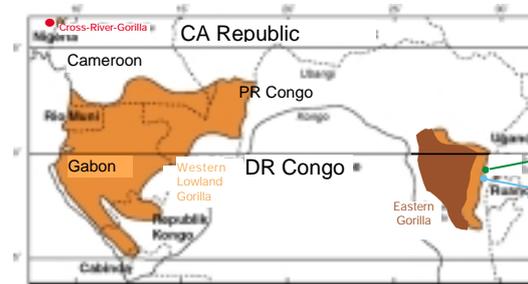


Gorillas are the largest of the Great Apes. They live exclusively in forest areas and are divided into a Western and an Eastern species.

The habitats of the different species and subspecies (5) differ considerably with regards to flora - and therefore food - and climate.

Best known are the Mountain Gorillas, which have been studied for more than 30 years. Much less is known of any of the other subspecies, because the forests they live in are thicker and the animals are hard to see.

With a few exceptions, it is mainly Western Gorillas that are kept in zoos.



Distributions of Gorilla subspecies.

POPULATION ESTIMATES (March 2000)

Western Lowland Gorilla	100.000 ??
Cross-River Gorilla	200
Eastern Lowland Gorilla	17.000 ??
Virunga Mountain Gorilla	300
Bwindi Mountain Gorilla	300

Only data from the Mountain Gorillas are relatively well known. All other estimates are questionable, since many areas are inaccessible and poaching has increased a lot over the last few years.



C. Lindemann



C. von Thiele

This will be a silverback in two years' time...



J. Hommes

Only a day old...



G. Hatzigeorg

Biological Data

Social structure: family groups: one or few males, several females with youngsters, group size 3-30. Bachelor groups and solitary living males. Both sexes usually leave their natal group.

Gender difference: adult males are considerably larger than females, having long canines, high parting, silvery-grey back ("silverback")

Hierarchy: one male leads the group

Pregnancy: 9 months

Breastfeeding: 3-4 years

Juvenile mortality: 30%

Life expectancy: in the wild 40-45 years, over 50 yrs in captivity

Size/Weight: males ~1.67 - 1.75 m/160-180 kg
females ~ 1.30 - 1.40 m/70-100 kg

Mature: males at 15 yrs, females at 10 yrs

Nutrition: Almost exclusively vegetarian!
Mountain Gorillas: herbaceous plants (nettles, thistles, etc.), bark, leaves, fungi, bamboo. Other subspecies also eat fruits. In addition: minerals (from soil) and ants (for protein!).



C. von Thiele

Western Lowland Gorilla



K.H. Kohrer

Eastern Gorilla: Silverback in Kahuzi-Biega NP



M. Vogt

Virunga Mountain Gorilla

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPECIES AND SUBSPECIES



Silverbacks: In the Western Gorilla, the silvery colour reaches over the dorsum and down to the knees. Their Eastern relatives have only a silvery saddle.

Size: Western Lowland Gorillas, esp. Cross River Gorillas are the smallest, Eastern Gorillas the largest.

Coat colour: Western Gorillas: mostly reddish forehead and front of crown, body individually grey-brown or reddish to dark-brown-black coloured. Eastern Gorillas: black

Mountain Gorillas have longer fur (because they live in cold regions).

Nose prints of Mountain Gorillas are more distinct than those of Lowland Gorillas.



W. Weber

Western Lowland Gorilla