

## Gorillas



Lowland Gorilla - Adult silverback male  
photo by: [James Gaither, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

*Contributed by Leanne Guenther*

- Gorillas are a sub-group of the family of great apes. They are mammals.

There are four species of gorillas:

- the eastern lowland or Grauer's gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*);
- the mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*);
- the western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*); and
- the Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehl*).
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- The cross river and mountain gorillas are endangered species with under 1000 (combined) still remaining in the wild.



Gorilla mother and child

photo by: [Martha de Jong-Lantink](#), [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Gorillas live in family groups of about a dozen, led by a dominant male.

- This dominant male is usually over a decade old and is called a "silverback" due to the silvery coloured hair on his back.
- Males younger than a decade old are called "blackbacks" as their hair has not yet turned silver.
- Similar to humans, gorilla mothers are pregnant for 8.5 months and tend to give birth to only one baby at a time. They nurse their baby for about 3 years.
- An adult male gorilla is the size of a human, but three times as heavy (they weigh up to 600 pounds).
- Although gorillas are considered plant eaters, their favourite food is termites - the protein, minerals and fat of these little insects is important to their health. The gorillas break open the termite nests and enjoy a feast at a leisurely pace.



The eyes are windows to the soul.  
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When not eating termites, gorillas spend most of their time feeding on fruit - they live on a diet of as many as 100 different types of fruit.

- A gorilla's arms are longer than its legs and they tend to walk on all four limbs, curling their hands into fists and "knuckle walking".
- Gorillas are most active during the day, but they are shy.
- At night, they make nests of grass and leaves to sleep in.