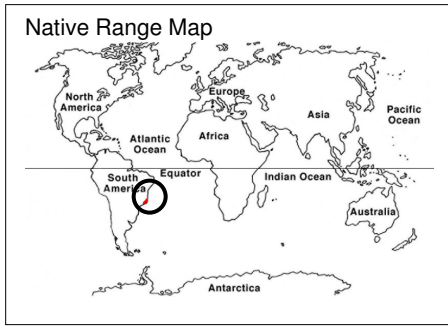


# Golden Lion Tamarin



Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Primata  
Family: Callitrichidae  
Genus: *Leontopithecus*  
Species: *rosalia*



Photo courtesy of Megan Mullin

## Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Golden lion tamarins inhabit the Atlantic coastal forest of Brazil and in or near the Reserva Biologica de Poco das Antas in Rio de Janeiro. They reside in dense forest that is entangled with many vines and has a high density of fruit. The climate is extremely humid. They occupy the closed canopy, often remaining 10-30 meters (30 to 90 ft.) off the ground. They are diurnal (active during the daytime) and sleep in tree holes for warmth and protection from predators. At the zoo they sleep in nesting boxes.
- **Exhibit Location:** Social Animals

## Characteristics

- Body length: 8-13.4 inches; Tail length: 12.6-16 inches; Weight: 600-800 grams (21 – 28 oz).
- The golden lion tamarin, one of the world's most striking and rarest mammals, is so called because of the beautiful mane of silky golden hair that frames its face. The fur is a lustrous golden color, but the tail and forepaws may be brown or black. The face is naked or sparsely haired. The forelimbs are shorter than the hind limbs and the thumb is not opposable. The digits are long and delicate with claw-like nails, which are perfectly adapted to forage for small prey. The canines are longer than the incisors. Tamarins have acute sight, good hearing and sense of smell.
- Males are typically larger than females but otherwise there are no major differences between the sexes.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild:** 10-12 yrs., **In Captivity:** 15 years

## Behaviors

- Golden lion tamarins express their emotions by movements of the eyelids, ears, and the hairy adornments of the head. Most of their time is spent in trees or shrubs. They generally travel in groups of 2-8 individuals and usually with family members. They are active and agile, running, jumping and leaping between trees. When at rest, tamarins draw the fingers inward so that the nails pierce the bark of the tree limb they are on. They are fastidious in the care and grooming of their fur, and often engage in mutual grooming.
- Tamarins are usually docile and gentle in captivity but will bite if handled against their will.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** live crickets and mealworms are given to encourage hunting behaviors

## Reproduction

- Sexual maturity is reached at 16 to 20 months of age.
- The golden lion tamarins are seasonal breeders, bearing most litters between January and June in the temperate zone (the reverse in Brazil which is July – November). Females' estrus cycle averages 2-3 weeks in length. During this period, there are changes in socio-sexual interactions between the male and female. Sniffing, approaching and grooming increase at the peak of estrus.
- The gestation period is 130 to 145 days. Females give birth to 1-3 young (2 being the norm), each weighing about 2oz. The male assists in the rearing of the young and carries them on his back. At feeding time he transfers them to the mother and then accepts them again after feeding. The young are fed every few hours and are weaned at approximately 2 to 3 months of age.

## Diet

- **In the Wild:** They are omnivorous, feeding on tree gum, fruits, insects, small lizards, flowers, leaves, nectar, bird eggs and nestling tree frogs. GLT's actively search crevices, bark, bromeliads and other hiding places for their prey. They use their long, slender fingers and hands to probe into these areas ("micromanipulation").
- **At the Zoo:** Marmoset diet, marmoset jelly, mealworms, monkey chow, orange slices, apples, bananas and grapes.

### Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** - Endangered; **CITES:** Appendix I
- The golden lion tamarin is one of the world's most endangered animals. Numbers declined largely due to destruction of its forest habitat for lumber, farming, pasture and housing. Until the 1960's they were subject to considerable exportation for use in zoos, laboratories and the pet trade.
- Reintroduction has had a positive effect. Once down to only 200-300, there are now about 1200 golden lion tamarins living in the wild, most in or near the Reserva Biologica de Poco das Antas in the state of Rio de Janeiro. About 450 live in zoos worldwide. To maintain the species, they are being bred in captivity (SSP) and commercial trade has been banned.
- Predators of the golden lion tamarin include humans, snakes, small cats and birds of prey.

### Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Tamarin groups actively defend a territory against other GLT's. They use vocalizations and scent marking during ritualized group encounters for defense. Actual fighting does not occur. This is to reduce the chance of injury for the tamarins that are involved. Remember, they don't have veterinarians in the wild!

### Source:

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