

# Vervet

Native Range Map



Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Primata  
Family: Cercopithecidae  
Genus: *Chlorocebus*  
Species: *aethiops*

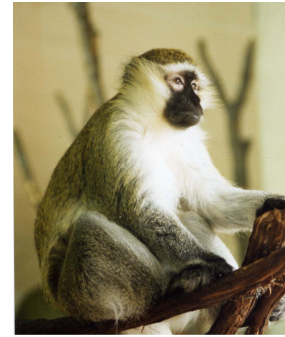


Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

## Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Vervets are found in Africa from Sudan to Ethiopia and south to South Africa. They inhabit forests, woodlands and savannahs, usually near rivers, streams and lakes. They spend about fifty percent of their time in trees.
- **Exhibit Location:** Adaptations

## Characteristics

- Body length is 13 – 28 inches with a tail from 20 – 40 inches long. They weigh between 6 and 11 lbs. Males are larger than females and easily recognized by their turquoise blue scrota. Fur color is tan to pale green with dark faces fringed with white. The long white-tipped tail is not prehensile but used for balance. Another name for vervet is green monkey due to the greenish tinge of its fur. These monkeys have the same number of teeth as man, and they have powerful jaws with muscles arranged to give an effective “nutcracker” action. They have cheek pouches in which they hold food for later consumption.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** up to 20 years; **In Captivity** up to 30 years.

## Behaviors

- Vervets are most active during the cooler part of the day, late afternoon and evening. When they are not sleeping or taking shelter in trees, they may be found running along the ground or swimming in nearby rivers. Vervets are social animals and live in troops ranging from 6 to 60 individuals. Troop members keep in touch using a number of different vocalizations. Different alarm calls have been identified for different predators. For example, the leopard alarm is distinctly different than the eagle alarm. A high ranking male demonstrates his place in the hierarchy by placing his tail in a stiffly upright position and strolling past lower ranking males. Grooming is commonly used as a courtship strategy.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** toys, treat logs, foraging barrels, scents. The exhibit is designed to simulate the environment that these primates would inhabit in the wild. There are numerous tree limbs, ropes and vines for climbing, as well as a floor of grass-hay that the vervets forage through for food.

## Reproduction

- The gestation period is 140 – 160 days with breeding occurring throughout the year. Generally one infant, occasionally two, are born. The baby clings to the mother’s abdomen as she moves around. Other adult or juvenile females may carry or groom the baby, but adult males are generally not tolerated near infants. Maturity is reached between 24 and 30 months of age.

## Diet

- **In the Wild:** Fruit, leaves, grain buds, seeds, bark, gum, roots, young birds, bird eggs, small reptiles and insects.
- **At the Zoo:** Primate diet (canned vegetable/soy-based mixture), monkey chow, peanuts, yams, carrots, spinach, green beans, apples, bananas, grapes, and oranges.

### **Conservation Status**

- The population is stable but habitat encroachment by humans threatens all species in the area. Since vervets raid crops, they have been trapped, poisoned and hunted. They are also occasionally consumed by people.
- Vervets rarely venture further than about 500 yards from the trees since they are vulnerable to a variety of predators including leopards, caracals, servals, baboons, large eagles, crocodiles and pythons. Though they usually confine contact calls to chirping and chittering, vervets scream and squeal when in danger.

### **Did You Know?/Fun Facts**

- Vervet monkeys living near areas inhabited by people can become pests, stealing food and other items and raiding crops. Good climbers, jumpers and swimmers, they often elude capture.
- In sexual and dominance displays, vervet monkeys run the gamut from shaking branches and jumping around to making a hard 'kek-kek-kek' sound to mark their territories.
- The Swahili name for the vervet monkey is *tumbili*.

### **Source:**

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