

MEERKAT

Suricata suricata



At the Racine Zoo:

You can meet: Hydro, Male, b. April 3rd, 2008; Blaze, Male, b. April 3rd, 2008; Terra, Male, b. April 3rd, 2008; Aero, Male, b. April 3rd, 2008; Jack, Male, b. Sept. 2nd, 2008

They can be found: Near Meerkat Manor

Quick Facts:

Conservation Status: Least Concern

Lifespan: 5-15 years in the wild; up to 12 years in human care

Adult Size: Up to 23.6 inches long; can weigh up to 1.7 lbs.

Diet in the wild: Mainly insects but includes small vertebrates, eggs, and plant matter.

Diet in the zoo: Cat food, mixed fruit and veggies, meat

Habitat: Scrublands, savannah, open plains, and grasslands

Range: Found in arid regions of southern Africa.



Mammal

Threats:

No serious threats faced in the wild. They are common prey animals but they reproduce quickly.

Fun Facts:

The black coloration around their eyes helps protect against the constant glare of the sun.

Meerkats live in complex and elaborate burrows and will rotate to different burrows within their territory every few months.

Meerkats are diurnal, meaning that they are active during the day.

Meerkats are immune to a scorpion's venom.

Meerkats are very territorial and will fight with neighboring colonies to defend their borders.

Meerkats use their phenomenal sense of smell to locate concealed prey, and then dig it out with their long-clawed forefeet.

A group of meerkats may travel up to four miles in a single day while foraging.

Meerkats live in colonies (called mobs, clans or gangs) of 10-30 members, and consist up to three family groups. Each individual family group includes a breeding pair and their offspring.

All meerkats in a clan have a job. Sentries stand watch for predators. Foragers hunt for food. Mentors teach weaned pups how to hunt, forage, and protect themselves. Babysitters (nonbreeding members) watch and female babysitters even nurse the younger pups.

Conservation Messages:

Meerkats in a colony share almost everything! Take a tip from meerkats and share – give reusable items to a thrift store or charity for others to use. Don't throw them away.