

Gorillas - The Gentle Giants

How many times have you heard someone say "Gorillas are so human-like." The eyes of a gorilla have a depth that people relate to humans, understanding and thinking. So maybe that's a small part of the reason humans have a close connection to these big hairy apes. Gorilla literally translated means "hairy person." Another reason could be due to the fact that gorillas share 98.3% of their DNA with humans.

Four types of gorillas

There are several different types of gorillas, but all have native homes in Africa. Appearance may vary a little, but each type has similar habitats and lifestyles.

The four different types of gorillas are Grauer's, Western Lowland, Mountain, and Cross River.



Grauer's Gorilla

Grauer's Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*) aka: Eastern Lowland Gorilla

Less than 5,000 exist in the mountainous forests of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Status: endangered.

the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Angola.

Status: critically endangered.



Mountain Gorilla

Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*)

A small population of about 700 Mountain Gorillas can be found within the Virunga mountains between the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda.

Status: endangered.



Western Lowland Gorilla

Western Lowland Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*)

Recent surveys show the population of Western Lowland Gorillas to be around 150,000-200,000. Their range is Cameroon, the Central African Republic,



Cross River Gorilla

Cross River Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*),

a subspecies of western gorillas once thought to be extinct. With an estimated population less

than 300, the Cross River Gorilla ranks among the world's 25 most endangered primate species and is considered the most endangered African ape. They are only found in a small area in Nigeria and Cameroon. *Status: critically endangered.*

Basic characteristics of gorillas

Gorillas are primarily terrestrial herbivores living in family groups called "troops." Peacefully, they travel much of the day, eating vegetation and stopping to rest at times. At night gorillas build nests of leaves and plant materials and sleep in their nests overnight.

Gorillas have long arms and balance on the knuckles of their hands as they walk, thus they are called "knuckle-walkers."

The troops can be fluid to the extent that females may leave to mate with different males. Also young males may leave to create their own family group, bachelor group or live solitary.



Silverback

The adult male (called silverback) protects his troop and mates to produce more babies. He usually takes the lead position when the troop is moving in the forest.



Infant riding on mom's back

After a gestation period of 8 1/2 months, females give birth to one or two babies. A baby gorilla will weigh about 4 lbs. at birth. Young gorillas enjoy playing and learn coordination and acceptable behavior through this activity.

When researching gorillas, the noses are unique and used for identification. Their faces are very expressive and show happiness, sadness, fear, confusion, etc. The intelligence of gorillas is thought to be equivalent to that of a six-year-old human. The strength of an adult male gorilla is equal to 6-8 human men.

The main threats to the survival of gorillas are habitat loss, bushmeat trade, and disease.



Gorilla Golf is Teeing Up for the Fall

It's that time again! We are looking forward to an incredible third annual Gorilla Golf fundraiser on October 8, 2013 at Brookfield Country Club. This is such a special year since it will be the first time our great friend, Andy Pachman, will not be playing. Andy passed away in April of this year after a long struggle with cancer. He was a key person is helping ACE begin Gorilla Golf, and it was always great fun to see him and his many golfing buddies playing in the tournament. To honor Andy and all that he did for ACE and Gorilla Golf this year, we are holding the tournament in his memory. We miss you, Andy.

Even though Andy won't be playing this year or letting his friends use the length of his arm to count off raffle tickets, we know his presence will be with us. Andy believed in ACE and the work of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International, which is the recipient of the profits of Gorilla Golf.

We are glad we have his wife, Tara Stoinski, as a part of DFGFI and ACE, and to continue the important work of saving gorillas in their native habitats.



Run for the Redheads Is A Success

On Saturday, September 14, 2013, ACE held its First Annual Run for the Redheads 5K Race. Volunteers began arriving to set up at 5 AM, and the runners were ready to start at 7:30 AM. The field of participants, many dressed in their best redhead garb, were started on their run by Haley Orangutan (actually an ACE volunteer in an orangutan costume). A group of younger athletes completed in the Great Ape Gallop, a one-mile run set after the 5K. Runners and volunteers alike enjoyed the beautiful fall morning after our summer of rain.



photo by Gene Todd
Team Pongo with Haley Orangutan

The after-race party included bananas, a "Who Looks Like An Orangutan" contest, encounters with Zoo Atlanta Zoomobile animals, and presentation of medals to the winners.

Thank you to our wonderful sponsors who helped to make this event a success - Trinity Presbyterian Church, WSB-TV, Cobb Pediatrics, West Stride, Gorilla Sacks, Tamaqua Foundation, Haven Ob/Gyn, Lauderdale Shirthouse, Inc., and Zoo Atlanta.



Photo by D. Bohanon
AJ and Troy Bohanon show off their Run for Redheads t-shirts and medals

A huge thanks goes to Patti Frazier and her tireless committee and to all of the volunteers who staffed the event. Money raised will benefit the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Project (SOCP), which works to help save the Sumatran orangutan in the wild. Look for final numbers and money raised in the next issue of *Heard It Through the Ape Vine*.

Update: Grauer's Gorilla Conservation and Research

(source: *DFGFI Gorilla Journal, Spring 2013*)

After a full year of hard work assessing gorilla presence in the ecological corridor between Kahuzi-Biega National Park and Maiko National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund is very happy to confirm the presence of Grauer's gorillas in the three community-based reserves studied (the Utunda and Watsa Gorilla Reserve 'REGOUWA,' Punia Gorilla Reserve "RGPU," and Bakano's Community Forest Reserve "COCREFOBA").

While monitoring the area, the teams observed 454 signs of animal presence including birds, buffalo, chimpanzee, antelope, gorilla, leopard, monkey, aardvark, pangolin, pig, other small mammals, snake, and tortoise. Of these, 193 occurrences were signs of gorilla presence!

In addition the monitoring teams also collected signs of human activities, especially mining, that are occurring in this ecological corridor. People working in mining are also placing traps for bushmeat, fishing, and carrying out

other activities as they work.

Hunting is not illegal except when protected species are involved. In that case, it is considered poaching, which is illegal. Gorillas are totally protected and it is illegal to kill or possess one. While carrying out the bio-monitoring, the teams were also sensitizing people against gorilla poaching and trading. The team has tried to develop a network for both indirect and participative anti-poaching action, which led to a network of gorilla traders.

The confirmed presence of gorillas in these areas of DR Congo has really reinforced the motivation of Grauer's Gorilla Conservation and Research program staff to help save the few remaining Grauer's gorillas. A gorilla behavior study, gorilla ranging study, and human activities mapping are needed in the future and are being planned.

Anti-poaching update

(source: *DFGFI Gorilla Journal, spring 2013*)

In February, the Fossey Fund's anti-poaching teams resumed patrols in Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda after a two-month hiatus. Routine

patrols had been suspended in December as trackers began attending mandatory paramilitary training that kept one-third of the team out of the field in three-week shifts.

The paramilitary training sessions, which are designed to equip field staff with skills that can help them carry out their work safely and efficiently in the forest, were also attended by Rwandan park authority rangers and guides.

Unfortunately, while the anti-poaching patrols were suspended, there was a clear rise in illegal activities in the forest. Trackers found many snares near gorilla trails, in close proximity to the groups, and even among the gorillas as they rested and fed.

Poachers know that the anti-poaching teams patrol the park and that they run a risk of being caught or having their snares destroyed by trackers. When there were no routine patrols, poachers probably took the opportunity to increase their activities while there was less monitoring of the forest.

Since resuming routine patrols, the anti-poaching team has also had the chance to try a new method of data collection in the field. The anti-poaching team collects data on the location and

the nature of illegal activities as well as the animal species they encounter in the park.



Photo by DFGFI
Trackers and anti-poachers learn to use Cybertracker.

Recently, Richard Bergl, Ph.D. of the North Carolina Zoo, visited the Fossey Fund's Regional Research Center in Musanze, Rwanda, where he provided assistance and training to begin setting up a new data collection system using Cybertracker software. The anti-poaching team was given the opportunity to test the software in the field and the trial was immensely successful. The team picked up the new software quickly and reported that they were excited to begin using it on a regular basis. This will replace the currently used pen-and-paper data collection.

Mountain gorillas are the only great ape species known to be increasing in number, and compared to some other gorilla habitats, Volcanoes National Park has a relatively low incidence of illegal activities due to the extreme conservation methods implemented by the Fossey Fund and its partners. In order to successfully protect the mountain gorillas, the daily monitoring and the daily anti-poaching patrols must continue.

Election of new board members

At the August 24, 2013, General Meeting the following people were elected: Michele Dave, Julie Gaines, Stacie Beckett, and Laura Mayo. We are so glad they will be joining the Board and we look forward to another successful year.

We appreciate the past service of Lynn Yakubinis, Jodi Carrigan and Patti Frazier. They were valuable Board members and committee chairs. Thank you for your strong leadership!

Next General Meeting will be November 3

Please mark your calendars to attend the next General Meeting on Sunday, November 3, 2013, at 6:30 pm at Zoo Atlanta.

It was voted at the last meeting that the November 3 meeting should be a potluck dinner. So be thinking of that special dish you might bring and share. Additional details will be announced closer to the meeting date.

New Membership Category for Students Created

We are excited to announce a new membership category - student. A student member is a full-time student in undergraduate school or below. This category is not open to graduate school students.

Student membership will be a non-voting membership, so participation on committees is not necessary to be considered active. However, students are encouraged to participate in ACE events and fundraisers as their time permits. Membership dues are \$5 annually.

We want to reach out to the students who are interested in great apes and nurture their growth in learning more about ape conservation and research.



Did you know?

ACE members have worked hard to raise funds to fulfill our mission. Since July of 2006, ACE has donated over \$73,402 to various organizations working to save the great apes.

Another - Did you know?

For the past four years, the resident artists of Zoo Atlanta and some of their friends from other zoos have worked very hard to raise money for their wild counterparts. Through Apes in the Arts, they have raised almost \$34,000 with their artwork. This money has been sent to organizations such as Friends of Bonobos, Goualougo Triangle Ape Project, Orangutan Land Trust and the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI).

2013-2014 ACE Board

Your 2013-2014 officers:

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