

GELATA MONKEYS



Gelada-male

Gelada monkeys live only in the high mountain meadows of Ethiopia. This high-altitude homeland has a lot of steep, rocky cliffs, to which geladas have adapted. At night, the animals drop over precipice edges to sleep huddled together on ledges. Although often referred to as gelada baboons, these monkeys are not true baboons. They are in fact the only member of their genus and are the last surviving species of a once widespread group of grass-grazing primates. These monkeys are the size of a baboon and are the world's most terrestrial (live on the ground) primates—except for humans. As grass-eaters, they are the last surviving species of ancient grazing primates that were once numerous. Geladas spend most of their day sitting down, plucking and munching on grasses. They have fatty rear ends, much like human bottoms, which helps them sit all day to eat the grass. The gelada can be easily recognized by the unusual hairless patches of skin on the chest and is sometimes called “The Bleeding Heart Baboon”. The snout is deeply grooved with long ridges, and the upper lip can be turned inside out to flash a display of communication. They also have pale eyelids that they flash and seeing them against the dark face, the flashing is used for communication.



Chewbacca the gelada (see IPPL's December 2007 Newsletter for more pictures of Chewbacca)

Gelada's live in small family units of one male and three to six females. Though males are larger and more colorful, females dominate gelada societies. When male gets older and begins to decline, the females in his family decide when he will be replaced by a younger rival—though the male will do all he can do drive off the younger competition. Gelada family units often combine to form large bands of 30 to 350 animals. When there is lots of food as many as 670 geladas have been seen together.



About 100,000 to 200,000 gelada monkeys survive, but even in their remote mountain location they are feeling the effects of encroaching agriculture that

threatens the grasslands. They only live to about 19 years old in the wild. Unfortunately, the local people hunt the geladas and foolishly use their beautiful manes in traditional coming-of-age ceremonies.

YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT THE GELADA IN THE DECEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER ON THE IPPL WEBSITE.