



LEMUR LEARNING ACTIVITY

Lemur Documentary Film Festival Guide

This guide lists films about lemurs and Madagascar, and includes discussion questions to use with each.

FILMS

1. Wild Madagascar (2011)

- Available with Amazon Prime
- 57 min.

2. Passport to the World: Madagascar (2019)

- Available with Amazon Prime
- 1 hr. 17 min.

3. The Lemur's Island (2018)

- Available with Amazon Prime
- 52 min.

4. Island of Lemurs: Madagascar (2014)

- Available for free on YouTube
- 40 min.
- <https://youtu.be/NxMNPuf2pWU>

5. Adorable Lemurs Roam Free on This Ancient Island - Nat Geo Short Film Showcase (2017)

- Available for free on YouTube
- 10 min.
- <https://youtu.be/UjSiq53nJBo>

6. Our Planet - Netflix Series (2019)

- Available on Netflix
- Available for free on YouTube
- 48 min. - "Forests" episode features Madagascar and lemurs (approx. 33 minutes into episode)
- <https://youtu.be/JkaxUblCGz0>

7. Madagascar - Dreamworks animated film (2005)

- Available to rent on YouTube (\$3.99) or Amazon (\$3.99)
- 1 hr. 25 min.
- <https://youtu.be/1WEw795RnGE>
- <https://www.lemurconservationnetwork.org/madagascar-a-guide-to-using-the-film-as-an-educational-tool-for-lemur-conservation-education/>



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Wild Madagascar (2011)

This film covers basic info, facts, and tidbits about Madagascar and the animals that call the island home. This is a good documentary for elementary level students.

1. Describe 3 habitat regions found on Madagascar.
 - a. Answer:
 - i. Central Highlands - central Madagascar; rice plateaus; rocky cliffs.
 - ii. Rainforests - eastern coast of Madagascar; lush flora and many rivers.
 - iii. Coastal Swamp - southern coast of Madagascar; mangroves; beaches.
2. What kind of habitats can ring-tailed lemurs be found in?
 - a. Answer: Deciduous forest, mid altitude forest, spiny brush.
3. Ring-tailed lemurs are opportunistic primates. What does this mean about their diet? What kind of things do they eat?
 - a. Answer: Opportunistic means that these lemurs eat what is available, they aren't picky! Ring-tailed lemurs eat leaves, flowers, fruits, even small birds and tree bark in "lean times".
4. How big is a typical ring-tailed lemur troop?
 - a. Answer: 13-15 individuals.
5. Why do chameleons change colors? What do the different colors mean?
 - a. Answer: Chameleons mostly change colors to communicate with mates and foes. Darker patterns are a warning for enemies, while brighter patterns are a love message to females.
6. What is the main threat to lemurs and why?
 - a. Answer: Deforestation, because lemurs rely on forest to survive; it is their main habitat.
7. Where did Madagascar's first explorers come from?
 - a. Answer: Asia
8. What percent of Malagasy households still burn trees/wood to cover their energy needs? How might this affect the lemurs and other wildlife that call Madagascar's forests home? What are some other ways Malagasy people can cover their energy needs without burning wood?
 - a. Answer: 95%. Using trees/wood for energy means cutting trees down, which adds to the problem of deforestation, which is the main threat to lemurs. Alternative energy sources could be solar, wind, and water/hydro power.
9. Where can the endangered radiated tortoise be found?
 - a. South and Southwest Madagascar.
10. Name some other animals found on Madagascar besides lemurs.
 - a. Answer: Chameleons, egrets, kingfishers, tenrecs, leaf tailed geckos, tomato frogs, crocodiles, tree boas, radiated tortoises.



Passport to the World: Madagascar (2019)

This film provides a good overview of Malagasy culture, traditions, and day-to-day life of Malagasy people.

1. What is the capital city of Madagascar?
 - a. Answer: Antananarivo
2. How do Malagasy traditions affect the work of modern Malagasies?
 - a. Answer: The Malagasy are hardworking people who value and respect the knowledge and ways of their ancestors. Rather than trying to take “the easy way”, Malagasies tend to stick to “the ancestors’ way”, traditional methods.
3. In a traditional Malagasy wedding, what does the groom offer to the bride’s family?
 - a. Answer: The back end of a sheep.
4. What iconic style of Malagasy music was discussed in the film?
 - a. Answer: Salegy, a dance music that was developed with the introduction of the accordion to Madagascar.
5. What kind of cattle do Malagasy people use the horns of to make various crafts and goods?
 - a. Answer: Zebu cattle.
6. In what ways are these animals important to Malagasy people?
 - a. Answer: Malagasies use the Zebu cattle for transportation, agriculture/working the land, and to make crafts and goods. In Madagascar, a man’s wealth can often be measured by the number of Zebu cattle he has.
7. What contributes to the high quality of essential oils Madagascar produces?
 - a. Answer: High plant biodiversity (over 12,000 species of plants are found on Madagascar) and the traditional know-how/wisdom of the Malagasy people.
8. How is a traditional Malagasy canoe made?
 - a. Answer: It is carved by hand using only an axe!
9. What is the relationship between nature and the people who live around Sahamalaza National Park?
 - a. Answer: The people generally respect the nature around them. They appreciate what it gives them for their livelihood and try to protect and care for nature in return.
10. What is tsingy?
 - a. Answer: Limestone rock formations in northern Madagascar that have become pointed over time because of erosion. In Malagasy, “tsingy” means “the place you cannot walk”.

Discussion Topics

1. Discuss the values of the Malagasy people. What do they believe in, what do they prioritize, what kind of lifestyle do they live?
2. What did you see throughout the film that differs from your own lifestyle and culture? How so? What was similar? How so?
3. After watching the film, do you want to visit Madagascar? Why or why not? Are there some parts of Madagascar you would like to visit and others you wouldn’t? Which ones? Describe your perfect trip to Madagascar.



The Lemur's Island (2018) - Page 1 of 2

This film follows two lemur families, a group of Ring-tailed Lemurs and a group of Sifakas, as they journey to find a new territory to call home. Overall, a glimpse into lemur life!

1. Madagascar is the ___ largest island in the world.
 - a. Answer: 4th
2. What are the 2 lemur species featured in the film?
 - a. Answer: Sifakas and Ring-tailed Lemurs
3. Why do lemurs sunbathe with their bellies facing the sun?
 - a. Answer: Lemurs sunbathe to warm up from the chilly night before. They sit with their bellies facing the sun because their fur is thinnest in that area and soaks up the heat easily.
4. Which species is the most terrestrial of the lemurs?
 - a. Answer: Ring-tailed lemurs, they spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of their time on the ground.
5. How many chameleon species are found on Madagascar?
 - a. Answer: Over 100 species of chameleon can be found on Madagascar.
6. What method of communication do lemurs use/rely on most?
 - a. Answer: Scent/smell/aroma
7. What sensory organ in the nose do lemurs have that allow them to have such a good sense of smell?
 - a. Answer: Rhinarium
8. What makes leaf-tailed geckos' camouflage so effective?
 - a. Answer: Leaf-tailed geckos can change their skin pattern to match their background and blend in almost perfectly. They also flick their leaf-shaped tail to mimic a leaf in the breeze.
9. Describe how the 2 lemur species in the film move/travel differently when on the ground.
 - a. Answer: Ring-tailed Lemurs walk mostly on all fours (quadrupedally). Sifakas leap sideways on their legs, keeping their arms spread to help with balance.
10. What and where is "tsingy"?
 - a. Answer: Tsingy are the sharp rock formations in northwest Madagascar, "the place man cannot walk barefoot".
11. Like most primates, why do lemurs groom each other? Unlike other primates, how does the way lemurs groom each other differ?
 - a. Answer: Lemurs groom each other to reinforce hierarchy and their relationships. Unlike other primates, lemurs don't separate the hair and pick with their hands. Instead, lemurs lick and use their specialized tooth comb to groom troop mates.
12. Why is playtime important for lemurs?
 - a. Answer: Playtime builds trust and strengthens relationships between lemurs. Play also helps individuals learn how to handle social situations, like a new member approaching a group.



The Lemur's Island (2018) - Page 2 of 2

13. How are lemurs like bees?
 - a. Answer: Like bees, some lemur species are pollinators. They transfer pollen and disperse seeds from flowers and plants they eat to other parts of the forest.
14. What is the most popular theory on how lemurs arrived on Madagascar? Why is it likely that this happened millions of years ago, but not likely for it to happen today?
 - a. Answer: The Rafting Theory. About 60 million years ago, lemur-like animals floated across the Mozambique Channel on large mats of vegetation carried by currents. 60 million years ago, Madagascar was further south and closer to the African continent than it is today. The channel was smaller, and the currents were favorable/flowed from the continent to the island.
15. Describe the meeting of the 2 lemur families in the film.
 - a. Answer: The Ring-tailed Lemur group scent marked on trees when they entered the Sifaka territory. The Sifaka group remained calm and docile when they saw the Ring-tailed Lemurs. This is common, most lemurs are permissive of other species. The Ring-tailed Lemur group soon encountered another Ring-tailed group, a troop that was already sharing the territory with the Sifakas. This caused some territorial displays among the two Ring-tailed Lemur groups. The newcomers eventually retreated and moved on from the territory, but some of the young males stayed and joined the resident Ring-tailed Lemur group. The Sifakas and the resident Ring-tailed Lemurs continued to coexist peacefully.



Island of Lemurs: Madagascar (2014)

This documentary features Dr. Patricia Wright, renowned primatologist and lemur conservationist. The viewer will learn more about her work to help the lemurs and people of Madagascar thrive.

1. What lemur species did Dr. Patricia Wright hope to find on her first trip to Madagascar and why?
 - a. Answer: Dr. Wright was hoping to rediscover the Greater Bamboo Lemur, as it had not been seen for the last 50 years and was thought to be extinct at that time.
2. What does the word "lemur" mean?
 - a. Answer: Wandering spirit.
3. There were once lemurs as big as gorillas, but they were hunted to extinction ___ years ago. What species of lemur is the largest alive today?
 - a. Answer: Giant lemurs were hunted to extinction 200 years ago. The largest lemurs alive today are the Indri Lemurs.
4. What makes Indri even more rare and more difficult to protect than other lemur species?
 - a. Answer: No Indri has ever survived in captivity.
5. What main problem do lemurs and humans in Madagascar have in common?
 - a. Answer: Limited resources that they both need to survive.
6. How long ago did people settle on Madagascar?
 - a. Answer: People settled on Madagascar 2,000 years ago.
7. What about lemur social life makes them different from other primates?
 - a. Answer: In lemur groups, the females are in charge/dominant over the males.
8. What and where is the Centre ValBio?
 - a. Answer: Centre ValBio is a research station in Ranomafana National Park that trains and supports the next generation of lemur conservationists.
9. Almost all of the plants and animals on Madagascar are endemic. What does this mean?
 - a. Answer: Endemic means that these plants and animals are found nowhere else on Earth.
10. What is the smallest type of lemur?
 - a. Answer: Mouse Lemurs
11. Where do Sifakas get their water from?
 - a. Answer: Sifakas rarely drink water, but instead get their water from the fruits and leaves of prickly cactus-like trees and plants that they eat.
12. Why is it important that the new/transported Bamboo Lemurs were examined before being let free in the national park?
 - a. Answer: It was important to examine the new lemurs first to evaluate any injury or illness and get them medical attention if needed, and also to treat/prevent any illness that could spread to the resident lemurs (contagious diseases, parasites, etc.)
13. According to Dr. Wright, how are we going to save lemurs?
 - a. Answer: "One generation at a time."



Adorable Lemurs Roam Free on This Ancient Island - Nat Geo Short Film Showcase (2017)

National Geographic's Description: "In Madagascar, a small piece of rainforest holds an inspiring conservation story. See how a group of local people have banded together to protect the island's much-loved ring-tailed lemur in this short film by Robin Hoskyns."

1. According to the legend told in this short film, how did the lemur get its name?
 - a. Answer: A lemur searching for food got its head stuck in a pot. When it was able to free itself, it ran away making a noise that sounded like "vaky, vaky vaky!"
2. Why was the Anja Association formed?
 - a. Answer: The locals of Anja realized that the forest and lemurs in their area could attract tourists, which would help their community and economy. That's why a group of individuals banded together and formed the association to protect lemurs and their habitat.
3. How has the relationship between humans and lemurs in Anja changed over time? What does this mean for the lemurs?
 - a. Answer: Locals in Anja never hunted or ate lemurs because it is a taboo according to their ancestors. It was, however, common practice for locals to capture and sell lemurs as pets. Others from areas outside of Anja did often hunt and eat lemurs in the past. Poaching and the pet trade are two major threats to lemurs causing them to be endangered. Thankfully, the Anja Association has helped people to see the value of protecting lemurs and their habitat. Anja has repaired its relationship with lemurs. People and lemurs now coexist and benefit from one another in this area. This is a great model for all of Madagascar, even all of the world, to adopt in terms of humans' relationship with wildlife.



Our Planet - Netflix Series, Forests Episode (2019)

The Forests episode of Our Planet features Madagascar (33:20-40:00), and explores the relationship between forest habitat and wildlife that call it home, including lemurs. Viewing the entire episode gives a great overview of the importance of forest habitat in general.

1. Where and how big are the Boreal Forests?
 - a. Answer: Russia, Europe, and North America; these forests contain about 750 billion trees.
2. Where are the Redwood Forests, and how do they differ from the Boreal?
 - a. Answer: Pacific northwest of North America; humidity from the Pacific Ocean makes conditions moist enough for trees to grow year round, unlike in the Boreal Forests.
3. What benefits come from a wildfire?
 - a. Answer: New growth of grasses, trees, and flowers occurs, seeds that wouldn't have germinated without the fire. The fire also clears foliage and lets sunlight into the newly opened canopy to allow this new growth to thrive.
4. How do trees in Tropical Forests like the Ghats in India depend on the animals that live there?
 - a. Answer: Tropical Forest trees depend on animals to be seed dispersers; to travel from tree to tree eating fruit and dispersing seeds in their droppings to other parts of the forest. This helps the trees reproduce.
5. What kind of tree makes Madagascar's forests unique?
 - a. Answer: Baobabs
6. Why are lemurs crucial to their forests?
 - a. Answer: Some species of trees can't survive without lemurs as pollinators and seed dispersers.
7. How big is a Grey Mouse Lemur?
 - a. Answer: At 15cm long, the Grey Mouse Lemur is one of the smallest primates in the world.
8. How much of Madagascar's dry forests are left?
 - a. Answer: 3%
9. How much of the planet's forests have been lost?
 - a. Answer: Over 50%
10. Discuss how Chernobyl is an example of an area of forest recovery. What implications might this have for forests in other parts of the world?
 - a. Answer: Because of the unsafe levels of radiation from the nuclear explosion, this area has been deserted by humans since the 1980s. In just 30 years, nature has reclaimed the urban area. Despite the radiation, vegetation began to germinate within a decade of the explosion. Animals soon followed, and an established and thriving wild community now exists with population sizes similar to those found in wild parts of Europe. The top predator of the area, wolves, have reappeared in Chernobyl, which would only occur if enough prey animals were there. The return of apex predators is a sign that wildlife is thriving. This recovery is proof of the extraordinary resilience of forests, if only given a little time and space to do so.



Madagascar - Dreamworks animated film (2005)

This popular animated film hit theaters back in 2005. While it gets quite a few things wrong about lemurs and Madagascar, it presents a great opportunity to learn about and discuss the real life versions of the animals and the island.

Check out this article by former LCN Director and zoo educator, Corey Romberg, for tips on how to use Madagascar the animated film as an educational tool.

Madagascar: A Guide to Using the Film as an Educational Tool for Lemur Conservation

- <https://www.lemurconservationnetwork.org/madagascar-a-guide-to-using-the-film-as-an-educational-tool-for-lemur-conservation-education/>