

We Want to Protect the Gorillas

Since 1984, the **Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe** has been working towards the conservation of the gorillas and their habitats. Among our activities is the provision of support to the rangers in the protected areas, for example by supplying equipment.

We want to prevent the destruction of the rainforest, particularly in those locations where only small areas of forest are left. In addition, we support the demarcation of reserve boundaries and the afforestation of cleared areas with local tree species.

We consider it important that the local population accepts the protected areas and benefits from them. We therefore support projects that raise the awareness of the local population of the significance of protected areas and the consequences of hunting and deforestation. So far, many of these projects have been strikingly successful.

Our bi-annual members' magazine "Gorilla Journal" promotes national and international information exchange. Our website www.berggorilla.org contains comprehensive information on gorillas and the threats they are facing (in German and English).

Our work does not follow a rigid approach: we make decisions on an individual basis, in a fast and un-bureaucratic manner, appropriate to individual conditions and requirements. **Our work is financed through member contributions and donations.** As all people involved in our work are volunteers we can guarantee that your donations will reach the projects they are meant for.



If you would like to contribute to the survival of the gorillas, become a member of the **Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe!** Alternatively, you can support our work with a donation. If you have questions, please have a look at our website or write to the address below. We welcome your interest and would be very happy to answer your questions.

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The Life of Gorillas

People all over the world have been made aware of the threat of extinction faced by the mountain gorillas through the indefatigable work of scientists over decades. In spite of all the research work, we are still learning new things about these fascinating animals that resemble us so much.

Every day, gorillas move through their range from one feeding place to the next, digesting great quantities of plant material. They live in groups that usually consist of one silverback male, several females and their offspring. In such a family, the leading male determines the pattern of activities of the group. It is not only physical strength which he has to demonstrate in the fight against rivals that will determine who leads the group, but also his experience and skills. For example, he guides the group to the right feeding places at the right time of year and it is very important that he knows how to deal with humans.



Gorillas occur in the tropical rain forests of Africa, ranging from the plains to the high mountains. Experts differentiate between eastern and western gorillas. The mountain gorillas belong to the eastern gorilla type. Eastern and western gorillas are very different, not only in their physical appearance but also in their genetic make-up.

Dangers for the Gentle Giants

It is not known exactly how many gorillas are left in the wild; it is estimated that there are about 320,000 western and fewer than 5000 eastern gorillas. As mountain gorillas only occur in two relatively small forested areas, their number alone can be estimated quite accurately: there are not much more than 1000 individuals. They range over four national parks in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The **Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe** concentrates its efforts on the mountain gorillas and other small, isolated gorilla populations found in other regions of East and West Africa.

Gorillas are at risk from a diversity of threats. Among them are:

- The destruction of forests through deforestation, fire or mining of mineral resources
- The isolation of gorilla populations in small forest fragments
- Diseases that can be transferred from humans or domestic animals to the gorillas
- Killing of gorillas for bushmeat
- Hunting of gorillas to obtain young animals, fetishes and trophies
- Hunting of gorillas as a reaction to the destruction of people's crops by the gorillas
- Injuries caused by traps put out for other animals
- Stress caused by the constant presence of humans
- Consequences of wars

Rain Forest under Threat

Does the rainforest still have a chance of survival?

Humans have no scruples when it comes to overexploiting tropical forests, even in those areas that are under protection. Within 100 years, approximately 60% of the African rain forest has been destroyed, and deforestation continues at an alarming rate.

The majority of felled trees end up as firewood; the formerly forested areas are then used for plantations, agricultural fields and pasture for domestic animals. With every hectare of cleared rain forest innumerable animal and plant species are lost – forever.

The disappearance of the rain forest also has grave implications for humans. Intact forest retains the mass of rain water during the rainy season: it then filters into the rivers in the dry season. Once the rain forest is gone, this “sponge” effect is lost; as a result, the heavy rains of the wet season wash away the fertile soil, landslides destroy villages and in the subsequent dry season the water levels are much lower.

The survival of the gorillas will be ensured only if we succeed in finding a balance between the needs of the human population and nature conservation measures. We want to contribute to finding this balance.

