

SCIENCE / LEMUR

Most Endangered Primate in World Found on Huge Island

In Madagascar, 95% of lemurs are under the threat of extinction



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Two white-belted ruffed lemur babies sit on a branch at their enclosure at the Prague Zoo in the Czech Republic on June 8, 2018. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)

(NEWSER) – What are the most endangered primates in the world? The answer may not be the one you expect: lemurs, according to an analysis by a group of conservationists known as the Primate Specialist Group. The animals are found only in Madagascar (and on a few neighboring islands), and 105 of the 111 species and subspecies of lemur found there are facing an extinction threat. That's 95% of the world's total lemur population that's at risk, notes AFP, and Russ Mittermeier, the chair of the Primate Specialist Group, puts it starkly: "This is, without a doubt, the highest percentage of threat for any large group of mammals and for any large group of vertebrates."

AFP calls out one species, the northern sportive lemur, as likely being down to its last 50 members.

As for the causes, the group cites a reduction in the size of the lemurs' habitat (thanks to everything from illegal logging to charcoal mining), the hunting of them (for food), and their poaching (for resale as pets). The group's deputy chair tells the BBC the hunting is likely done for local restaurants, "and this is a new phenomenon for Madagascar—we didn't see it at this scale 15 years ago."