



Photo by John MacKinnon

## Flying Lemur (*Cynocephalus volans*)

TODAY, there are only two surviving species of Flying lemur: the Philippine Flying Lemur, which is endemic to the country and the Malayan Flying Lemur, which can be found in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and Borneo.

The Philippine Flying Lemur (*Cynocephalus volans*) used to be common in the wilderness of Leyte, Samar, and Bohol in the Visayas, and in Basilan and other parts of Mindanao where it is locally known as "Kagwang". Its habitat has been destroyed by logging and consequent conversion of forestland to other uses.

It is hunted for its fur to make caps, and for its flesh as a delicacy. This makes the species an attractive prey to both the hunters and the Philippine Eagle, one of the world's rarest birds. In Mindanao, reports revealed that 90% of the eagle's diet consists of flying lemur.

The Philippine flying lemur is a misnomer. It is not a true lemur and it does not fly; it travels by a series of glides from tree to tree, scrambling up trunks to gain height before launching off in another glide, as far as 80 meters in one leap. It feeds on ripening fruits of certain trees, buds, and young leaves. It is a



nocturnal animal, spending the day inside tree holes or clinging motionless on a tree trunk, head uppermost. At night, it suspends itself among the branches to feed. It lives in lowland forests near the seashore and deep in the interior.

**Status:** Widespread and common, populations are stable. Widespread destruction of lowland forest makes them somewhat vulnerable, but their ability to persist in disturbed forests makes them more resilient than many species. IUCN: Vulnerable (although current data do not support this listing). (FIELDIANA, Zoology, New Series, No. 88)

