African Gray Parrot

**Class:** Aves  
**Order:** Psittaciformes  
**Family:** Psittacidae  
**Genus species:** *Psittacus erithacus*

**FIELD MARKS**
Wingspan up to 21 in.; length up to 13 in.; weight just over 1 lb.; gray parrot with light eye spot and scarlet tail.

**LIFE HISTORY**
Form gregarious flocks of hundreds or even thousands of birds, communicating with a wide range of squawks, whistles, and shrieks. Pairs form life-long monogamous bonds. Females build nests in tree cavities near fresh water, males feed their mates, and pairs sing soft monotonous notes to each other. Clutch size: 2-5 round or oval eggs. Incubation: 30 days. Young emerge from nest at 12 weeks.

**DIET**
- In the wild, parrots feed on fruit, seeds, nuts, and berries.
- In captivity, they eat fruit, vegetables, primate biscuits, dog kibble, seeds and nuts.

**THREATS TO SURVIVAL**
- Though not currently endangered, widespread trapping and deforestation have caused wild population declines.
- In the 1980’s, African Grays were the second-most trapped and traded parrot in the world. International trade remains their principal threat.
- They have also been persecuted as pests by maize farmers in some areas.

**CONSERVATION STATUS**
- There is an international ban on wild bird importation. Legally captive-bred parrots wear a closed numbered band on the ankle. Notice the bands on our birds. Buy only parrots with closed bands.

**RANGE & HABITAT**
- West and Central Africa
- Occur in diverse habitats including contiguous forest, forest edges, and human-developed areas

*These parrots are among the most intelligent birds in the world! They are extraordinary mimics. Some parrots have demonstrated human vocabularies well over 200 words, and one bird up to 1,000 words.*

*In addition, one gray parrot named “Alex” was the first bird to comprehend the numerical concept of zero.*
Ball Python

Class: Reptilia  Order: Squamata  Family: Pythonidae  Genus species: Python regius

FIELD MARKS
Average length is 4 ft., but may reach 7 ft.; dark brown body covered by large cream-colored patches with dark centers; males have more pronounced anal spurs and wider tails than females.

LIFE HISTORY
Females lay 8 eggs per clutch, on average. Young snakes are approximately 12 in. when they hatch.

DIET
• In the wild, ball pythons feed on small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.
• In captivity, they eat small rodents.

THREATS TO SURVIVAL
• There is increased pressure on wild populations due to the pet trade. 60,000 ball pythons are imported annually.
• Despite a low reproductive rate, they are the least expensive snake, and therefore, one of the more popular species in the pet business.
• Native people kill ball pythons for the skin trade and for their meat.

CONSERVATION STATUS
• Ball pythons are not endangered. However, trade is monitored to protect their status.

RANGE & HABITAT
• West Africa
• Forests and brushland, primarily on the ground

When threatened, the ball python will curl itself into a ball with its head hidden under its coils, hence its name.
Golden Mantella

**Class:** Amphibia  **Order:** Anura  **Family:** Rhacophoridae  **Genus species:** Mantella aurantiaca

**FIELD MARKS**
Length: 25-35 mm. Incubation: 2-6 days. Life Span: 8 years. Coloration: brilliant golden-orange. Short legs with adhesive disks found on fingers and toes.

**LIFE HISTORY**
Mantellas are colonial, and male to female ratio is 2 to 1. During the breeding season, males become very territorial and will fight. Females lay 12-30 eggs usually in damp moss, logs, and under rocks. Tadpoles are primarily herbivorous eating algae and detritus. After 6-8 weeks, the tadpoles metamorphose into frogs and start eating an adult diet.

**DIET**
• In the wild, mantellas are terrestrial diurnal insectivores. Thus, they hunt on the ground for termites, ants and fruit flies during the day.
• In captivity, they eat young crickets and fruit flies.

**THREATS TO SURVIVAL**
• Habitat destruction is taking place in the montane Pandanus forests around Andasibe in Madagascar which is the only place where this frog lives in the wild.
• The pet trade is another major threat.

**CONSERVATION STATUS**
• As of 2006, the Golden Mantella was listed as a vulnerable species (CITES Appendix II), which means that it may become endangered or extinct unless trade is strictly regulated.
Helmeted Guinea Fowl

**Class:** Aves  **Order:** Galliformes  **Family:** Phasianidae  **Genus species:** Numida sp.

**FIELD MARKS**
Length: 20 in., weight: 3 lbs., average lifespan up to 12 years. Dark body with white dot design and light head with characteristic red “helmet” crest and wattle.

**LIFE HISTORY**
Large flocks split into smaller groups for breeding and form monogamous pairs. Females incubate clutch of 12-15 eggs for 25-30 days.

**DIET**
• In the wild, guinea fowl forage seeds, bulbs, tubers, berries, and insects.
• In captivity, they eat corn, game and turkey grain, and ground insects.

**THREATS TO SURVIVAL**
• Guinea fowl adapt well to diverse natural and human environments. Although they are from Africa, guinea fowl are like white-tailed deer in that they are hunted for meat but have benefitted from human land-use and development.

**CONSERVATION STATUS**
• Wild and captive populations are relatively stable.

**RANGE & HABITAT**
• Widespread throughout Sub-Saharan Africa
• Open grassland, savanna, and cultivated land

*In the US, guinea fowl are often used for tick and insect management. They typically form large, noisy groups. As many as 2,000 have been observed roosting in the same tree! They are excellent runners and can cover up to 20 miles in a day.*
FIELD MARKS
Bony; flattened, long dorsal fin; possess two types of jaw—one in mouth to suck, scrape, or bite food, another in throat to crush food; males more colorful than females.

LIFE HISTORY
Female lays eggs in a hollow in the sand. Courting male fertilizes them in “nest.” After fertilization, the male and/or female will take eggs into his/her mouth for an incubation period of about three weeks. This is called mouthbrooding. Young fish return to the mouth to feed or if threatened.

DIET
• In the wild, cichlids feed on insects, leafy plants, snails, and mussels.
• In captivity, they eat specialized cichlid pellets, flakes, krill, and brine shrimp.

THREATS TO SURVIVAL
• Cichlids are threatened by pollution, overfishing, the introduction of nonnative plants, and predation by a large alien predator (the Nile perch), oxygen depletion of lake waters, and industrial development.
• 50 years ago, cichlids made up 99% of the biomass in Lake Victoria. Today, they account for 1%, being replaced by the Nile perch. At least 200 cichlid species became extinct!

CONSERVATION STATUS
• In 1993, AZA established the first fish Species Survival Plan (SSP) for Lake Victoria Cichlids.
• As of 2006, AZA institutions maintained 13 of these endangered species.
• The goal for the SSP is to return a portion of the captive population to the Victoria Basin for reintroduction studies and to develop educational exhibits in Kenya and Uganda to teach people about the value of these fish.

RANGE & HABITAT
• Lake Victoria and surrounding bodies of water in Victoria Basin, East Africa
• Open water, shoreline, and bottom environments

Female cichlids lay far fewer eggs than most fish. Mouthbrooding cichlids lay only 10 eggs as opposed to the thousands of eggs laid by other fish. This is most likely due to the large amount of parental investment.

Lake Victoria Cichlid
Class: Osteichthyes  Order: Perciformes  Family: Cichlidae  Genus: Haplochromis and Macropleurodus
**Taveta Golden Weaver**

*Class: Aves  Order: Passeriformes  Family: Ploceidae  Genus species: Ploceus castaneiceps*

**FIELD MARKS**
Small passerines with heavy, finch-like beaks. Males are bright yellow with greenish wings and tail and chestnut patches around the head. Females are yellow-olive green with dusky streaks and pale yellow underparts.

**LIFE HISTORY**
Form gregarious colonies. Males weave intricate nests of locally-available palms and grasses. Females line nests with soft materials and lay 2-3 olive green eggs per clutch.

**DIET**
- In the wild golden weavers eat grass and corn seeds and insects.
- In captivity, they eat finch seed, crickets, fruit, and vegetables.

**THREATS TO SURVIVAL**
- Kenya and Tanzania have established reserves in the Taveta Plains region, including Tsavo National Park in Kenya.
- These reserves help protect important weaver habitat and reduce the impacts of human encroachment and associated habitat depletion.

**CONSERVATION STATUS**
- Wild golden weaver populations are currently stable.
FIELD MARKS
Length of head and body is 2 ft.; length of tail is 2 ft.; weight is 7 lbs.; ruff of very soft white fur around face; distinguished from higher primates by moist snout, or rhinarium.

LIFE HISTORY
Breed during February and March. Give birth to up to 5 young after gestation period of 103 days. Female builds nest where she stays with young for almost two weeks. This is the only species of lemur to build a nest.

DIET
• In the wild, lemurs eat fruit, leaves, flowers, and soil.
• In captivity, they eat fruit, vegetables, bread, and primate biscuits. Lemurs are coprophagous—they assimilate excreted nutrients by eating their own feces.

THREATS TO SURVIVAL
• Lemurs flourished in Madagascar in the absence of large mammals. Since the arrival of humans 2000 years ago, 80% of the rainforest has disappeared and 15 species of lemurs have become extinct through deforestation and poaching.

CONSERVATION STATUS
• The black and white ruffed lemur has been an endangered species since 1975.
• It is part of AZA’s Species Survival Plan (SSP) program.
• The Madagascar Fauna Group has sponsored a reintroduction project since 1997, where captive-born lemurs are released into Betampona Natural Reserve in Madagascar.
• Before being released into the protected area, lemurs are trained within complex and challenging environments at Duke University Primate Center and St. Catherine’s Island. They learn locomotor and foraging skills in order to survive in the wild.
FIELD MARKS
Length of head and body is 15-18 in.; length of tail is 22-24 in.; weight is 5-7 lbs.; gray fur on back, and limbs; white fur on extremities; black muzzle and rings around eyes; black and white banded tail; males have a fingernail-like spur above each wrist used for scent marking.

LIFE HISTORY
Breeding season is mid-April. Females are receptive for a total of 24 hours per year. Gestation period is 136 days. One, or occasionally two, offspring carried by mother until independence at 3-4 months. Lifespan is 15-25 years.

DIET
• In the wild, ring-tailed lemurs eat fruit, leaves, flowers, bark, and sap.
• In captivity, they eat fruit, vegetables, bread, and primate biscuits.

THREATS TO SURVIVAL
• Fires set to promote growth of grass, livestock overgrazing, and charcoal production have caused severe loss of habitat.
• Wild populations are also threatened by illegal hunting.

CONSERVATION STATUS
• The ring-tailed lemur is a “flagship” endangered species which has brought attention to the threatened flora and fauna of southern Madagascar.
• It is part of AZA’s Species Survival Plan (SSP) program.
• Conservation education is the most important tool in preserving lemur habitat.
• Before being released into protected areas in Madagascar, lemurs are trained within complex and challenging environments where they learn locomotor and foraging skills in order to survive in the wild.