

Nearly All Lemur Species Are Now Facing Extinction



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8/02/18 3:30pm



They can't die, or I'm going to cry.
Photo: Getty

I gotta admit, I didn't know too much about lemurs until I watched "Madagascar." Even then, all I noticed was how cute and cuddly they were. I should've been paying closer attention because the world's lemur species are on the brink of extinction. Soon "Madagascar" may be all we have left to remember them by unless we take action.

Every five years, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) gathers experts to re-evaluate how endangered lemurs are. This year's meeting in May ended with a stark finding. The experts found that 95 percent of all lemurs are in trouble, the group Global Wildlife Conservation reported Wednesday.



A female blue-eyed black lemur.

Photo: Courtesy of Global Wildlife Conservation

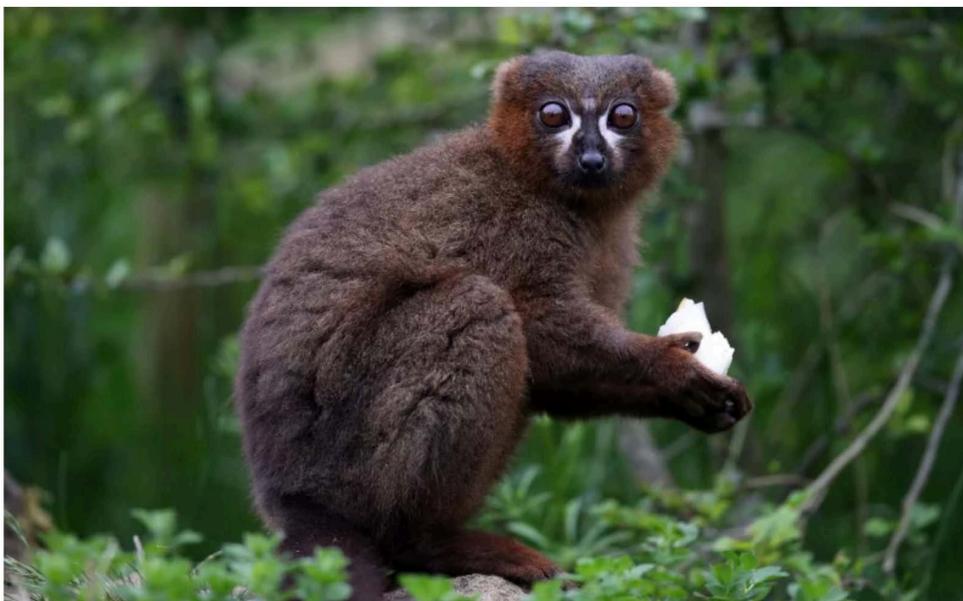
Of the 111 lemur species and subspecies, which are only found on Madagascar, 105 are now critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable. That's 12 species more than the last time the organization looked into this in 2012. This makes lemurs, 14 species of which have already gone extinct, the most endangered primate in the world.

“This is, without a doubt, the highest percentage of threat for any large group of mammals and for any large group of vertebrates,” said Russ Mittermeier, the chief conservation officer for Global Wildlife Conservation, in a press release.

Humans first descended on Madagascar some 2,000 years ago, and their presence is what's behind the decline. These creatures—from the tiny wide-eyed mouse lemur to the startled-looking black lemur—are suffering from habitat loss. Farmers and loggers are cutting down the tropical jungle to cultivate rice crops and harvest timber respectively. Some people even eat the animals, too.

The assessment from IUCN still has a few steps before becoming final, but 50 experts from around the world came up with these preliminary results, meaning they're on pretty solid (and startling) ground. In the critically endangered category, the species went from 24 to 38.

The indri, the world's largest lemur also called the babakoto, is one of those that are now critically endangered. Even the king of the lemurs is having trouble.



Look at this mongoose lemur. :(

Photo: AP