

## Common Name: Kinkajou

Scientific Name: *Potos flavus*



IUCN Red list Status: Least Concern  
AZA Conservation Program: AZA SSP

**Class:** Mammalia  
**Order:** Carnivora  
**Family:** Procyonidae  
**Genus:** Potos

**Habitat:** Rainforest, dry forest, evergreen, and savannah forests from southern Mexico down to Brazil.

**Threats in the Wild:** Arboreal cats and the harpy eagle are kinkajous main predators. Harpy eagles are known to snatch kinkajous that are sleeping during the day.

Humans hunt them for the pet trade, for their furs (used to make wallets), and for bush meat. Habitat loss due to deforestation is also a threat to kinkajous.

**Physical Characteristics:** Kinkajous are nocturnal, arboreal mammals distantly related to racoons with lots of specialized adaptations for life in the trees at night. They have very large eyes for superb night vision. Kinkajous have very flexible spines and prehensile tails which are longer than their body and allows them to hang upside down, while supporting the entire weight of their body. They have short legs and very sharp non-retractable claws on their toes. They are able to rotate their feet and ankles of their rear legs 180 degrees, allowing them to run rapidly down a tree trunk head first or even to run backwards on limbs! Their small ears can move independently. Their front paws are very dexterous and they can hold small fruits with one hand. A 5-inch extendable tongue helps them lap nectar from flowers or probe inside of husks around fruits. The kinkajous body length is 16 to 30 inches. with a prehensile tail of 15 to 24 inches. They range in weight from 3 to 10 pounds. Males have slightly larger canines and are slightly larger than females. Their bodies are covered with a woolly fur of yellowish-to-brownish grey outer coat on top of grey undercoat.

**Reproduction:** Kinkajou females can come into estrus year-round, but the timing is often linked to peak seasonal fruit abundance. Females are estrous for up to 17 days. Males will follow the females over large portions of the territory for hours. Kinkajous exhibit polygamous (either sex may have more than one mate at any given time)

Fact Sheet – Mammalia – Kinkajou  
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mating. There are usually two males in a group with one being dominant. The dominant male will mate with both the female in his group and any females not within another group along the periphery of his territory. Subordinate males will follow along vocalizing and picking fights with the dominant male. Occasionally the subordinate is allowed to mate with the female. Gestation ranges from 98 to 120 days and usually only one offspring is born. Young are typically weaned in about four months.

**Longevity:** A kinkajou can live up to 20 years.

**Diet:** 90% of a kinkajou's diet is made up of fruit. While most of their diet is ripe fruit, it's common name means honey bear- kinkajous love sweet nectar and honey. On occasion they will eat eggs, hatchlings, insects (especially ants) and other small invertebrates. They are the only member of the order carnivora that pollinates plants. Because the seeds of the plants they eat pass through their digestive system intact, kinkajous are important seed dispersers.

**Miscellaneous:** Kinkajous normally travel and feed alone at night, but may share den or nest sites during the day. A typical group is usually two males, a female, and sometimes juveniles. Mutual grooming is usually done in the evening before they separate to forage during the night. Territories of 12 to 128 acres are maintained by scent marking and hissing and screaming vocalizations. Kinkajous make a variety of vocalizations, but not a lot is known about the meaning of most of them other than the threat calls.

Kinkajou as a pet? Beware!! With sharp claws and teeth, a kinkajou can do a lot of physical damage to furniture, as well as deliver a severe bite to humans. It also can acquire racoon roundworm, *Baylisascaris procyonis*, and transmit it to humans through the oral-fecal route. If this disease crosses the blood-brain barrier, it can cause encephalitis and be fatal. In addition, kinkajous carry a bacterium, *Kingella potus*, named for them. This species was isolated from the swollen tissue of a zookeeper that suffered a bite from a kinkajou in her care.

**Cool Fact:** Kinkajou hearing is so sharp that they detect the movement of a snake.

**References:** <https://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/kinkajou>

