

Drill, Baby, Drill...



No sign of Sarah Palin but a rare new baby at Edinburgh Zoo is keeping the resident drill family on their toes. This baby drill is the first to be born at the zoo, making the new arrival even more special.

Senior Primate, Hoofstock and Koala keeper Donald Gow said:-
“Drills are the rarest and most endangered primate in Africa. Relatively few zoos have drills, including only three zoos in the UK, making this birth particularly significant for the conservation of these rare animals. We had high hopes that our drill group would breed and are delighted to have a new baby.”

“Mum Nora, one of two female drills who arrived at Edinburgh Zoo in 2009, is an excellent mum. She’s being very protective of her baby, but the youngster can be a bit of handful. Our baby drill is pretty adventurous and likes to explore, but mum is staying close and keeping a watchful eye on everything. Dad, Illembo, arrived at Edinburgh Zoo in 2006. Our drills are the largest monkeys we have at Edinburgh Zoo, but even by drill standards Illembo is very big, weighing around 45 kgs. Like most male drills he is a fairly ‘hands-off’ dad, occasionally coming over to check on the baby, but for the most part allowing Nora to get on with the childcare.”

Closely related to baboons and mandrills, Drills have distinctive wide and flat faces and pink, mauve or blue bottoms. Drills can live up to 28 years in the wild and do not become fully grown until they are three or four years old. At Edinburgh Zoo these omnivorous animals live on a varied diet of fruit, vegetables, insects and meat.

In the wild, drill monkeys can be found living in the tropical rainforests of the cross-river state of Nigeria, South West Cameroon and Bioko Island in equatorial New Guinea.

All together their range in the wild is only around 40,000 km², meaning these animals are especially vulnerable to habitat destruction and hunting. In the wild these animals stand their ground when approached by hunters making them easy targets.

The wild drill population has decreased by 50 percent over the last 30 years. Drills are marked as endangered IUCN Red List, meaning they face a very high risk of extinction in the wild