

A red ruffed lemur, a primate, is all eyes at the Bronx Zoo. Bottom, a fossa on the prowl.

# NOW

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## INTO THE WILD

### It's beast meets West as Bronx Zoo's 'Madagascar!' critters get new digs

BY HOWARD KISSEL

In the Disney hit "Madagascar," animals from the Central Park Zoo escape back to their home off the eastern coast of Africa, only to then beat a retreat back to the zoo.

Up in the Bronx there is now a permanent refuge for the animals of Madagascar in what used to be the Lion House of the Bronx Zoo.

The huge, 20,000-square-foot space opens today as "Madagascar!," featuring more than 150 animals from 30 species, all native to the world's fourth-largest island, a place not really colonized until the late 18th century.

The permanent exhibit offers children a look at rare

animals — including the endlessly entertaining, monkey-like lemurs — and adults an understanding of wildlife conservation.

Among the animals on display are a wide variety of lemurs, two huge Nile crocodiles, several lemur predators, the fossa and the mongoose, rarities like the tomato frog

and the radiated tortoise, and an insect not likely to win the hearts of New Yorkers — the Madagascar hissing cockroach.

Each species is displayed in an environment designed to reproduce its natural habitat. As you enter the darkened building, the first things you see are two ring-tailed lemurs, Christine and Phillip.

They are in a vertical setting that gives them plenty of branches at odd angles to indulge their unusual gifts for acrobatic leaping.

The meticulously designed set also features much live foliage — "They're living in a salad bowl," a curator explained.

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PHOTOS BY JULIE LARSEN MAHER

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The red-ruffed lemurs at "Madagascar!" exhibit are the stuff of tall tails.



PHOTOS BY JULIE LARSEN MAHER

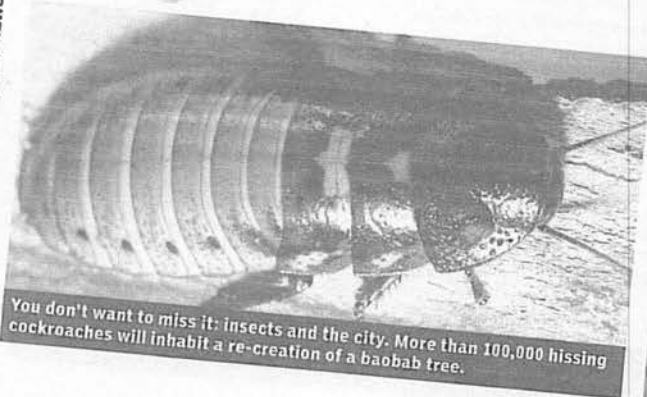
The male Red Fody displays bright plumage during breeding season.



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DAILY NEWS

Thursday, June 19, 2008



You don't want to miss it: insects and the city. More than 100,000 hissing cockroaches will inhabit a re-creation of a baobab tree.

The crocodiles have just arrived, but are already flashing some winning grins.



# INTO THE WILD

CONTINUED FROM THE COVER

Christine was bred at Duke University. She was first paired with a male whose advances she rebuffed. (His name has been withheld, presumably to spare him embarrassment.) She responded positively to Philip, who was bred at the Los Angeles Zoo. It is hoped the pair, whose official designation is Coquerel's sifaka, will mate successfully.

Next you come to a spectacular underground limestone cave, home to a 13½-foot, 800-pound crocodile and its somewhat smaller kin, both of which arrived in the U.S. from Madagascar only three weeks ago.

The setting, behind a 2-inch-thick glass wall, has 17,000 gallons of water and allows visitors to view the crocs both above and below the water line.

The water is also home to hundreds of tropical fish, which, a curator assured early visitors, are too small and too agile for the crocodiles to pursue as food. Instead they are fed a diet of chicken.

**COVER STORY**

Red-ruffed lemurs are set in a simulated rainforest, with a cascading waterfall and occasional cloudbursts.

As for the cockroaches, more than 100,000 of them — considerably larger and with far more articulated bodies than the local variety — will live in a re-creation of a baobab tree.

An animal that has never been exhibited in the U.S. before is the fossa, which is in a separate habitat, since nearly half of its normal diet back home in Madagascar would be lemurs.

The fossa slithers in a manner that seems feline, but it is of the same family as the ring-tailed mongoose, which is exhibited in a habitat nearby.

The mongoose is another lemur predator. Its area is separated from its prey by an almost invisible mesh fence, which allows visitors to see the natural enemies in close proximity. One mongoose discovered the fence when it lunged — unsuccessfully — at a lemur on the other side.



The mouse lemur, small enough to fit in your palm, is shy and active only at night.



A Coquerel's sifaka, part of a breeding project, finds that a branch makes an ideal recliner.



**it's all happening at the zoo**

For more photos of the animals from the "Madagascar!" exhibit, head to:

[NYDailyNews.com/lifestyle](http://NYDailyNews.com/lifestyle)

The intention of "Madagascar!" is to raise visitors' consciousness about the need to protect relatively unspoiled environments like that of the island nation.

The Wildlife Conservation Society, the umbrella organization that runs all of New York's zoos, has been working to save Madagascar's biodiversity since the early '90s.

With the help of the government of the country, it has created a landmark agreement in which Madagascar will offer for sale more than 9 million tons of carbon offsets to help protect the Makira Forest, which, along with the Masoala National Park, make up the country's largest contiguous protected area.

Two years ago, the building itself, the 1903 Beaux Arts landmark Lion House, received the NYC Green Building Award from the NYC Department of Environmental Projects. The award was for the use of green technology — like skylights that maximize daylight and modulate temperatures and geothermal heating and cooling systems that reduce use of fossil fuels.

## PLAN YOUR VISIT

- **The Bronx Zoo is open 365 days a year.**
- **SUMMER HOURS** Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; weekends, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- **ADMISSION** \$15 for adults, \$11 for children 3-12 and \$13 for seniors. Children 2 and under are free. Some exhibits, but not "Madagascar!," cost extra.
- **GETTING THERE** By subway: Take the #2 or the #5 train to East Tremont/West Farms Square. By bus: The BxM11 Express Bus makes stops along Madison Ave. from 26th to 99th Sts. and then at the Zoo Gate. By car: For directions and other information, go to [www.bronxzoo.com](http://www.bronxzoo.com).

The mantella frog, which can turn on a dime, adds vibrant color to the Bronx zoo exhibit.



The giant day gecko uses protective coloration to hide atop a leaf.



The high dome of its shell protects the radiated tortoise from predators.

