single young born after a 5-month gestation. Offspring are produced about every 20 months. Maturity occurs about 4-6 years. Life span in captivity 23+ years.

Cultural & Conservation: Their decline is due to deforestation and hunting by humans. They are also captured live to sell or trade. The skins are used for coats or dresses, but they are more commonly used for circular rugs or wall hangings.

Arab Legend has it that a colobus monkey will rip its skin when injured. African legend refers to these monkeys as "messengers of the gods" because of their habit of perching on the tops of trees at sunrise, sitting silently as if in prayer.

