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Primates in Peril – the World's Top 25 Most Endangered Species (by region)

Africa

Rondo dwarf galago (*Paragalago rondoensis*) – Tanzania (numbers unknown)

The Rondo dwarf galago is classified as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Weighing the same as a tennis ball, this tiny species is only known from eight small, highly threatened forest patches in coastal Tanzania (with a total area of less than 100 km²). The biggest threat facing the Rondo dwarf galago is habitat loss due to agriculture, logging, and rampant charcoal trade, with several forest reserves important to the species predicted to be lost over the next 10-15 years.

Roloway monkey (*Cercopithecus roloway*) – Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (very few remain, possibly fewer than 100)

The roloway monkey – easily identified by its broad white brow-line, long, white beard and yellow thighs – is one of the most endangered monkeys in Africa. Illegal logging has destroyed large areas of the forests in Ghana where they live. They are hunted, and their forests are besides cut down for charcoal production. Without effective conservation, they could soon become extinct in the wild. The captive population is so small that extinction in captivity is also a strong possibility.

Kipunji (*Rungwecebus kipunji*) – Tanzania (number approximately 1,100)

First discovered in 2003, the kipunji is Critically Endangered and faces a high risk of extinction in the wild. There are only two populations, separated by approximately 350 km of open agricultural land – one in the highland forests of the Ndundulu Forest Reserve, and the other in the Rungwe-Kitilo forest in southwestern Tanzania. Kipunji are often killed by log traps in retribution for raiding maize, bean and potato crops, and are also threatened by habitat degradation and fragmentation.

White-thighed colobus (*Colobus vellerosus*) – Nigeria (numbers unknown)

One of four species of black-and-white colobus monkeys in Africa. Unregulated hunting is the main reason for the demise of this species across a very large part of its range, although habitat loss and degradation have also contributed significantly to population decline. The encounter rate when surveying for the white-thighed colobus has reduced on average by 87 per cent in the last four decades.

Niger Delta red colobus (*Piliocolobus epieni*) – Nigeria (numbers as few as 1,000)

Red colobus monkeys are probably more threatened than any other group of primates in Africa. As a result of habitat destruction and hunting, the population has declined significantly since the 1990s and may now be 90 per cent lower than the previous estimate of 10,000. It is feared that the Niger Delta colobus, with its restricted range, is at risk of extinction.

Tana River red colobus (*Piliocolobus rufomitratu*s) – Kenya (number fewer than 1,000)

This species is confined to about 34 small, fragmented, river and flood-plain forests along a 60 km stretch of the lower Tana River and Tana Delta on Kenya's northern coast. Group sizes have fallen by about 50 per cent since the 1970s. Decline is fuelled by deforestation as

a result of a rapidly expanding human population, changes in vegetation due to dam construction upriver, and the impact of invasive flora species.

Western chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*) – Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Republic of Guinea, Senegal and Sierra Leone (numbers between 18,000 and 65,000)

The western chimpanzee once ranged widely across 11 countries but is now believed to have disappeared from Benin, Togo, and Burkina Faso, and is close to extinction in Ghana. Between 1990 and 2014 there was a total population reduction of 80 per cent, with current predictions estimating a further 99 per cent loss of the remaining population by 2060. The major causes of decline include illegal hunting, habitat loss and infectious disease. Infants are also captured and sold to wildlife traffickers. Many countries where the chimpanzees live have also suffered from civil unrest and political crises in past decades, reducing their ability to protect their biological resources.

Madagascar

Bemanasy mouse lemur (*Microcebus manitatra*) – Madagascar (number unknown)

To date, this highly threatened lemur has been confirmed to live only in the Bemanasy forest, a tiny forest fragment covering just 31.1 hectares in the Special Reserve of Ambatotsirongorongo in the south-eastern corner of Madagascar. It was only recently identified as a species distinct from the grey mouse lemur also present in this area. The greatest threats to the Bemanasy mouse lemur are habitat loss and degradation (driven by wood extraction to meet the demand for construction timber), slash-and-burn cultivation, and fires.

Lac Alaotra gentle lemur (*Haplemur alaotrensis*) – Madagascar (numbers fewer than 2,500)

Found in Madagascar, the Lac Alaotra gentle lemur is the only primate living exclusively in a wetland. Despite legal protection efforts, the population has been declining continuously since the first published census in the 1990s. Total numbers are now at around 2,500 individuals due to poaching and annual marshland burning. Reconnecting isolated subpopulations is a priority conservation measure.

James' sportive lemur (*Lepilemur jamesorum*) – Madagascar (very few remaining)

This lemur is found only in Manombo Special Reserve and Vevembe Classified Forest in the south-eastern coastal region of the island, and is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Deforestation is a significant problem in this region as people use the forest as their only resource for timber, firewood and charcoal production. These problems directly affect food availability for James' sportive lemurs and also lead to a fragmented habitat. James' sportive lemur is hunted using traditional traps or simply by cutting into trees and taking them directly from tree holes.

Indri (*Indri indri*) – Madagascar (numbers 1,000-10,000)

This highly distinctive black-and-white lemur is the only lemur that communicates through long, complex songs, including a group chorus. Population figures are declining due to habitat destruction for slash-and-burn agriculture, logging, and fuelwood gathering, all in protected areas. Illegal hunting is also a major threat despite traditional tribal taboos, which are increasingly failing to protect the indri – in some local villages skins are worn as clothing and meat fetches a premium price. This species has never been successfully kept in captivity and the establishment of a captive breeding programme is highly improbable.

Aye-aye (*Daubentonia madagascariensis*) – Madagascar (numbers unknown but Aye-Ayes are rare)

The aye-aye is the largest nocturnal primate, easily recognisable for its unusual appearance – a long, thin middle finger, continuously-growing fused teeth, yellow eyes, big ears and long bushy tail. They are the only surviving representative of the Daubentoniidae, the oldest family of the living lemurs. The major threats to aye-ayes are forest degradation and fragmentation, slash-and-burn agriculture and local communities that believe the aye-aye is an evil omen. As such, aye-ayes are often killed whenever they are seen near their villages.

Asia

Javan slow loris (*Nycticebus javanicus*) – Java, Indonesia (number unknown)

The Javan slow loris is the only venomous primate. To avoid being bitten, traders habitually cut or pull out an animal's lower front teeth. Many researchers and conservationists have only ever seen a slow loris in the illegal wildlife trade, dried on bamboo sticks in preparation for traditional medicine, paraded as a photo prop on a tourist beach, or sold as a pet. Devastating habitat loss throughout Southeast Asia threatens all nine species of slow loris with extinction. The Javan species is now listed as Critically Endangered.

Pig-tailed snub-nosed langur (*Simias concolor*) – Mentawai Islands, Indonesia (approximate population 3,300)

Classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, this remarkable and little-known species is confined to a few small islands in the Mentawai archipelago off the west coast of Sumatra. It is threatened by hunting, commercial logging, and human encroachment. Pig-tailed snub-nosed langur meat is regarded as a delicacy and entire groups can be eliminated in a single hunt.

Golden-headed or Cat Ba langur (*Trachypithecus poliocephalus*) – Vietnam (numbers 50-60)

This species occurs only on Cat Ba Island off northern Vietnam. The population fell from around 2,400–2,700 in the 1960s to approximately 50 by 2000. The langurs were poached for traditional medicines and sport. Since 2000, strict measures have seen their population increase. This has raised concern that poaching by people from adjacent regions may start again. Strict enforcement of the established protections is necessary for the survival of all species on Cat Ba Island targeted by the Asian wildlife trade.

Gee's golden langur – (*Trachypithecus geei*) – India and Bhutan (numbers fewer than 12,000)

Discovered in 1953 and found to be restricted to India and Bhutan, the Gee's golden langur is golden orange, as the name suggests, but only during the breeding season. For the rest of the year it is creamy white. The main threat is loss of habitat. Hunting and smuggling, dependency on forests, social unrest, inbreeding and diseases are additional threats, along with electrocution on power lines, road accidents and attacks by domestic dogs. The global population of the species was estimated at about 12,000 in 2009. The conservation scenario for this golden langur is alarming and critical. The threats to golden langurs are increasing and likely to worsen considerably over the coming years, despite a number of conservation initiatives.

Purple-faced langur (*Semnopithecus vetulus*) – Sri Lanka (numbers unknown)

Extensive deforestation took place after the end of Sri Lanka's twenty-six year civil war in 2009, escalating conflict between humans and monkeys. All four subspecies of purple-faced langurs are under threat, but especially the Critically Endangered western form, which is forced to live alongside humans in the densely populated region around Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo. These monkeys are often shot as pests for feeding on cultivated fruit, attacked by dogs or hit by vehicles while travelling along the ground, or electrocuted when moving along power lines.

Skywalker hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock tianxing*) – China, Myanmar (number fewer than 150)
Once widely distributed around the west bank of Salween River, west of Yunnan, China, there are now fewer than 150 remaining, making them Critically Endangered. Major threats include agriculture, commercial logging, habitat fragmentation, and hunting for bush meat and the pet trade. Populations are also threatened by their isolated nature, offering no opportunity for genetic diversity when breeding. Conservation efforts in Myanmar are further complicated by recent political unrest.

Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*) – Indonesia, Sumatra (numbers approximately 767)

The Tapanuli orangutan is the most endangered great ape species in the world. There is just one known population remaining, living in the rugged uplands of the Batang Toru Ecosystem, and it has declined severely over the past few decades. Major threats include widespread deforestation, including the illegal clearing of protected forests, agriculture, mining, and trade in young orangutans. Hunting has also increased in recent decades due to migrants settling on protected forest land. The species is also under threat from the recently initiated development of a hydro-electric dam in the area of highest orangutan density.

Neotropics

Buffy-tufted-ear marmoset (*Callithrix aurita*) – Brazil (numbers unknown)

This tiny marmoset lives in the mountain chains of the Atlantic Forest in south-eastern Brazil. Like many primates on this list, it is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, however it also suffers a more pressing threat from the groups of invasive and hybrid marmosets which are replacing native buffy-tufted-ear marmoset populations with alarming speed. An outbreak of yellow fever in 2016 has further reduced numbers, with these marmosets proving particularly vulnerable to the disease.

Pied tamarin (*Saguinus bicolor*) – Brazil (numbers unknown)

The pied tamarin is native to the Brazilian Amazon, with a large portion of its 7,500 km² range taken up by the state capital Manaus and its metropolitan region. In urban areas, pied tamarins are run over, electrocuted when using power lines, attacked by cats and dogs, captured as pets, and generally mistreated. Away from urban areas, threats include deforestation, habitat degradation and fragmentation, disease, and displacement by encroaching red-handed (or Midas) tamarins, all supporting a classification of Critically Endangered on the Brazilian List of Threatened Wildlife.

Ecuadorian white-fronted capuchin (*Cebus aequatorialis*) – Ecuador, Peru (numbers unknown)

Inhabiting the tropical and subtropical forests of the Chocó and Tumbes eco-regions, the white-fronted capuchin's distribution has been reduced to less than 1% of its original range in the last few decades. Forest loss and fragmentation have been particularly severe in western Ecuador, where 70% of the original forest cover has been converted to other uses, mainly agriculture and ranching. White-fronted capuchins are hunted as pests on plantations, and in some mangroves areas are seen as competitors in crab-hunting by local people, who also persecute them.

Olalla brothers' titi monkey (*Plecturocebus olallae*) – Bolivia (numbers fewer than 2,000)

One of just two primates found only in Bolivia, this Critically Endangered species has an extremely limited range of just 267 km² in an area of fragmented forest. Today there are fewer than 2,000 individuals remaining. The main threat is habitat loss caused by cattle-ranching in the grasslands – fires set to regenerate pasture often become uncontrolled and spread to forest patches, and smoke forces titi monkeys to leave their territories.

Brown howler monkey (*Alouatta guariba*) – Brazil, Argentina (numbers unknown)

The main threats to the wild populations are hunting, habitat fragmentation and the very small sizes of the scattered populations. Howlers are highly susceptible to yellow fever, and two recent outbreaks have severely affected their numbers.

Central American spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*) – Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama

Because of habitat loss and fragmentation, severe hunting pressure, and the pet trade, the Central American spider monkeys are considered Critically Endangered. Their diet mainly consists of fruit, meaning they require large expanses of forest and are less able to adapt to fragmentation than some other primates. Another major threat is deforestation caused by the illegal drug trade, which sometimes takes place in natural parks and reserves.

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