

ELEPHANT SHREW, BLACK & RUFUS GIANT

RANGE:

Eastern central Africa.

HABITAT:

Leaf litter of the tropical forest floor and arid woodlands to desert.

SIZE:

Length: 12 inches (tail: 7 - 10 inches)

Height: 10 inches

Weight: Approximately 1 lb.

REPRODUCTION:

- Monogamous, they share the same territory, but spend little time together.
- They defend their territory, the females chase the females and the males keep the males out.
- Mating is brief and the males do not help in raising the young.
- Gestation is 47 days.
- One or two fully furred young are born and are weaned within 3 weeks, though they stay with the mother for another week.
- Once on their own the young establish their own territories.
- Females may have several litters a year as they breed year round.

DIET:

Wild: insects and other invertebrates, also small mammals and amphibians.

Zoo: meal worms and crickets and fruits and vegetables.

BEHAVIOR:

- These elephant shrews are diurnal.
- They make many shallow nests through out their home range, made of leaf litter to camouflage into the forest floor.
- Though they do have good vision and excellent hearing they explore their world nose first. They use different nests each evening to discourage predators.
- With long, mobile and very sensitive noses these animals use scent trails to find food and locate territories.
- Strong scent glands demark male and female and family groups from intruders.
- Tail-slapping is used to discourage predators from attacking.

STATUS:

Endangered, due to loss and fragmented habitat.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Elephant shrews were once classified with hoofed mammals, primates and rabbits.
- Today elephants shrews are super-classed as Afrotherians, animals related to the elephants, hyrax, manatee and aardvark.
- Elephant shrews have a small mouth located far back from the tip of their snout.
- Called sengi, a Bantu word, for long legged, is a fast runner.
- Elephant shrews are among the three percent of mammal species that are monogamous.
- A quick agile body is another defense against predators like hawks, snakes and leopards.

theZOO
LOUISVILLE



photo by Robert Kemnitz

Order: **Macroscelidea**
Family: **Macroscelididae**
Genus: **Rhynchocyon**
Species: **petersi**

ELEPHANT SHREW, BLACK & RUFUS GIANT



REFERENCES:

<http://www.calacademy.org/research/bmammals/eshrews/synopsis.html>

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/SmallMammals/fact-elephantshrw.cfm>

The Encyclopedia of Mammals, 1999, Dr. David Macdonald, editor