TWO-TOED SLOTH

**Description:**
The two-toed sloth is a slow moving mammal with two layers of gray-brown to beige fur. The under fur is short and fine while the outer coat is made up of long, coarse hairs. They have flattened faces with a naked, protruding nose. Their ears are small, round and inconspicuous. The forelimbs have two claws that are bound together with skin. The hind limbs have three claws.

**Size:**
They reach lengths up to 2 feet, and they weigh between 8 and 25 pounds.

**Life Span:**
12 years in the wild and 20 years in captivity.

**Diet:**
*In the wild:* leaves, shoots and fruit
*At the Zoo:* apple, banana, yam, orange, canned primate diet, lettuce, bread roll

**Geographic Range:**
Two-toed sloths are found from southern Central America to northern South America: Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela, Guiana, north-central Brazil, and northern Peru.

**Habitat:**
Rainforest.

Class: Mammalia
Order: Edentata
Family: Megalonychidae
Genus: Choloepus
Species: didactylus

Credit: Ashley Clayton
**Reproduction:**
Female sloths give birth to a single young after a 7 to 10 month gestation period. Egg implantation may be delayed so that the young are born when there is plenty of food. For 6 to 9 months, the young sloth rides on its mother’s belly. It is weaned after one month, and will first eat leaves that have been chewed by the mother. If separated from its mother, a young sloth will cry out.

**Special Adaptations:**
The sloth’s eyesight and hearing are relatively poor. Instead, they rely on their acute sense of smell, taste and touch. Algae grows in its fur, which allows it to camouflage well among the trees. In dry weather, the algae turns yellow and in wet weather it turns blue-green.

**Behavior:**
The two-toed sloth eats, sleeps, breeds and nurses upside down. To move along the forest floor, the sloth must pull itself along with its claws because it does not have the muscles necessary for walking. They are better at swimming than they are at walking. They are nocturnal. When sleeping, the sloth will place its head on its chest and curl into a ball. Although it moves slowly, a sloth can strike out quickly to defend itself.

**Current Status:**
The greatest risk to the two-toed sloth is deforestation.

**Related Species:**
Two species of two-toed sloth exist, as do 3 species of three-toed sloth.

**Where am I in the Zoo:**
The two-toed sloth in is an outdoor exhibit across from Monkey Island in the center of the Zoo. It shares an exhibit with the Brazilian agoutis and golden lion tamarins.