

Hide and seek with wild gorillas

King Kong and Mighty Joe Young would have a tough time living in the African forest with wild gorillas. Besides dodging hunters, they would have to find food and shelter in a wilderness that keeps shrinking.

This week, the Kid travels to Uganda in the heart of Africa. Uganda, located west of Kenya, is about the size of Oregon. English is the official language. About two thirds of the 28 million people are Christian.

The Kid hopes to see mountain gorillas hiding in the high cloud-shrouded forests. Dian Fossey studied mountain gorillas, bringing them to the attention of the world.

There are four types of gorillas:

- Western lowland (about 94,000 living in the wild). This is the type of gorilla found in zoos.

- Cross River (250).
- Eastern lowland (16,000).
- Mountain (650).

Gorillas live in dense forests along the equator in Africa. They forage during the day, eating fruits, leaves, shoots and insects. At night, each gorilla makes a new nest from brush.

Gorillas are the world's largest primates. Adult males grow to about five and a half feet tall and weigh up to 400 pounds. Females are smaller.

Adult males get a patch of gray hair on their back. They are called silverbacks.

Gorillas live in family groups. A strong silverback



The large male gorilla (left) has a patch of silver fur on his back. This baby mountain gorilla (right) lives in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda.



heads each family, also called a troop.

A typical family has a couple of young adult males who act as sentries and three mothers with youngsters.

The silverback leads the group to feeding sites. He mediates conflicts and keeps the family safe.

Gorillas are gentle, peaceful creatures. However, the silverback will fiercely defend his position if challenged by a younger male. He will drum his chest, show his teeth, scream and charge.

Young adults leave the family to form a new group.

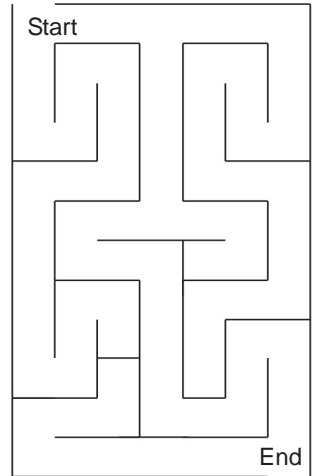
Man and nature threaten gorillas' future. Hunters pursue gorillas for the illegal pet market and for meat. Loggers destroy their habitat.

The same viruses that make humans sick can hurt gorillas. The Ebola virus has

killed almost half the western lowland gorillas.

A female gorilla has an offspring about every six years, with only two or three over the course of her life. That means the population can't rebound quickly.

Gorillas are very smart. In the wild they use rocks and sticks as tools. They learn sign language in captivity



For the **Kid** in You



Newspaper in Education activity

- Put this story in your journal.
- Circle five adjectives in this story.
- Find 10 adjectives in the newspaper. Did any of them come from headlines?
- Find an adjective that could describe a gorilla.