

# BABIRUSA

## RANGE:

Found on Sulawesi, Togian, Sula and Buru Islands in the Indonesian Archipelago.

## HABITAT:

Moist to marshy forested areas along lake shores and riverbanks.

## SIZE:

**Body Length:** 34 1/4 to 42 inches (90 - 110 cm)

**Height:** 25 to 32 inches (65 - 80 cm)

**Tail Length:** 10 1/2 to 12 1/2 inches (27 - 32 cm)

**Weight:** Up to 220 lbs. (100 kg)

## LIFE EXPECTANCY:

Generally average around 10 years, however one captive female reached an age of 24 years.

## REPRODUCTION:

Babirusa have been observed living singly and in small family groups. Gestation lasts between 125 and 150 days and at birth the young are 6 to 8 inches (15 - 20 cm) long. Generally only one or two offspring are born since the mother only has 2 nipples for nursing. This characteristic of only having two mammarys is one of the things that suggests that Babirusa are very primitive members of the pig family. Twins are always of the same sex. Unlike most other wild pigs, the babies do not have stripes. Babirusa mothers are very aggressive when defending their young.

## DIET:

**Wild:** Roots, berries, tubers, leaves, insect larvae, and fruits.

**Zoo:** Pelleted diet high in fiber, vegetables, fruit, hay and alfalfa.

## BEHAVIOR:

Diurnal. Babirusas prefer forested swamps and dense reed thickets for hiding and wallowing. Babirusa are known to be very good swimmers and have been observed crossing rivers and wide inlets into the sea in their search for food. During their search for food they do not root in the ground like other pigs, but have been observed occasionally digging insect larvae out of rotting trees. As in most species of pigs, babirusa vocalize through grunting and squeaking noises and when excited, they will chatter their teeth.

## POINTS OF INTEREST:

Babirusa are considered unusual among the wild pigs of southeast Asia, mainly due to their unusual appearance. The head is very small and they have a pronounced arched back and long slender legs. The skin looks naked from a distance and can either be smooth or wrinkled. The thickness of their coats varies within the 4 different subspecies. The most striking feature is the size of the upper canine teeth, which can reach a length of over 12 inches in males and can be observed growing through the upper cheeks. In some older males these large canines can grow in a circle and back into the upper jaw where they first emerged. These tusk-like teeth are relatively brittle and are probably used to ward off an opponent's attack, as opposed to actually being used to pierce flesh in the use as a weapon. These large unusual canines have led to numerous legends and myths among native peoples in the region. Malaysians claim that the babirusa can hang from the branches of trees with their teeth. The German term for this animal is "hirscheber" which means "deer boar".

theZOO  
LOUISVILLE



photo by Cindy Rogers

Class:	<b>Mammalia</b>
Order:	<b>Artiodactyla</b>
Family:	<b>Suidae</b>
Genus:	<b>Babirusa</b>
Species:	<b>babirusa</b>

## **BABIRUSA**



### **STATUS:**

Endangered, mainly due to over hunting and habitat destruction.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

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