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TITLE: The Mangabeys, Cercocebus ssp.

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INTRODUCTION

Mangabeys are Old World monkeys of the Family Cercopithecidae. They are from baboon lineage and are immunologically most closely related to the Guinea baboon Papio papio. Some anthropologists consider mangabeys to be morphologically primitive baboons. Parapapio, a late Miocene (8MYA - million years ago) cercopithecine who is ancestral to living Cercocebus and Papio looks much like the living mangabeys.

Mangabeys belong to a subgroup or tribe of the primate Subfamily Cercopithecine, known as either Papiionini or Cercocebini. They are more slender than baboons and live in the forest rather than on the savannah. Golden-bellied mangabeys belong to the more terrestrial torquatus group of mangabeys along with Cercocebus torquatus and C. atys as well as the three other C. galeritus subspecies, rather than to the more arboreal albigena group, which includes C. albigena and C. aterrimus species and subspecies. The galeritus species is said to have somewhat shorter hands than do the arboreal mangabeys and a digitigrade locomotion rather than the branch-walking palmigrade progression of the albigena group. They also have colorful white eyelids and browns and whites and golds rather than the grey and black coloration of the albigena group. The galeritus species has a somewhat shorter tail than the arboreal mangabeys and the carriage of the tail is more parallel to the back. They are somewhat stockier and display more sexual dimorphism than is seen in the albigena group of mangabeys.

The four subspecies of Cercocebus galeritus all live in seasonally flooded forests or in riverine areas. The species was thought to be found in a continuous belt across central Africa at one time, but as swampy forest habitat decreased, populations became fragmented. The four subspecies of today are now geographically separated: Tana mangabey, Cercocebus galeritus galeritus (a semi-terrestrial subspecies from the Tana River region of NE Kenya), Cercocebus galeritus agilis (a semi-terrestrial subspecies from northeastern Gabon), Cercocebus galeritus sanii (from the Uzungwa Mountains of SW Tanzania - see Homewood and Rodgers, 1981), and the golden-bellied mangabey, Cercocebus galeritus chrysogaster (from central Zaire). The golden-bellied mangabey is thought to live in the Congo Basin area of central Zaire in the Lukenie-Sankuru area, although there are no known data on these animals in the wild.

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