

Common Name: Lesser Madagascar Hedgehog Tenrec

Scientific Name: *Echinops telfairi*



IUCN Red list Status: Least Concern
AZA Conservation Program: none

Class: Mammalia
Order: Afrosoricida
Family: Tenrecidae
Genus: Echinops

Range/Habitat: There are more than 25 species of tenrecs, adapted for living in trees and water and on the ground. Most live in Madagascar, but some can be found on mainland Africa and the Comoro Islands.

Echinops telfairi is found in the dry deciduous forest areas of western Madagascar and the xerophytic (dry) spiny forest and gallery regions of southwest Madagascar. It has also been found in open grasslands tens of kilometers from forest, including in disturbed habitats of non-native vegetation.

Physical Characteristics: In spite of their many adaptations, tenrecs still exhibit a number of characteristics which make them distinct from other small mammals and which were probably typical of the earliest mammals. Such traits include nocturnal activity patterns, small body size, the retention of a cloaca as a common uro-genital opening, abdominal testes, poor eyesight and a dependence on their sense of smell and hearing. They are also considered primitive physiologically, since all species have relatively low body temperatures and metabolic rates relative to their body size, and several species enter torpor regularly.

Lesser hedgehog tenrecs have short tails, limbs and muzzles of moderate length, and prominent ears. The entire dorsum is covered with sharp spines. Color is usually yellow buff; individuals range from near white to almost black. Head and body length is 5 to 6.8 inches (13 to 17 cm). Weight is about 7 ounces (0.2 kg).

Reproduction: After gestation of about 49 days, a litter of one to ten young (usually five to seven) is born. The young weigh only about eight grams, and become independent after 30 to 35 days.

Longevity: 3-4 years in the wild, 5-7 (or longer) in captivity.

Diet: Insects and larvae; occasionally fruit.



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Miscellaneous: Solitary. Males can be territorial. Communication between individuals is mainly tactile and chemical.

Active mainly at night; spends its daytime hours resting under a log or in a hollow tree, although trees are widely scattered in its native habitat. In hot weather, it sleeps with its body extended, but otherwise lies in a curled position to rest. It enters a state of torpor in the winter time.

When threatened, these tenrecs curl into a ball, leaving only sharp spines—modified hairs—exposed.

Fun Facts: Scientists suspect that tenrecs, like lemurs, reached Madagascar by “rafting” from Africa on floating mats of vegetation.

Recent genetic studies show that tenrecs are not as closely related to shrews and moles as they are to elephants, armadillos, and manatees.



Fact Sheet – Mammalia – Hedgehog Tenrec
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