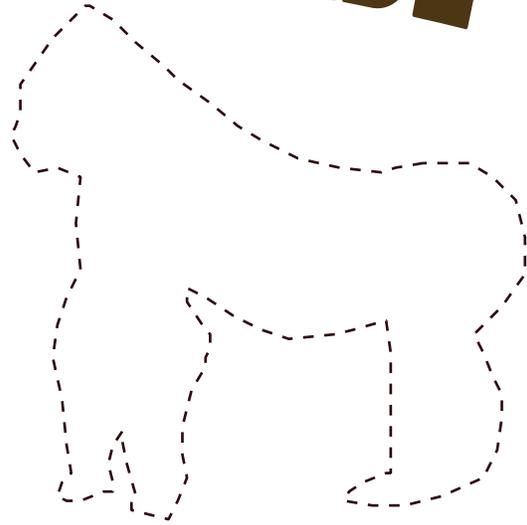


GORILLA STUDY GUIDE

Mountain Gorilla

Gorilla beringei beringei
Class: Mammal



General Information

- Omnivore
- Average lifespan: 35 years
- Standing height: 4 to 6 feet
- Weight: 300 to 500 pounds
- Group: troop or band of up to 30 individuals
- Status: Critically endangered

Behavior

Mountain Gorillas prefer to walk using both their arms and legs, with the knuckles of their hands facing downward, but can run on two legs for a short distance. During the day, Mountain Gorillas forage for food. Every evening at dusk they build a new nest from leaves.

Males

The gorilla troop is led by a mature male, called a silverback due to the gray hairs he develops on his back between ages 12 and 15 years. He organizes where the group travels, eats, and nests. They are generally peaceful animals, but the silverback will beat his chest, make loud noises, and bear his teeth if threatened.

Females

Females give birth for the first time around 10 years of age. Like humans, they have a pregnancy term of about 9 months. The females are very close with their babies until the baby is about 4 years old and can travel independently in the family.

Young

Baby gorillas weigh around 4 pounds at birth and ride on their mothers' backs until they are 2 to 3 years old. From 3 to 6 years old they are very playful, just like human kids, spending much of their day chasing each other and swinging from branches.

Diet

Mountain Gorillas eat a variety of leaves, roots, shoots, fruit, wild celery, tree bark, bamboo, thistles, and stinging nettles. Gorillas get enough hydration from these plants so they do not need to drink water.

Habitat

The 700 remaining Mountain Gorillas, who only occur in Central Africa, are split between the Virunga Mountains on the borders of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda. The gorillas live primarily in the Hagenia tree forests and travel to the bamboo forest when fresh shoots grow.

Dangers

There are only about 700 Mountain Gorillas left in the world. They are facing very serious threats in their habitat. The main dangers include:

- Deforestation by charcoal gatherers
- Disease by humans
- War and conflict in the region