

Mountain Gorilla



The mountain gorilla, a large, strong ape inhabiting Africa's volcanic slopes, has few natural predators. Yet due to detrimental human activity, such as poaching, civil war, and habitat destruction, the mountain gorilla, a subspecies of the eastern gorilla, has become the most endangered type of gorilla.

Currently, the mountain gorilla's habitat is limited to protected national parks in two

regions of Africa. One group of gorillas lives in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda. The other group is spread over three national parks in the Virungas mountain region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda.

Mountain gorillas are as shy as they are strong. But when threatened, they can be aggressive. They beat their chests and let out angry grunts and roars. Group leaders will charge at the threat. Mothers will fight to the death to protect their young.

Mountain gorillas live in groups of up to 30. Female mountain gorillas can produce young beginning at age 10. They carry one or two babies at a time. In general, they will bear between two and six babies in a lifetime.

Newborn gorillas weigh about 1.8 kg at birth. They are as weak and uncoordinated as human babies. For the first four years of their lives, they get around by clinging to their mother's backs. By 3.5 years of age, the young gorillas are fully weaned from their mother's milk and start the same diet as mature mountain gorillas: plants, leaves, roots and shoots.



Fully-grown male mountain gorillas can weigh up to 180 kg (400 lb). Females weigh half that at about 90 kg. Apart from the silver stripe on their backs, male mountain gorillas are different from females because they have a crest of fur on their heads. Both genders have similar thick black hair covering their body. Their thick hair keeps them warm in cold mountain

temperatures.

Why are gorillas important?

Gorillas live in the Congo basin, in the second-largest tropical rainforest left on earth, a forest that plays a critical role in our fight against climate change. It acts as the "lungs of the planet," cleaning the air of the carbon dioxide that leads to climate change and replacing it with the clean oxygen that we need to breathe. Gorillas play an important part in keeping these lungs healthy, dispersing seeds, letting in light, and shaping plant communities within the forest.

Gorillas act as an "umbrella species" for their habitat, helping to protect biodiversity on a larger scale. Their forest habitat is home to numerous other species, many themselves endangered. Protecting gorillas helps protect these other vital plants, animals and insects as well.

Conservation Status

Mountain gorillas are considered endangered by [IUCN's Red List](#). Not only are mountain gorillas threatened by loss of habitat due to human encroachment, they have also become victims of human violence. As civil war rages in Africa, efforts to conserve mountain gorilla populations have been reduced or stopped. Mountain gorillas have also been killed or captured by poachers. Their body parts are sold to collectors, and baby gorillas are sold illegally as pets, research subjects, or private zoo animals.

What You Can Do to Help

To help, you can make donations to the [International Gorilla Conservation Program](#). You can also support the [Gorilla Fund International](#), set up by conservationist Dian Fossey.

Mountain Gorilla Range



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