

BLACK-HEADED SPIDER MONKEY

updated March 2017



Range	Central America to northern South America
Habitat	Dry forests, humid forests and cloud forests, and can live up to 6,600–8,200 feet (2,000–2,500 meters) above sea level
Diet (wild)	Fruit; when fruit is scarce, they will consume a greater amount of leaves, flowers, seeds, bark, and honey, and occasionally small insects
Diet (captive)	
Description	Length: 20–22 inches; tail: additional 28–34 inches; weight: 18–20 pounds. Long, thin arms, hook-like hands with no thumbs. They also have a prehensile tail that is used as a fifth limb. As an infant, spider monkeys have a pink face and pink ears but as they grow, the hair on their heads turns brown. Males and females appear the same; both have bodies of very dark brown or black, depending on the subspecies.
Lifespan	Wild: 25 years. Captivity: 40 years
Reproduction	Usually a single offspring is produced; young are cared for by only the mother for 20 months before weaning. Females express readiness to mate with changes in their behavior, scent, and visual signals. The estrous cycle is 26 days and females will associate with a male for up to three days, with mating lasting 5–10 minutes.
Behavior	Spider monkeys travel and forage in the upper levels of the forest. When traveling, they spend more time hanging from branches, usually moving by arm swinging (brachiating) and climbing rather than walking or running on all fours. They live in groups of up to 20–30 individuals but are rarely all seen together. Spider monkeys will nearly always be traveling or resting in small groups (2–4 individuals). Each female has a “core area” of the group’s home range which she uses most.
Our animals	1 female, 4 males. Born: 06/21/1981 (female); 02/15/1983; 07/21/1997; 11/12/1998; 12/20/1999 (males). Birth place: San Diego Zoo (female); National Zoo (Washington D.C.) (one male); the younger males are the offspring of the older male and female, born at PPZ
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spider monkeys’ prehensile tails have an area of bare skin allowing for a better grip. This bare patch of skin has its own unique “tail print,” much like our fingerprints. • The hands and feet of spider monkeys are adapted for climbing. Black-headed spider monkeys lack a thumb, which increases the strength of their grip and helps with climbing. • Only New World primates have prehensile tails. • Black-headed spider monkeys can leap in excess 30 feet from branch to branch. • Researchers and observers of spider monkeys of South America look for a scrotum to determine the animal sex because female spider monkeys have pendulous clitorises long enough to be mistaken for a penis.

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
PrimatesFamily
AtelidaeGenus
Atelesspecies
A. fusciceps rufiventris