



Gorilla

(*Gorilla beringei* and *Gorilla gorilla*)

Conservation Profile Synopsis



State of the Species

The genus *Gorilla* includes two species (Western - *G.gorilla* and Eastern - *G.beringei*), each of which encompasses two subspecies. The western subspecies (the Cross River and Western lowland gorilla), are found in several countries in the Western portion of tropical central Africa. Western lowland gorilla populations are estimated at approximately 125,000 animals, whereas only 250-300 Cross

River gorillas are found in their relatively small (~8,000km²) geographic range straddling the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. Some studies demonstrate that *G.gorilla* declined >60% over a period of 20-25 years^{1,2}.

The subspecies of the eastern gorilla include Grauer's and mountain gorillas, which are found in Uganda, Rwanda and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Though it is the only gorilla subspecies not listed as Critically Endangered, Grauer's gorilla populations are estimated at only 2,000-10,000 individuals. Mountain gorillas are found in two geographically isolated subpopulations and number approximately 880 individuals.

Primary Threats to the Species

The primary threats to Western lowland and Cross River gorillas are poaching, habitat loss and fragmentation, and the Ebola virus. Timber harvest has increased in their range in the past 2-3 decades, and with it roads have been built in areas previously inaccessible to hunters, resulting in disastrous impacts on gorilla populations. These threats are thought to be worsening rather than improving, and are exacerbated by a very low reproductive rate. Where Ebola outbreaks occur, mortality rates in gorillas are as high as 95% and it is thought that all protected areas with populations of animals are at risk of being affected. Cross River gorillas are further threatened by potential inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity associated with small population size as well as encroachment by human settlement.

Grauer's gorillas are also affected by habitat loss and fragmentation, with a similar result of increasing access for and incidence of hunting and capture of infants¹. Political instability and associated military activity have been and are currently a threat to both mountain and Grauer's gorillas in portions of their range. Though ecotourism is an important component of Mountain gorilla conservation, this subspecies is at risk of human-gorilla disease transmission during these activities.

AZA Conservation Support

Between 2010 and 2014, close to 50 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums reported taking part in a variety of field conservation projects benefitting gorillas, including both financial support for and in some cases on-the-ground involvement with projects in range countries. Over those five years, the AZA community invested \$4.5 million in gorilla conservation. In 2010, the Ape TAG Conservation Initiative was launched by AZA's Ape Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), with the goal of increasing zoo support for ape conservation. Through the Initiative, 19 AZA institutions continually contribute resources to global ape conservation. AZA institutions also provide financial support to field conservation partners such as the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International; a charity established for the protection of endangered Grauer's and mountain gorillas through anti-poaching efforts and conservation education programs. This is not an exhaustive list of organizations, but these efforts represent the significant ties that AZA-accredited institutions have with gorilla-focused conservation organizations.

Status

African Subpopulations

IUCN Western gorilla: Critically endangered
Eastern gorilla: Endangered

ESA Endangered

CITES Appendix I

AZA Western Gorilla Subpopulation

Ape Taxon Advisory Group

Chair Tara Stoinski

SSP Coordinator Kristen Lukas

AZA Green SSP

AZA Population 341 individuals



1. IUCN. 2015. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <http://www.iucnredlist.org> Downloaded on 08 May 2015
2. Walsh, P.D., Tutin, C.E.G., Oates, J.F., Baillie, J.E.M., Maisels, F., Stokes, E.J., Gatti, S., Bergl, R.A., Sunderland-Groves, J. & Dunn, A. 2008. Gorilla gorilla. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2014.3. <www.iucnredlist.org>. Downloaded on 08 May 2015.
3. Hall, J. S., Saltonstall, K., Inogwabini, B.-I. and Omari, I. 1998. Distribution, abundance and conservation status of Grauer's gorilla. Oryx 32: 122-130.