



Questions About Gorillas And the fight to Save Them From Extinction

How many gorillas are left in the world today?

There are fewer than **900 mountain gorillas** left in the entire world, all of them living in the wild. Mountain gorillas are only found in three countries: **Uganda, Rwanda** and the **Democratic Republic of Congo** in central Africa. More than half of them live in the Virunga mountains, a chain of extinct volcanoes on the borders the three countries. The only other population of mountain gorillas live just a few kilometres away in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda.

Lowland gorillas are also in trouble, even though there are more of them – perhaps as many as 100,000 in the wild, and some in zoos worldwide. Since they don't live up in the mountains, lowland gorillas are at extra risk from poachers and their forest habitat is being destroyed at an alarming rate by logging and mining companies.

Most gorillas at some point come into contact with humans and can easily catch human diseases such as chest infections, scabies and potentially TB . An outbreak of Ebola could decimate them! An outbreak in west Africa in 2006 killed 5,000 lowland gorillas.

What are the main threats facing gorillas in the wild?

Gorillas live in some of the poorest, most insecure and most densely-populated parts of Africa. Impoverished communities living alongside the National Parks often have no choice but to enter the protected forests for fuel and food. This means the trees the gorillas rely on for food and shelter are disappearing at an astonishing rate. Additionally, poachers hunting for small mammals lay down rope or wire traps on

the forest floor and these can trap gorillas, maiming or even killing them.

Other threats facing the gorillas include fighting between rebel armies in and around the National Parks, habitat loss caused by illegal mining and the illegal charcoal trade, and human diseases.

Why should we care?

Gorillas share more than 96% of their DNA with humans: they really are our cousins. As well as genetic similarities, gorillas also live peacefully in closely-knit families and display many of the same characteristics as humans. Gorillas laugh and cry and young gorillas love to play. A death in a gorilla group will leave the whole family grieving, just as we do.

As well as being our cousins, gorillas play a vital role in the ecosystem of Africa's richest forests. By moving every day, they disperse seeds, helping important trees to germinate, making them the true 'gardeners of the forest'; without them, the whole ecosystem could fall apart. New evidence shows that conserving the world's forests is doing as much to combat climate change as any costly emissions reduction programme.

What can be done to save the gorillas?

In the short-term, regular, well-equipped ranger patrols are needed to combat threats such as poaching, illegal mining and the destructive charcoal trade. Rangers really do serve at the frontline of conservation.

At the same time, it's also vital that we tackle the underlying reasons behind threats such as poaching and the charcoal trade. Giving communities a means of growing their own food or a reliable source of

power means they need no longer rely on the resources of the forest, ensuring the gorillas are left in peace. Education projects aimed at showing local communities just how important gorillas are also play a crucial role in ensuring their long-term survival.

How can I help?

There are many ways you can play a part in protecting gorillas. You could adopt an infant mountain gorilla through the Gorilla Organization, hold a fundraising event of your own, become a community volunteer and help raise awareness in your area, or sign up for our annual Great Gorilla Run in London and run 7k in a gorilla suit to help raise money to save the gorillas!

For more information email

info@gorillas.org

or see us at

WWW.GORILLAS.ORG

Facebook The Gorilla Organization

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