

# Linne's Two-toed Sloth

*Choloepus didactylus*

Mammal

## Scientific Name

*Choloepus didactylus*

## Other Names

None

## Range

South America through Venezuela and the Guianas, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru

## Habitat

Lowland and upland tropical rain forests

## Average Size

Length: 24 - 26 inches

Weight: 10 - 20 pounds

## Lifespan

In the wild: 12 years

In human care: 30+ years

## Description

A medium-sized animal with a rounded head with small face, small ears and a prominent, wet, brown nose. The coarse, dense fur varies from grayish-brown to beige, with a green overall look due to algae on the hairs. Shoulders and top of head are darkest with a paler face. There is no visible tail.

## Diet

In the wild: Leaves, flowers, fruit, eggs and nestling birds

In the zoo: Fruits, vegetables and Zupreem protein biscuits

## Gestation

10 months

## Litter Size

One offspring

## Sexual Maturity

As early as 1 - 2 years, but more commonly 3 - 5 years

## Predators

Anacondas, caimans, birds of prey and carnivores

## Population Status

Not Threatened



## Behavior

Two-toed sloths are arboreal, nocturnal leaf eaters. They have large, multi-compartmental stomachs that contain cellulose-digesting enzymes to aid with the breakdown of large quantities of plant material. Food may take more than a month to be digested, and they pass urine and feces only once a week. When the sloth climbs down to the base of the tree to deposit its feces, a moth that lives in its fur jumps off and lays eggs in the defecation.

They spend their days hanging upside down and motionless, with the algae on their fur helping to camouflage them in the trees. The fur on their belly is parted to help water flow off. Two-toed sloths maintain a very low body temperature from day to day, ranging from 85 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. This temperature drops even lower during cooler months or when they are inactive. Because their metabolism and muscle mass are much lower than other mammals in the same weight range, they cannot afford the energy to shiver and get warm. Therefore, they find trees with sun exposure to help regulate their body temperature. Adult sloths are mostly solitary, and it is not known how they communicate with one another or dispute territories. Males are thought to mark their areas with feces and secretions from the anal gland. Two-toed sloths hiss when disturbed.

## Reproduction and Breeding

Biologists believe that sloths breed throughout the year. Information on their breeding behavior and courtship is unknown due to their reclusive nature. A single offspring is born in the trees high above ground. The mother helps it learn to nurse. It is weaned after a month, but may begin eating leaves at a younger age. Only the mother tends to the young, carrying it against her stomach for six to nine months. The young sloth will not often leave the mother to eat, though it will grab accessible foliage from its position. If the two sloths become separated the young will bleat and whistle until the mother returns.

After weaning, the young sloth occupies part of the mother's home range and shares in her taste preference for leaves.

## Conservation

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) lists the two-toed sloth as an animal of Least Concern in view of its wide distribution, presumed large population, its occurrence in a variety of protected areas,



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and because it is unlikely to be declining fast enough to qualify for listing in a threatened category. While there is some evidence that they are hunted opportunistically, there is no serious bushmeat trade in this species. Because they are usually found high in the canopy, motionless and virtually invisible, they are not as commonly hunted as armadillos or anteaters, and there are taboos against their consumption by some native groups.

In some more human populated areas of their range, sloths are in danger of electrocution on power lines and being hit by cars on busy roads. There are a variety of rescue and rehabilitation centers that focus on recovering and restoring injured animals and increasing local sloth conservation efforts.

### **Amazing Facts**

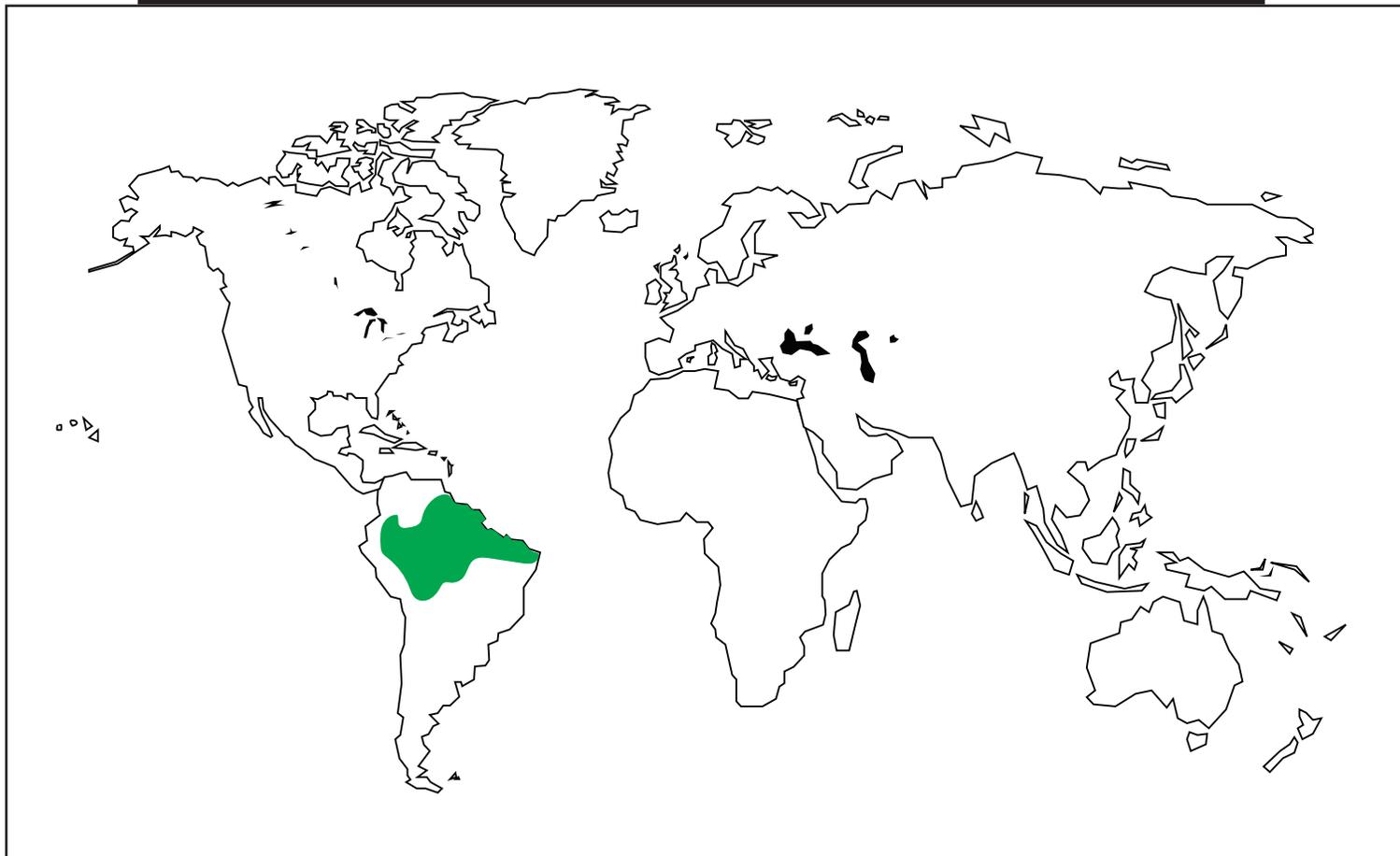
Sloths are excellent swimmers that often take to the water in flooded forests to change trees.

These mammals have simple teeth: only five upper molars and four lower ones.

A full stomach may account for up to a third of the body weight of a sloth.

Sloths are related to armadillos and anteaters.

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