



ANIMAL MASTER LIST

COLCHESTER
ZOOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

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Key

Animals which can highlight specific teaching topics:

Adaptations - (Ad)

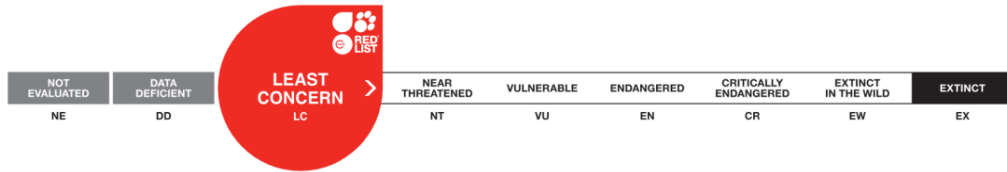
Africa - (Af)

Endangered – (En)

Water - (Wa)

Rainforest - (Ra)

Meerkats



Habitat: Desert and savannahs

Distribution: Southern Africa, including Namibia, and South Africa

Diet: Varied, including insects, scorpions, small mammals, eggs and lizards

Longevity: About 10 years in wild, up to 17 in captivity

What Meerkats Look Like

- They're mostly tan to blend in with their surroundings.
- Black rings around their eyes work like sunglasses—helping them see better in bright light.
- Adults grow up to 50cm long and weigh less than 1kg.

How They Live

- Meerkats are part of the mongoose family and live in groups called mobs, with up to 20 meerkats.
- Each meerkat has a special role, like look-out (sentry), babysitter, hunter, or teacher.
- Sentries climb high spots to watch for danger, and can warn the group by barking.

Diet & Feeding

- Eat mealworms, insects, fish, raw eggs, fruit, and vegetables.
- Food is hidden around the enclosure to encourage natural foraging.

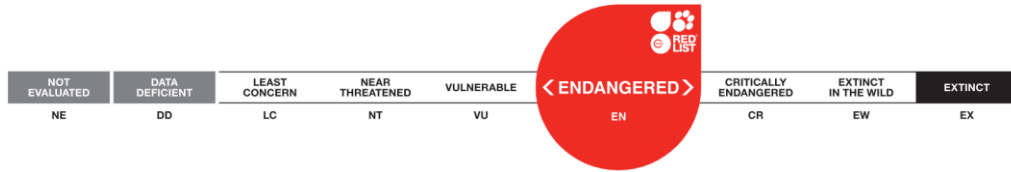
At Colchester Zoological Society

- The zoo has one mob of meerkats.
- The number of meerkats changes as babies (called pups) are born or moved to other zoos.
- One alpha female is in charge—she decides who gets to be the dominant male, and only those two have babies.



African Bush Elephant

Loxodonta africana



Habitat: Savannah and shrubland

Distribution: Africa, south of the Sahara, mainly in reserves

Diet: Grass, leaves, woody plants, shrubs, bark, flowers and fruits.

Longevity: Up to 60 years, longer in captivity

Physical Features

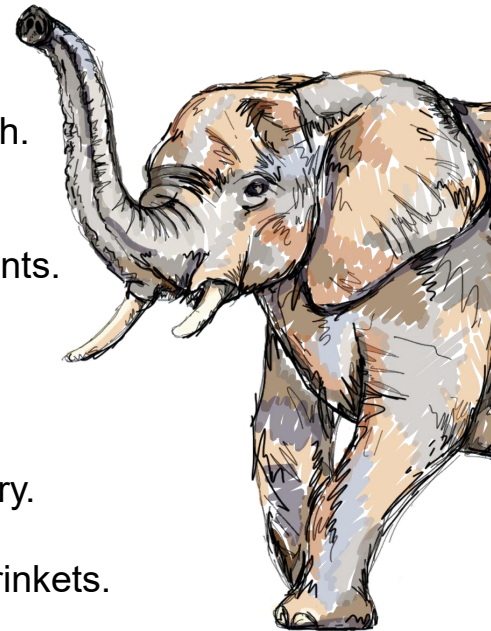
- Elephants are the largest land mammals on Earth.
- Can weigh up to 6 tons, reach 7.5m in length, and stand over 3m tall.
- Tusks are made of ivory (modified front teeth) and are used for digging, removing bark, and defending against predators.
- Their trunks are used for drinking, squirting water, grabbing objects, breathing, and trumpeting.
- They contain 40,000 muscles, but no bones or teeth.

Social Structure

- Elephants live in complex social herds.
- Females form family groups led by a matriarch.
- Males are often solitary or form male groups.
- Group living helps protect against predators.
- Humans are the only predator of adult elephants.
- Calves may be hunted by lions and hyenas.

Conservation Status

- Elephants are endangered.
- The major threat they face is poaching for ivory.
- Around 17,000 elephants are killed annually.
- Tusks used to make statues, bracelets, and trinkets.



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- The zoo has two elephant paddocks.
- Bull paddock viewable from the Elephant Bush walk.
- The cow paddock located opposite Kingdom of the Wild.

Giraffes



Habitat: Savannah

Distribution: Eastern Africa, including Tanzania, Kenya, and Botswana

Diet: Feeds on leaves and shoots of trees and shrubs

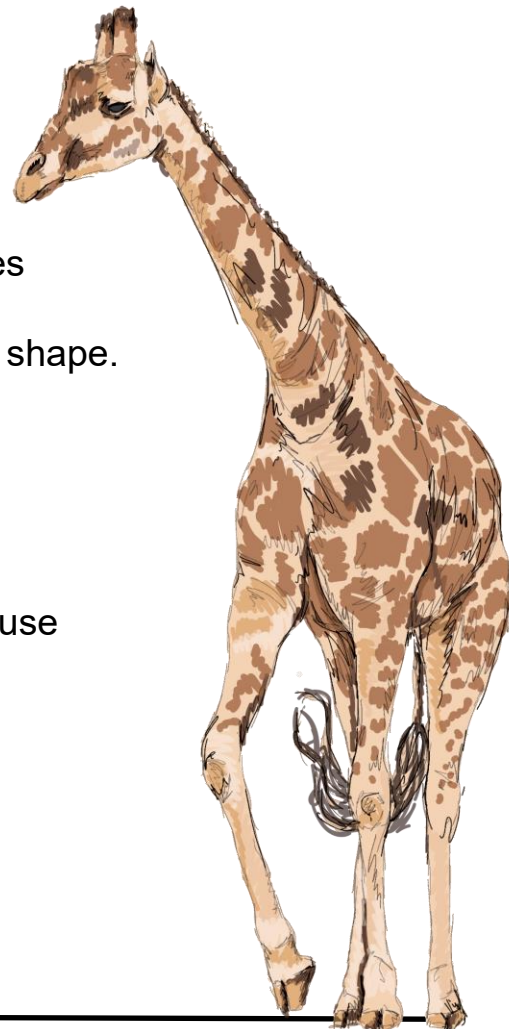
Longevity: 25 years in the wild, longer in captivity

Physical Features

- Giraffes are the tallest land animals, reaching up to 5.3 meters.
- They have 7 neck bones, the same as humans—but extra long.
- Their neck and 40cm-long tongue help them reach high tree branches
- Tongue is purple-black, acting as a natural sunblock.
- Due to their height, giraffes struggle to lie down or stand quickly.
- They sleep only around 20 minutes per day.

Sub-species Diversity

- Colchester Zoo houses Reticulated Giraffes.
- Other 7 sub-species:
 - Rothschild's, Angolan, Kordofan, Nubian,
 - West African, Thornicroft's, and Masai Giraffes
- Found in various parts of Africa.
- Coat patterns differ in shade, patch size, and shape.



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- Giraffes share a mixed paddock with:
 - Rhinos, zebras, kudus, and ostriches
- In dry weather: giraffes are usually outside.
- In muddy conditions: viewable inside their house via the ramp and stalls.

White Rhinoceros



Habitat: Savannah

Distribution: South and northeast Africa

Diet: Grazes on grasses and other vegetation

Longevity: 45 years in the wild, longer in captivity

Status: Near Threatened

Rhino Species & Conservation Status

- Five rhino species: White, Indian, Black, Sumatran, and Javan
- Indian rhino: Vulnerable
- Black, Sumatran, and Javan rhinos: Critically endangered
- Northern white rhino: Extinct in the wild
- Southern white rhino: Near threatened



Threats & Conservation

- Poaching for rhino horns is a major threat.
- Driven by illegal trade and increasing demand.
- As other species decline, white rhinos become primary target.
- Keratin horns: same material as human hair and nails.
- Used for trinkets, dagger handles, and especially in traditional medicine.
- Scientific evidence shows no medicinal value, but demand persists.

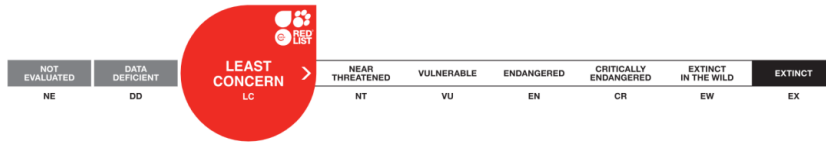
Predicted future

- Poaching will intensify if other species go extinct.
- White rhinos could become endangered within five years if poaching continues.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Rhinos at Colchester are part of an international breeding programme.
- Several calves born since 2009 with the most recent birth being Dara in 2022.

Spotted Hyena



Habitat: Grassland and flat, open savannahs

Distribution: Africa south of the Sahara, except the Congo basin

Diet: Mainly large, hoofed mammals either hunted or scavenged

Longevity: 20 - 25 years in the wild, can live up to 40 in captivity

Physical & Social Traits

- Hyenas have strong jaws, large muzzles, and prominent ears—adapted for bone-crunching scavenging.
- Females are larger and heavier than males.
- Most live in clans with complex hierarchies led by dominant females; some are solitary.

Behaviour & Communication

- Hyenas hunt in groups and are skilled scavengers, consuming almost all parts of their prey.
- Their communication includes diverse vocalisations (like whoops and giggles), scent marking, and body language.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Though not endangered, they face threats from harmful stereotypes and human persecution.
- The IUCN notes their negative reputation as a risk to survival.
- At CZS, the hyenas live near mandrills and cheetahs. We're one of only four UK zoos with this species.



Cheetah



Habitat: Savannah

Distribution: Southern and eastern Africa, Middle East

Diet: Hooved mammals, hares, rodents and other small animals

Longevity: 12 years in the wild, up to 17 in captivity

Distinctive Features & Speed

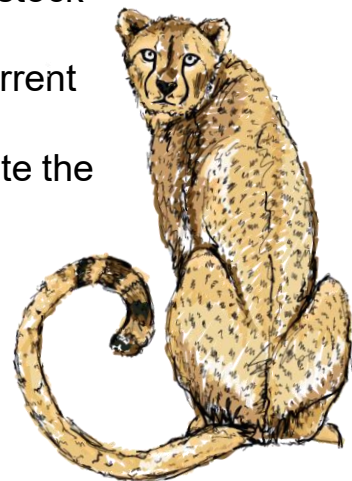
- Cheetahs are slim with small heads, long legs and tails, and weigh up to 60kg.
- They have distinctive black lines from their eyes to mouth, with a spotted coat.
- Known for incredible speed, they reach 60mph in about 3 seconds thanks to flexible spines and non-retractable claws that aid traction.

Hunting Technique

- Instead of sneaking close, cheetahs stalk to about 30m, then create panic and chase a single prey.
- They use swift strides and flick their front feet to trip prey, abandoning the chase quickly if unsuccessful due to high energy cost.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Wild populations have dropped from 15,000 in the 1970s to around 6,500 today, largely due to habitat loss, conflict with livestock owners, and fur hunting.
- CZS has a successful breeding history and hopes its current cheetahs will breed.
- The cheetahs are located near the mandrills and opposite the Komodo dragons at the zoo.



Ring-Tailed Lemurs



Habitat: Deciduous forests and rainforests in Madagascar

Distribution: Southwest Madagascar only

Diet: Mainly fruit, flowers and leaves (sometimes insects)

Longevity: 16-19 years in the wild, up to 27 in captivity

Appearance & Adaptations

- Easily identified by their black-and-white ringed tail.
- Covered in soft fur: grey on the back and white underneath, except for hands and feet.
- They have small arms, long legs, and leathery skin for enhanced grip.

Behaviour & Daily Life

- They are diurnal (active during the day) and spend more time on the ground than in trees.
- Famous for sunbathing—sitting upright to expose their thinly furred, dark-skinned underside and warm up quickly.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Main threats include habitat loss from deforestation, hunting for food, and pet trade.
- Colchester Zoo (CZS) houses two troops. One troop lives in the Lost Madagascar walkthrough enclosure, accessed via a ranger-guided road train.
- After visiting, guests may return by train or exit near the lions—note all pupils must be accompanied.



Chimpanzees



Habitat: Tropical rainforest and savannah

Distribution: Guinea and Ghana in West Africa, across to Tanzania

Diet: fruit, flowers, insects, and meat

Longevity: 40 - 45 years

Traits & Behaviour

- Chimpanzees are closely related to humans and share many characteristics.
- They are apes (not monkeys!) and lack tails—a key distinction.
- Adapted for climbing, their hind feet have big toes like thumbs.
- Chimps are omnivores, eating fruit and hunting in groups for larger prey like young monkeys and small antelopes.
- Highly intelligent, they use tools to extract insects from nests.

Threats to Survival

- Habitat destruction from logging and farming threatens their rainforest homes.
- Poaching for bush meat poses a serious danger.
- Their genetic closeness to humans makes them vulnerable to zoonotic diseases.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- The zoo houses a family troop with distinct personalities and behaviours.
- Males and females can be told apart—females have notably large bottoms.
- Visitors may observe individual differences in playfulness, confidence, and seriousness among the chimpanzees.



Pygmy Hippopotamus



Habitat: Tropical rainforest and swamps

Rainforest Layer: Understory

Distribution: Western Africa

Diet: Leaves, shoots, roots and fruit

Longevity: 35 years in the wild, up to 42 in captivity

Physical Traits & Lifestyle

- Much smaller than common hippos—about 1 metre tall, weighing 272 kg.
- Young are about the size of a housecat.
- Smooth, nearly hairless brown-black skin secretes a natural moisturiser.
- Lacks webbed toes, suited for life on land.
- Nocturnal and solitary, active between 6pm and midnight.
- Uses forest cover for safety rather than water.

Behaviour & Threats

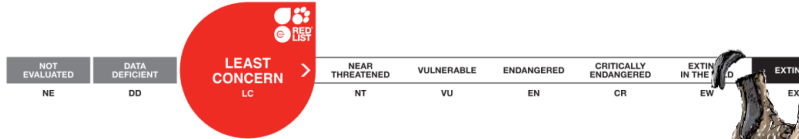
- Despite their size, pygmy hippos can be aggressive when provoked.
- Not social—usually live alone or in pairs.
- Males have territories of 160 hectares; females 40–60 hectares.
- Habitat loss, hunting for meat and teeth, and their elusive nature threaten their survival.
- Fewer than 3,000 likely remain in the wild.

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- Part of an international breeding programme called an EEP.
- The zoo has successfully bred several young.
- Offspring are sent to other zoos worldwide support conservation efforts.



Linné's Two-toed Sloth



Amazing Adaptation: Living upside-down
Habitat: Tropical rainforests
Rainforest Layer: Canopy and understory
Distribution: Northern South America
Diet: Leaves, fruits, and occasional insects
Longevity: Over 30 years in captivity



Lifestyle & Adaptations

- Sloths live solitary lives mostly hanging upside down in the forest canopy—doing everything from eating to giving birth this way.
- They descend only once a week to defecate, burying their waste to avoid detection by predators.
- Special adaptations include upside-down organs, long claws, fur growing backwards, and grooves in the fur that house green algae for camouflage and occasional snacking.

Movement & Conservation

- Among the slowest animals, they average 0.5 km/h but can reach up to 1.6 km/h.
- Surprisingly good swimmers—an adaptation to cope with rainforest floods.
- There are six species, some critically endangered due to habitat loss and the pet trade.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- CZS houses two pairs of Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloths.
- You can find them in the "Worlds Apart" exhibit and the "Rainforest Walkthrough."

Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*



Habitat: Warm coastal waters and sandy/scrubby shorelines
Distribution: Peru, Chile and islands off the west of South America
Diet: Crustaceans, krill, squid, and fish
Longevity: 30 years

Adaptations and Behaviour

- Humboldt penguins are medium-sized with flipper-like wings, perfect for swimming at speeds up to 25 km/h.
- Though they live in warmer climates, they retain a layer of insulating fat for cold water protection.
- Their shorter plumage helps them manage heat better than other penguin species.
- Nesting behaviour includes burrow digging and using natural materials like sticks and moss to line nests.
- Penguin pairs often stay together for life and share the job of incubating their eggs.

Threats They Face

- Risk drowning after getting caught in fishing nets.
- Targeted by illegal hunters and captured for the pet trade.
- Guano over-harvesting used to be a major issue, impacting nesting sites—still occurs in some areas but less often.

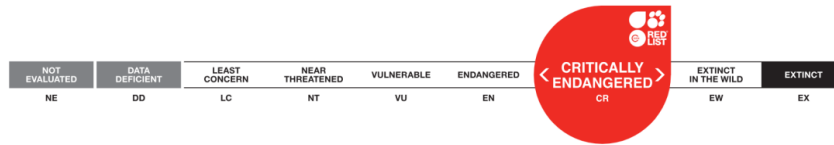
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- Colchester Zoo houses a breeding colony of Humboldt penguins on the Inca Trail.
- Each penguin has a unique pattern of black belly spots, which keepers use to identify individuals.



Bornean Orangutan

Pongo pygmaeus



Habitat: Tropical rainforest

Distribution: Borneo and Sumatra

Diet: Mainly fruit, also leaves, bark, nuts, eggs and small vertebrates

Longevity: Up to 35 in the wild, and 50 in captivity

Physical Adaptations & Behaviour

- Orangutans have long red-orange fur that camouflages them in the rainforest canopy.
- Their arms are nearly twice as long as their legs, ideal for swinging through trees.
- Hands and feet are large and curved for excellent grip.
- Known for high intelligence—use tools, make umbrellas from leaves, and even fish with sticks.

Habitat & Social Structure

- The name "orangutan" comes from Malay: orang (man) and hutan (forest).
- They are native to the rainforests of Indonesia, specifically on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra.
- Orangutans are mostly solitary, unlike other great apes.

Threats & Conservation

- Orangutans are critically endangered due to habitat destruction.
- Deforestation driven by unsustainable palm oil plantations is the biggest threat.
- Palm oil is used in many products, making its demand and profit high.
- Conservation efforts are urgent to protect the last remaining populations.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- At CZS, the orangutans can be spotted in their enclosure at 'Ragang's Forest'.

Spider Monkey

Ateles fusciceps



Amazing Adaptation: Four fingers, prehensile tail

Habitat: Rainforests

Distribution: Columbia, Ecuador and Panama

Diet: Fruit, nuts, leaves and sometimes eggs, insects or flowers

Longevity: Up to 25 years

Physical Traits & Movement

- Exceptionally long limbs and a strong prehensile tail act like a fifth limb for gripping.
- Lack of a proper thumb improves ease of swinging between branches.
- Tail tip has no fur for improved grip and can support their entire body weight.
- Agile climbers, second only to gibbons; they run on all fours or swing hand-over-hand.
- On the ground, they may walk upright on their hind legs.

Social Structure & Size

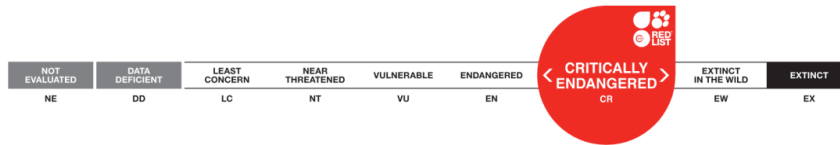
- Live in groups of ~20 individuals, usually seen in smaller, shifting subgroups of 2–8.
- Females can be slightly longer in body length (up to 57cm) but tend to be lighter than males.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- The Colombian black spider monkey is critically endangered due to rainforest destruction.
- Habitat loss from deforestation poses the greatest risk to their survival.
- Spider monkeys can be seen at CZS, across from the Amur leopards on the hill.

Amur Leopard

Panthera pardus



Habitat: Deciduous (woodland) forest, and conifer forests

Distribution: Far eastern Russia along the Russia-China border

Diet: Deer, hares, badgers and other small mammals

Longevity: 10-15 years in the wild and up to 20 years in captivity

Physical Appearance

- Amur leopards have pale cream fur in winter and reddish-brown in summer.
- Their bodies are marked with large, widely spaced rosettes with thick borders and dark centres.
- Their heads have small spots that grow larger on the legs and stomach.

Behaviour and Communication

- They are solitary and hunt primarily at night using a stalk-and-ambush strategy.
- Strong climbers who may eat their prey in trees.
- Communicate using a rasping call instead of growling.



Conservation Challenges

- Threatened by hunting for fur and traditional medicines.
- Habitat destruction has led to reduced prey availability.
- Small population risks include fire, disease, and inbreeding.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Amur leopards at the zoo are housed separately in adjoining enclosures to reflect their solitary nature.
- You can visit them at Ussuri Falls, next to 'The Canopy of South America'.

Giant Anteater



Amazing Adaptation: Long tongue, strong claws

Habitat: Grasslands, woodlands and rainforest

Distribution: Southern Mexico to Uruguay and Argentina

Diet: Ants, termites and occasionally other insects

Longevity: Unknown in the wild and up to 26 years in captivity

Physical Features

- Large body covered in long, coarse fur.
- Elongated head with a tube-like snout and mouth.
- Tongue can reach over 60 cm (2 feet), covered in tiny backward-pointing spines.
- Has a thick tail used for balance when standing upright.

Feeding Techniques

- No teeth—uses its tongue to extract ants and termites from nests.
- Can consume up to 35,000 insects in one day!

Unique Movement and Claws

- Equipped with huge front claws for ripping open termite mounds.
- Walks on knuckles to protect claws, which fold back into its palms while walking.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- The giant anteater can be found in the undercover viewing area between the Asian short-clawed otters and the Amur leopards.



Binturong



Amazing Adaptation: Prehensile tail, climbing claws

Habitat: Tropical rainforests and sub-tropical forests

Distribution: Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and northeast India

Diet: Leaves, fruit, birds, fish and small mammals

Longevity: Up to 18 years in the wild, and 20 in captivity.

Distinctive Features

- Binturongs (also known as bearcats) are related to mongooses and meerkats.
- They have long, coarse fur and tails as long as their bodies.
- One of the few non-primates with a prehensile tail used for gripping and climbing.

Adaptations and Movement

- Nocturnal with strong night vision, acute hearing, and a sharp sense of smell.
- Can climb expertly, turning their feet almost backwards for face-first descents.
- Less agile on land but capable of swimming and diving, like otters.

Family Life and Territory

- Live in small family groups with attentive parenting.
- Parents teach young how to use their tails effectively.
- Mark territory with a scent famously resembling popcorn.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- The binturongs share their enclosure with the Asian short-clawed otters.
- Both species are native to Southeast Asia and inhabit similar environments such as tropical rainforests.

Otter



Amazing Adaptation: Rudder like tail, webbed feet, goggles and ear plugs

Habitat: Shallow wetlands and rivers in rainforests and woodlands

Distribution: Southern and Southeast Asia, India and China

Diet: Mainly fish, but also frogs, crabs, insects, rats and birds

Longevity: Approximately 10 years in the wild, up to 20 in captivity

Aquatic Adaptations

- Otters are skilled swimmers and divers, holding their breath for up to 20 minutes underwater.
- Use nictitating membranes (clear third eyelids) like built-in goggles to protect their eyes.
- Close their ears and nostrils when submerged and use sensitive whiskers to detect prey.
- Slim-bodied, relying on a dense, insulating fur coat (not fat) to stay warm and dry.

Swimming Style

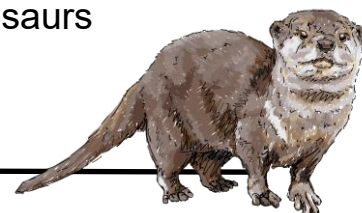
- Paddle slowly with webbed paws; swim fast using powerful back legs and flattened tail, which can be 60% of their body length.

Social Life and Species

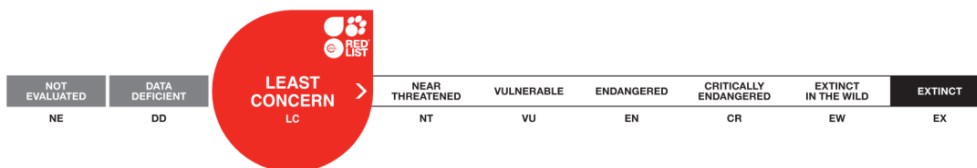
- Highly playful—even as adults—which helps strengthen social bonds.
- Live in large family groups and make burrows near water's edge.
- Smooth-coated otters: largest Southeast Asian species with velvety, shining fur.
- Asian short-clawed otters: smallest of the 12 otter species.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Asian short-clawed otters share their enclosure with binturongs.
- Smooth-coated otters live near the flamingos and dinosaurs



Fennec Fox



Amazing Adaptation: Giant ears, large feet

Habitat: Desert

Distribution: North Africa through the Sahara desert

Diet: Small rodents, invertebrates, birds and anything else they catch

Longevity: 6 years in the wild, 12-16 years in captivity

Tiny Yet Adaptable

- Smallest fox species: weighs just 1.5kg and measures 24–41cm.
- Sandy-coloured fur, dainty face, and enormous ears up to 15cm long.

Desert Survival Skills

- Large ears radiate heat thanks to abundant blood vessels.
- Furry soles protect against scorching desert sand.
- Thick fur keeps them warm during chilly desert nights.
- Burrows not only provide shelter but also generate dew for hydration.

Nightlife and Physiology

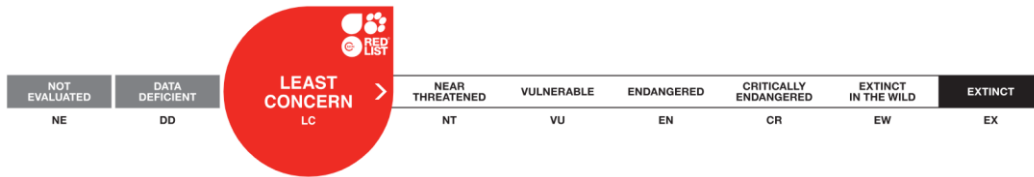
- Nocturnal: active only at night to avoid daytime heat.
- Unique kidney adaptations help conserve water—they rarely need to pee!

At Colchester Zoological Society

- At CZS, the fennec fox can be found in the indoor viewing area at Lion Rock.



Aardvark



Amazing Adaptation: Digging paws, long tongue, nocturnal

Habitat: Grassland and deserts

Distribution: Southern Egypt to South Africa

Diet: Ants and termites primarily; some other fruit and insects

Longevity: 10 years in the wild and longer in captivity

The Termite Terminator

- Size & build: Up to 150cm long, 60cm tall at the shoulder. Muscular with a humped back and a powerful posterior.
- Claws: Spoon-shaped, sharp-edged—perfect for busting into termite mounds.
- Skin & fur: Thick, sparsely hairy, ranging from sandy to grey.
- Tail: Thick at the base, used for balance or defence.

Unique Features

- Elongated head with circular nostrils protected by folds and nose hairs.
- Small tubular mouth with a long, sticky tongue—hello, insect buffet!
- Teeth that grow continuously, lack roots, and include only grinding surfaces and incisors.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Nocturnal and digs deep burrows to snooze during the heat of the day.
- Sleeps curled up in a tight ball, almost like a giant hamster!
- Find them in the Aardvark Burrow beneath the Giraffe House, entrance by the lake.



Red Panda



Habitat: Temperate (woodland) forests

Distribution: Himalayas, Burma, Sichuan and Yunnan

Diet: Mainly bamboo but also small mammals, birds, eggs, blossoms, berries, and fruit

Longevity: 14 years in the wild

The Tree-Dwelling Mystery

- Size: Much smaller than giant pandas—just 3–5kg and up to 60cm long.
- Taxonomy twist: Not a true bear! Scientists are still unsure if they're closer to raccoons, bears, or something else entirely.

Life Up High

- Arboreal experts: Hairy footpads help grip branches; they can leap 1.5m and even climb down trees head-first with rotating ankles.
- Nocturnal routine: Active during twilight hours, snoozing high up in the trees by day.
- Territorial quirks: Mark their turf with scent—urine and oils from foot pads.

Under Threat

- Major challenges include habitat loss, fragmentation, and poaching.
- As human populations grow, forest destruction for farming and firewood intensifies.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo plays a vital role in the international breeding programme.
- Cubs born at the zoo have moved to other zoos—mirroring their wild instinct to leave home when grown.

Komodo Dragon



Habitat: Dry grasslands, savannahs and (monsoon) rainforests

Distribution: Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Gili Motang, Gili Dasami and Flores.

Diet: Deer, wild boar, and snakes. Will also eat fish and smaller Komodo dragons

Longevity: Up to 50 years in the wild, presumed longer in captivity

The Island Giant

- Size king: World's largest land-living lizard—up to 3 metres long!
- Look & build: Long neck, short limbs, sharp claws, and a tail longer than its body. Adults range from dark red to grey-black.

Deadly Senses

- Uses a long yellow tongue and an extraordinary sense of smell to find rotting carcasses—up to 10km away.
- Mostly scavengers, but they'll hunt pigs, deer, and water buffalo too!

Lethal Bite Strategy

- Serrated teeth slice open prey.
- Their mouths contain deadly bacteria and venom, triggering slow blood poisoning.
- A Komodo will injure, stalk, and patiently wait for its meal to succumb before feasting.

Conservation Status

- Wild populations stable but highly vulnerable due to limited island range.
- Risks include natural disasters, poaching, and deforestation.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- First UK zoo to breed Komodo dragons naturally.
- Supports the European Endangered Species Breeding Programme (EEP).

Sun Bears

Helarctos malayanus



Habitat: Dense rainforests

Distribution: South-eastern Asia

Diet: Termites, bees, other insects, honey, vegetation, fruit, nuts, birds and other small vertebrates

Longevity: Up to 25 years

Unique Traits of Sun Bears

- Smallest of all eight bear species.
- Named for the golden crescent marking on their chest, symbolizing the sun in Eastern folklore.
- Smooth, hairless footpads help grip tree bark.
- Long claws aid in climbing and tearing open termite mounds and bee nests.
- Nocturnal—most active at night.

Threats and Conservation Status

- Main threat: habitat loss from deforestation for timber and agriculture.
- Illegally hunted for:
 - Bear paw soup
 - Traditional medicine (bear gall bladders)
 - Targeted by the illegal pet trade due to their small size

Rainforest Dependence

- Native to tropical rainforests.
- Depend on dense forest cover for shelter, food, and nesting.
- Protecting rainforest habitats is needed for their conservation.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo houses sun bears that are part of an international breeding programme.
- Programme supports global conservation efforts to protect and preserve the species for future generations.



Visayan Spotted Deer



Habitat: Tropical rainforest, woodland forest, grassland

Distribution: Philippine Islands of Negros and Panay (Visayan Islands)

Diet: Grasses, leaves and bud

Longevity: Suspected maximum of 15 years

Habitat and Distribution

- Found only on two of the Visayan Islands in the Philippines.
- One of the most narrowly distributed mammals in the world.
- Rainforest and woodland habitats have been heavily cleared for agriculture.
- Estimated to be extirpated from 95–98% of their original range.

Physical Traits and Behaviour

- Small deer species, approximately 80 cm tall.
- Prefer dense forest environments.
- Nocturnal and elusive, making them difficult to study.
- Population estimates range from 300 to 2,500 individuals in the wild.

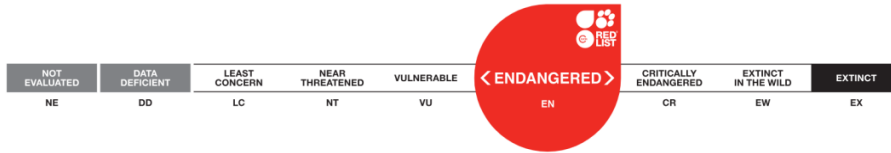
Threats and Conservation Challenges

- Major threats include habitat loss and hunting.
- Despite legal protection, hunted for food and trophy antlers.
- Captured for the pet trade.
- Habitat continues to decline due to illegal logging and agricultural expansion.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo houses Philippine spotted deer.
- Part of an international breeding programme.
- Successful breeding has occurred multiple times.

Amur Tiger



Habitat: Tundra, deciduous (woodland) forest, and coniferous forests

Distribution: Amur-Ussuri region of eastern Russia

Diet: Large herbivores such as wild boar, deer and elk

Longevity: 17 years in the wild, longer in captivity

Size and Physical Adaptations

- Largest of all tiger species and big cats.
- Males: up to 363 kg and 3.4 m in length (nose to tail).
- Females: around 226 kg.
- Thick fur coat and fat layer for insulation.
- Adapted to survive temperatures as low as -40°C .
- Stripes provide camouflage in forest environments.



Behaviour and Diet

- Lives in cold, forested regions.
- Camouflage helps in stalking prey.
- Main prey includes Sika deer and wild boar.

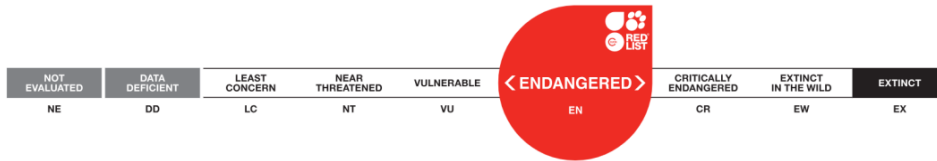
Threats and Conservation Challenges

- One of the most endangered tiger species.
- Population declining due to illegal poaching and habitat loss.
- Poached for fur and body parts used in traditional medicine.
- No scientific evidence supports medicinal claims.
- Habitat loss from farming, logging, and human development.
- Decline in prey species also affects tiger survival.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo's Amur tigers are part of an international breeding programme.

Golden Lion Tamarin



Habitat: Rainforests

Distribution: Eastern Brazil

Diet: Mainly fruit, flowers, tree sap, leaves and insects

Longevity: About 10 years in the wild, up to 18 in captivity

Physical Traits and Social Behaviour

- Tiny monkeys, only 40 cm long including the tail.
- Silky golden fur with a distinctive mane around the face.
- Live in monogamous pairs—unusual among primates.
- Offspring often stay in the group and help raise younger siblings.

Conservation History

- Critically endangered in the early 1980s: fewer than 400 in the wild, 80 in captivity.
- Captive breeding and reintroduction efforts began.
- Initial reintroductions faced high mortality due to poor survival skills.
- By mid-1990s, over 130 individuals released.
- Wild population grew to over 600 with intensive conservation.

Current Status and Ongoing Challenges

- Still endangered, with wild populations restricted to a fragmented 5,000 km² area.
- Around one-third of wild individuals originated from captive breeding.
- Continued conservation is essential to maintain progress.
- Habitat fragmentation and other threats remain a concern.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo houses a group of Golden Lion Tamarins which can be seen in the Canopy of South America Exhibit

Marmosets and Tamarins



Habitat: Rainforests and deciduous forests

Rainforest Layer: Emergent, canopy and understory

Distribution: South and Central America

Diet: Mainly fruit, flowers, tree sap, leaves and insects

Longevity: About 10 years in the wild, up to 18 in captivity

Physical Traits and Habitat

- Among the smallest monkeys.
- All live in South and Central America.
- Belong to the group of New World Monkeys (family: Callitrichidae).
- Arboreal (tree-dwelling) with gripping claws for climbing.
- Very active, often seen jumping through the forest canopy.

Social Structure and Behaviour

- Offspring often stay for several years to help raise siblings.
- Marmosets: highly territorial and aggressive.
- Tamarins: more timid, tend to hide when threatened.

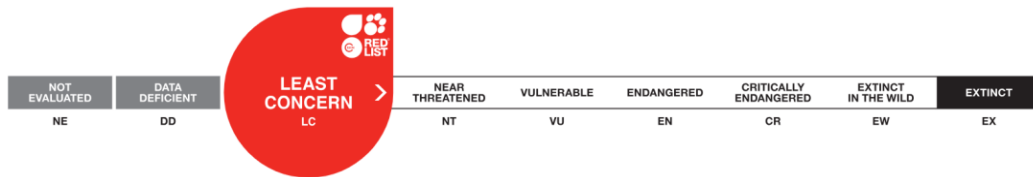
Classification and Differences

- Classified by dental structure.
- Tamarins: large front teeth for gouging trees and extracting insects.
- Marmosets: smaller front teeth.
- Behavioural differences also help distinguish the two groups.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo houses many species in Rainforest Walkthrough, Worlds Apart Walkthrough, and near Wilds of Asia.
- Species include:
 - **Goeldi's marmoset** – fluffy black fur
 - **Golden lion tamarin** – bright orange with large mane
 - **Golden-headed lion tamarin** – black body with bright orange mane

Squirrel Monkey



Habitat: Rainforests, riverine forests and mangrove swamps

Rainforest Layer: Canopy and understory

Distribution: South America; Ecuador and Venezuela to Brazil, Bolivia and Peru

Diet: Fruit, nuts, insects and eggs

Longevity: Up to 21 years

Physical Traits and Adaptations

- Small monkeys, around 30 cm long.
- Very long tails used for balance.
- Juveniles have prehensile tails (can grasp), adults do not.
- Dexterous hands help them move quickly through trees.
- Adapted to various habitats and diets.

Social Behaviour and Intelligence

- Live in large troops of 30–50 individuals.
- Often found near capuchin monkeys for added protection.
- Communicate in various ways, including scent marking.
- Urinate on hands and feet to leave scent trails while climbing.

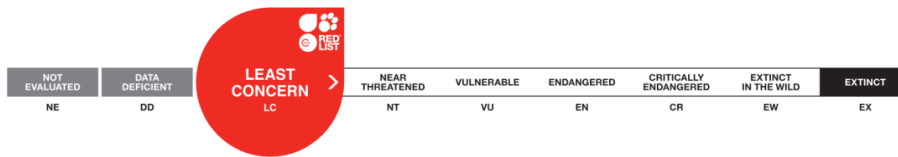
Habitat and Lifestyle

- Arboreal, living in tree canopies and understory.
- Highly active and agile.
- Found in diverse environments across South America.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo houses a group of squirrel monkeys in the Heart of the Amazon exhibit.
- Group includes many females and regular births.
- Young monkeys are identifiable by their grasping tails.

Green Anaconda



Habitat: Freshwater: Streams, and wetlands

Distribution: South America, east of the Andes

Diet: Carnivore eating large rodents, tapirs, pigs, fish, turtles and birds

Longevity: 10-15 years in wild, over 30 in captivity

Size and Physical Features

- Among the largest snakes in the world.
- Heaviest snake species—5 m individuals can weigh over 90 kg.
- Longest recorded anaconda: 6.3 m.
- Some reports suggest possible lengths over 12 m in dense rainforest.

Hunting and Behaviour

- Excellent swimmers; can stay underwater for over 30 minutes.
- Often hide in water with only their nose exposed, waiting for prey.
- Use heat sensors and strong sense of smell to detect prey.
- Non-venomous; kill prey by constriction after grabbing with long teeth.

Threats and Conservation

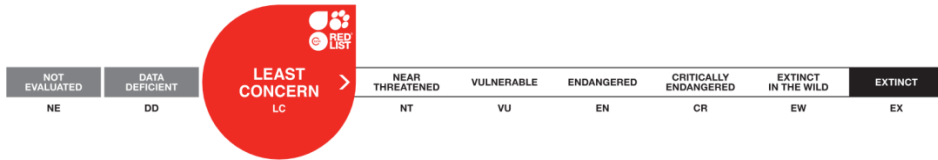
- Rainforest destruction threatens their habitat.
- Larger snakes hunted for skins.
- Juveniles often captured for the pet trade.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo's green anacondas are housed in the Rivers Edge Exhibit.

Red Piranha

Pygocentrus nattereri



Habitat: Freshwater: Warm freshwater

Distribution: Amazon, Paraguayá rivers, as well as lakes, streams and flooded forests of South America

Diet: Omnivorous scavenger and forager; fish, crustaceans, insects, fallen fruit, plants and dead or weak animals.

Longevity: 20 years

Behaviour and Feeding

- Often misunderstood as ferocious predators.
- Generally shy and cautious animals.
- Feeding frenzies are rare and only occur during starvation.
- Diet includes dead or injured fish, mammals, and birds.
- Commonly eat plants and insects.

Social Structure and Activity

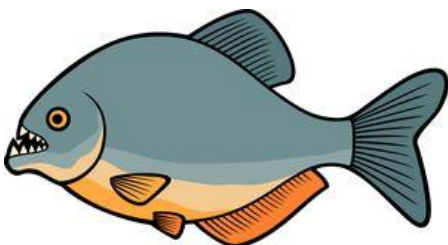
- Live in shoals (groups) for protection.
- Predators include river dolphins, large fish, caiman, and aquatic birds.
- Juveniles forage during the day.
- Adults forage at dawn and dusk.

Conservation and Threats

- Conservation status currently unknown due to wide river habitat range.
- Rising demand in the pet trade is a growing concern.

At Colchester Zoological Society

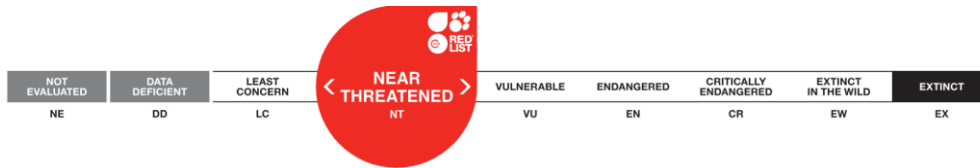
- Colchester Zoo houses a shoal of red-bellied piranhas.
- They can be found in the Heart of the Amazon exhibit.



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Chilean Flamingo



Habitat: Freshwater and Saltwater: Coastal mudflats, estuaries, lagoons and salt lakes. Can be found living 4,200 metres above sea level.

Distribution: Chile, Peru, Argentina and Ecuador

Diet: Algae and plankton

Longevity: 50+ years

Species and Appearance

- One of six flamingo species; found in the Andes Mountains of South America.
- Live in large flocks, often numbering in the thousands.
- Famous for pink plumage, caused by pigments in algae and plankton.
- Chicks and juveniles are grey until adulthood.

Feeding and Adaptations

- Curved bill adapted for filter feeding.
- Eat upside down, straining food from water.
- Diet includes algae and plankton.

Breeding and Conservation Innovation

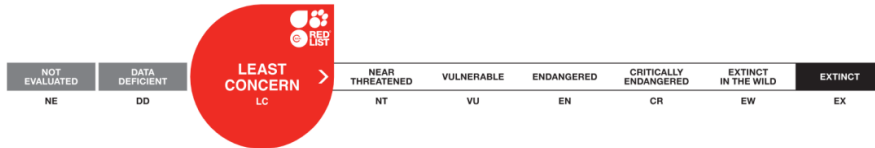
- Form pairs to breed; both parents build nest, incubate egg, and rear chick.
- Only breed in large flocks.
- Colchester Zoo used mirrors to simulate a larger flock, encouraging breeding.
- Resulted in successful pair bonding, nesting, and hatchlings.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo's flamingos are located at the bottom of the large lake near the gelada baboons.



Koi



Habitat: Freshwater: Cold freshwater

Distribution: Domesticated in Japan now found worldwide as pets.

Diet: Omnivores feeding along the bottoms of ponds and lakes.

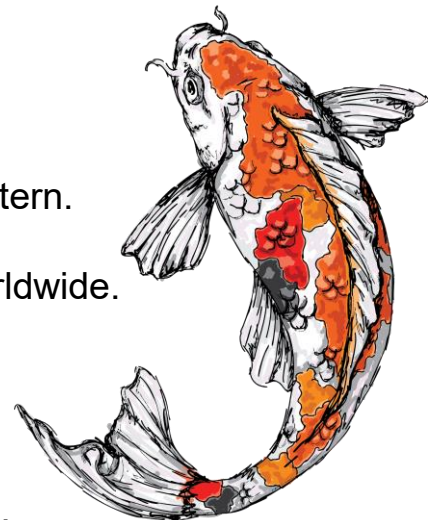
Longevity: 50 years. However one koi was found to be over 200 years old.

Origins and Symbolism

- Domesticated from common carp in Japan during the 1820s.
- Bred for colourful patterns and ornamental appeal.
- The word *koi* means both “carp” and “love” or “affection” in Japanese.
- Symbolises love and friendship.

Varieties and Popularity

- 22 recognised varieties based on colour and pattern.
- New varieties are bred regularly.
- Commonly kept in ponds and water gardens worldwide.
- Some koi are worth several hundred pounds.



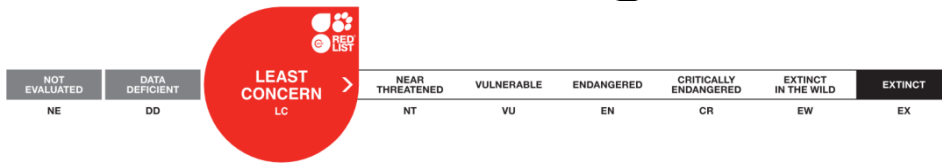
Environmental Impact and Conservation

- Not threatened as a domesticated species.
- Considered invasive when released into the wild.
- Hardy and resistant to many infections and parasites.
- Released koi revert to darker colours within three generations.
- Cause water disturbance, reducing aquatic plant life and water quality.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo’s koi are housed at Koi Niwa, next to Rainbow Landings.

African Lungfish



Habitat: Freshwater: Shallow swamps, marshes and streams.

Distribution: Throughout Africa

Diet: Omnivores: fish, crustaceans, amphibians and plants

Longevity: 80+ years

Breathing and Survival Adaptations

- Have lungs to breathe air, allowing survival when waterways dry up.
- Also have gills, though smaller than those of other fish.
- Create and seal burrows in mud to avoid predators and dehydration.
- Can remain in burrows for several months.

Physical Traits and Movement

- Long, eel-like body with small fins.
- Moves more like an eel than a typical fish.
- Crawls along the bottom and swims with undulating motion.

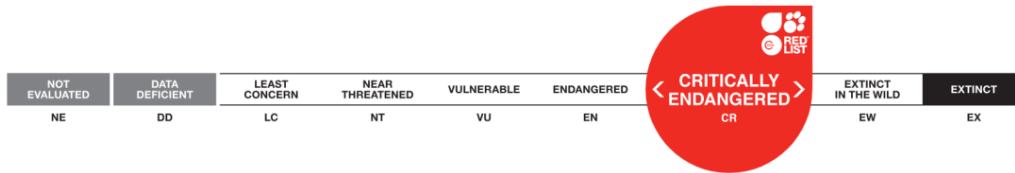
Reproduction and Threats

- Lay eggs in burrows and defend them from predators.
- Hatchlings resemble tadpoles with external gills.
- Lungs develop as they mature.
- Often dug up and eaten by humans during dry season.
- Improved technology for locating burrows is causing population decline.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo's lungfish are located at the top of the giraffe house.

Slender-Snouted Crocodile



Habitat: Freshwater: Rivers and lakes within rainforest

Distribution: Central and Western Africa

Diet: Carnivore: mainly fish but have been seen eating mammals, reptiles and birds

Longevity: Up to 50 years in captivity

Behaviour and Physical Traits

- Shy and secretive; known to rest several metres up in trees.
- Solitary animals except during breeding season.
- Long, slender snout ideal for catching fast-moving fish.
- Snout also helps reach prey in burrows and between tree roots.

Reproduction and Development

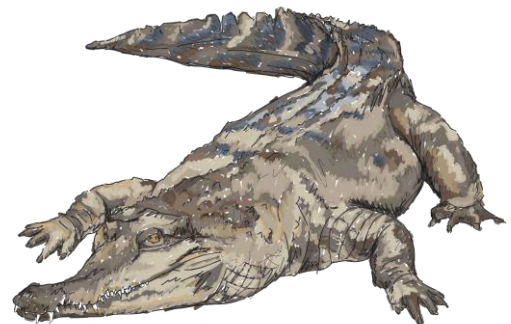
- Females lay eggs in land-based nests.
- Lay fewer eggs (around 16) compared to other crocodile species.
- Long incubation period of 110 days.
- Hatchlings are larger than those of other crocodile species.

Conservation Status and Threats

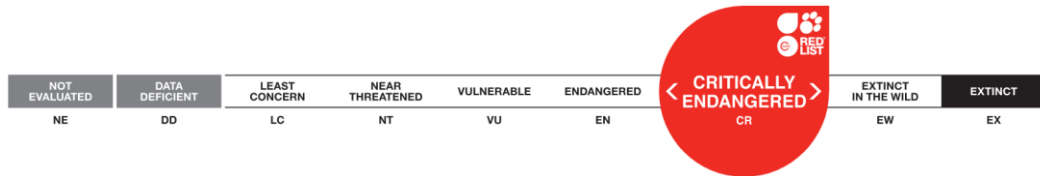
- Population has declined by 50–80%.
- Threats include poaching for skin and meat, habitat loss, overfishing, and human disturbance.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo's slender-snouted crocodile is housed inside Chimpanzee Lookout.



Giant Asian Pond Turtle



Habitat: Freshwater: Streams, marches and rivers as well as rice fields. Often found on the land under plants.

Distribution: Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos,,

Diet: Herbivore. Aquatic plants but is thought to eat some small animals such as insects

Longevity: 20-30 years

Behaviour and Reproduction

- Semi-aquatic: lives both in water and on land near water.
- Females lay 4–6 eggs, incubated for around 100 days.
- Males show aggressive courtship behaviour by biting the female's head and neck.

Conservation Status and Threats

- Classified as vulnerable.
- Threatened by the pet trade, meat consumption, and traditional medicine use.
- Demand has increased over the past decade due to economic growth in parts of Asia.

Protection Efforts

- International organisations and treaties are working to protect pond turtles.
- Conservation efforts aim to prevent further population decline.

At Colchester Zoological Society

- Colchester Zoo's turtles are located in Rajang's Forest, to the left of the entrance.

