

BLACK-HANDED SPIDER MONKEYS

Ateles geoffroyi

Spider Monkeys get their name because of their extremely long, spidery limbs & prehensile tail which acts like a fifth limb & is used to hang on when they are feeding high in the trees. The coat colour varies from light buff to reddish-brown or black depending on the subspecies &, as the common name implies, the hands (& feet) are usually black. They are sociable animals & tend to live in multi-male, multi-female groups of 4 to 35 individuals (average around 15).

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

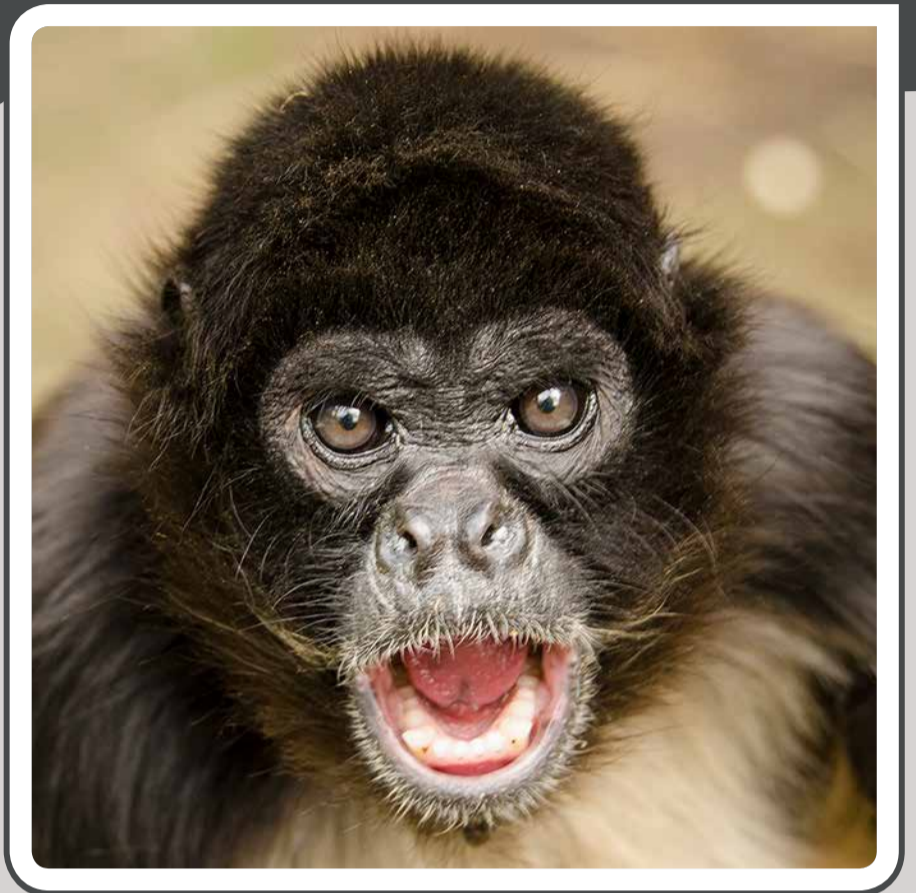
In the wild they live in Mexico & Central America. It is an arboreal species that prefers to live in the upper levels of the tree canopy & is often found in primary & secondary rainforests.

DIET

Active during the day (diurnal), they like to eat fruit, but will also eat leaves, flowers, & occasionally bark, nuts, seeds, insects, arachnids & eggs.

LIFE EXPECTANCY & BREEDING

Life expectancy in the wild: approx 25 years. Females actively choose their mates & initiate breeding which may take place at any time of the year. Females give birth to a single infant every 2 to 4 years, after a gestation period of 7 to 8 months. Young are normally dependent on their mothers for 3 years & reach sexual maturity at 4 years (females), 5 years (males), after which females usually migrate to other groups.



CONSERVATION STATUS

The Black-handed Spider Monkey sadly appears on the The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as **ENDANGERED**. The major threat is habitat loss. It's estimated that the species has declined by as much as 50% since 1970.

