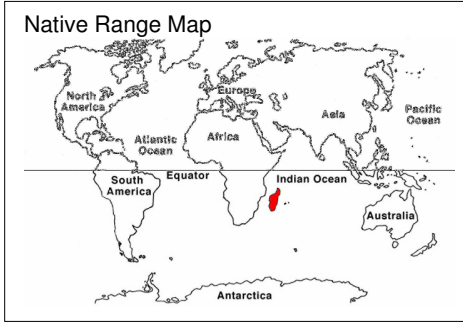


Native Range Map



Fossa

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Eupleridae
Genus: *Cryptoprocta*
Species: *ferox*



Photo courtesy of Kate Woodle

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The fossa is found on the island of Madagascar. It inhabits all forested areas and ranges from the coastal lowlands to mountainous areas up to 6,560 feet in elevation.
- **Exhibit Location:** Social Animals

Characteristics

- Length: males up to 31 inches, females up to 27 inches; Height: 14.5 inches; Tail length: 24-31 inches; Weight: males up to 22 pounds, females up to 15 pounds
- The fossa has a very muscular build. It has short, thick, reddish-brown fur.
- The head is fairly small, with a short muzzle and ears that are small and rounded. It has 32-36 small teeth, and its whiskers can be as long as its head.
- It has short, curved claws that are retractable and which enable efficient tree climbing. It walks on the soles of its feet (plantigrade).
- It has keen vision, hearing and smell.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** Unknown; **In Captivity** 20 years

Behaviors

- The fossa is cathemeral (sporadically active throughout a 24 hour period).
- It is secretive and solitary, except during the breeding season.
- Both males and females mark the boundaries of their territories with secretions from their anal glands. The territories vary in size depending on the abundance of prey but are usually about 0.39 square miles.
- They are excellent climbers and will pursue prey through the trees.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** scents, toys, boxes, etc.

Reproduction

- Breeding age is about 4 years old. Mating season occurs during September and October. Aggression among males may occur during the mating season, including threatening calls and postures, which may lead to fighting. Females will mate with several males. Mating can occur on the ground or on a horizontal tree branch.
- After a gestation period of 90 days, 2-4 young are born in a den the female makes in an old termite mound or the hollow of a tree. The young weigh about 3 ounces; they are toothless and blind, but furred. Their eyes open in about 15 days. They have adult teeth at about 2 years of age.
- When they are about 4 ½ months old, they are weaned and venture out of the den. They are protected until they become independent at 15-20 months old.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** lemurs, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects
- **At the Zoo:** carnivore diet, rats, mice, quail

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** Endangered; **CITES Appendix:** II
- The fossa has been on the endangered list since 2000. It is estimated that less than 2,500 fossas remain in the wild. Loss of habitat and local farmers who regard fossas as predators of poultry have greatly contributed to their population decline.
- Rabies, introduced to the island by domestic dogs and wild cats, has also become a significant threat.
- Fossas are protected in a number of Madagascan reserves; they are found within the Ankarana and Analamera Special Reserves, and within the Ranomafana, Andasibe-Mantadia and Montagne d'Ambre National Parks. A successful captive breeding program has also been established, and it is hoped that these measures will be sufficient to secure the future of one of Madagascar's most enigmatic and fascinating animals.
- Predators: humans

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Fossa is pronounced "foosa".
- The fossa goes down a tree headfirst like a squirrel.
- Fossas are the largest mammalian carnivores on the island of Madagascar.
- The fossa is related to the mongoose, but until recently, it was mistaken for a primitive type of cat.

Sources:

- Garbutt, N. (2003, February 7). Fossa (*Cryptoprocta ferox*). Retrieved December 4, 2007, from ARKive | Images of life on Earth Web site: http://www.arkive.org/species/GES/mammals/Cryptoprocta_ferox/more_info.html#Threa
- Lundrigan, B. and T. Zachariah. 2000. "Cryptoprocta ferox" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed October 15, 2007 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Cryptoprocta_ferox.html
- Postanowicz, R. (2007). Fossa (*Cryptoprocta ferox*). Retrieved December 4, 2007, from Lioncrusher's Domain Web site: <http://www.lioncrusher.com/animal.asp?animal=98>
- Zoological Society of San Diego. (2007). Mammals: Fossa. Retrieved December 4, 2007, from San Diego Zoo.org Web site: <http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-fossa.html>