Gorilla families, in a lot of ways, are very similar to our own! They have fathers and mothers, teenagers on the cusp of adulthood, children, and babies.

All of these family members play an important role in keeping the troop healthy, safe, and happy. Gorillas, like us, will eventually go through all of these different life stages, and experience all of what those life stages have to offer. From infancy to elderly, gorillas age and mature, gain knowledge and wisdom, form friendships and rivals, and so much more!
Silverback: Most gorilla troops are led by one dominate mature male, known as the silverback. He is the protector, mentor, and guide to all of the females, juveniles, and infants in his troop.

Adult Females: Gorilla troops typically contain multiple adult females whose role is to raise their infants and juveniles in the troop.

Blackbacks: As young male gorillas mature, they reach an age where they are known as blackbacks. Blackbacks are similar to “teenage” gorillas who are getting ready to leave the troop.

Juveniles and Infants: The role of the youngest individuals in the troop is simply to learn how to be an adult gorilla! Gorillas learn through play, observing other gorillas in their troop, and copying behaviors (just like human kids do!).
Our Gorillas

**ASHA**
Female  
12/4/2002

**HOW THEY LOOK:**
- Mostly dark black hair
- Larger than other females

**HOW THEY ACT:**
- Outgoing
- Moves around entire yard

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**CHEWIE**
Female  
9/17/1995

**HOW THEY LOOK:**
- Lots of black in hair
- Many rings/wrinkles around eyes & nose

**HOW THEY ACT:**
- Very active, moves around a lot

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**ELLE**
Female  
8/25/2015

**HOW THEY LOOK:**
Smallest Gorilla, Has a white patch of fur on her rear

**HOW THEY ACT:**
- Very adventurous, Likes to play with the other young gorillas

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**GLADY'S**
Female  
1/29/2013

**HOW THEY LOOK:**
- Young gorilla
- Shaggy hair
- Round body shape

**HOW THEY ACT:**
- Often near M'linzi, her surrogate mom
- Very playful
- Likes to carry younger gorillas

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**JOMO**
Male  
7/18/1991

**HOW THEY LOOK:**
- Silver color on back
- Twice as large as adult females

**HOW THEY ACT:**
- Uses entire yard and climbs tree
- Likes to sit in a cave near waterfall
MARA
Female
8/13/1995

HOW THEY LOOK:
• Puffy, gray sideburns
• Lanky, thin body

HOW THEY ACT:
• Sits in tree a lot
• Likes to be alone

MLINZI
Female
12/7/1982

HOW THEY LOOK:
• Lots of gray hair
• Low brow, looks like frowning

HOW THEY ACT:
• Sits in tree a lot
• Often holds hand to head

MONDIKA
"MONA"
Female
8/4/2014

HOW THEY LOOK:
Lanky body, Thinner face

HOW THEY ACT:
Very curious and sociable,
Likes to play with the other young gorillas

MSHINDI
Male
10/17/1987

HOW THEY LOOK:
• Small silverback
• Round sagittal crest

HOW THEY ACT:
• Pretty laid back
• Like to watch whatever is going on around him
• Quiet for a silverback

SAMANTHA
Female
1/30/1970

HOW THEY LOOK:
• Pink spot on lower lip, looks like tongue sticking out
• Gray hair

HOW THEY ACT:
• Hangs out near caves & grassy area under tree left of stream
For the past two decades, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden has been a part of the Mbeli Bai Study, which is the longest running field study of Western Lowland Gorillas!

Mbeli Bai, located in the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park of the Republic of Congo, became established as a research site in early 1995 and has been monitoring large mammals from observation platforms ever since. From observation platforms, researchers have been able to monitor gorilla troops over long periods of time and gain rare and valuable insight into gorilla lives.

All of this research has helped to greatly enhance our knowledge of wild western lowland gorillas and has provided essential information to better care for gorillas in zoos. This knowledge has helped to improve conservation efforts in gorilla habitats.

This research is vital! Almost 60% of all Western Lowland Gorillas live in the Republic of Congo. Money from our Project Saving Species funds help to support the Mbeli Bai Study and the amazing work that they do to protect gorillas.
How can you help gorillas!

Recycle your cell phone

Coltan is a mineral needed to make your cell phone work. The problem is coltan is mined where gorillas live in the wild. By recycling your old cell phone you can reduce the need to take coltan out of the forest, and also recycle many other items as well.

Map of the Congo where coltan is mined
The Effects of Mining

How can you help gorillas!