



World Gorilla Day Suggested Activities

Forage like a Gorilla (*intergenerational, children, family groups*)

Focus: gorilla feeding strategies and diet

Activity: Fill a small plastic kiddie pool or tub with shredded paper, paper scraps, and/or straw to create bedding (though mindful of allergies if using straw). Within the bedding bury and hide plastic/artificial food. Encourage guests to dig through the bedding to find the food, emulating how a gorilla forages.

Interpretation: A staff member, volunteer, or teen volunteer can talk with guests about how gorillas find food in the wild and how animal care staff tries to feed them in different and challenging ways within the Zoo. (See “gorilla facts” for more detailed information on gorilla diet, feeding behaviors, and quantity.)

Gorilla Nose Prints (*intergenerational, children, family groups*)

Focus: Individual traits of gorillas, how researchers can tell gorillas apart, noses like thumbprints

Activity: Visit www.gorillafund.org/learning-materials and download and print out the “Nose prints” PDF. See if guests can match which gorilla belongs to which nose print. Take it one step further: Get a picture of a gorilla nose at YOUR institution and see if guests can identify which gorilla at your zoo it matches.

Interpretation: Staff member, volunteer, or teen volunteer can talk with guests about the individuality of gorillas, how each is different. Just like how humans have unique fingerprints, gorillas have unique nose prints. This is one way that researchers can tell individuals apart.

Handprint over Handprint Pledge/Craft (*intergenerational, children, family groups*)

Focus: Size comparison between human hand and gorilla hand, creating a connection between humans and gorillas, providing an opportunity for youth to make a pledge to help gorillas).

Activity: Print out sheets with a life-size gorilla handprint on each (prints from gorillas at YOUR own zoo make this even more fun). Add a conservation message, hashtag (#worldgorilladay), logo, or conservation pledge to it if you wish. Guests ink their own handprint (you provide the ink and the hand cleaning station) and make their print over top of, next to, near the gorilla handprint. To make this a pledge, have the pledge written on the paper along with the gorilla print and have the guests print indicate their “signature” signing up to help gorillas. “Some of the parts inside our cell phones and tablets come from mines in places where gorillas live. I pledge to help save gorilla habitat by recycling my old electronics so more of these parts don’t have to be mined.”

Interpretation: Zoo staff, volunteer, or teen volunteer can run this station and help to explain the link between electronics recycling and gorilla conservation. (See EcoCell resources for more information about recycling e-waste to benefit gorillas.)

Thumbprint Pledge Banner (*intergenerational, family groups, all guests*)

Focus: provide guests the opportunity to take a pledge to help gorilla conservation.

Activity: Similar set up and message as “Handprint over Handprint” activity. Instead of making handprint however, guests can ink their thumbprint and make their pledge for gorilla conservation by placing their thumbprint mark inside a line drawn gorilla on a vinyl or paper banner. Banner can have conservation messaging, hashtags (#worldgorilladay), or a conservation pledge printed along with the gorilla outline. (See “Handprint over Handprint” activity for example of pledge messaging)

Interpretation: Staff, volunteer, or teen volunteer can run this activity and help to explain the pledge and the link between the conservation action and gorillas.

50th Anniversary Card (*intergenerational, family groups, all guests*)

Focus: Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Dian Fossey’s Karisoke research center, the longest running gorilla field study site.

Activity: Make a giant Happy 50th Anniversary card or banner for Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI). Invite guests to sign the card or banner. Take a picture of the completed card and post it on social media to “send” it to DFGFI, #worldgorilladay

Photo Station (*intergenerational, family groups, all guests*)

Focus: create a social media presence about World Gorilla Day and share gorilla conservation actions being done by guests

Activity: Create a photo frame out of coroplast, cardboard, or other durable material). Put your Zoo logo and the World Gorilla Day logo (visit the “downloads” section of the worldgorilladay.org for the official logo) on it along with #WorldGorillaDay. Provide props for guests to use during photo opportunities: binoculars, field notebooks, stethoscopes, hats, signs to hold with word bubbles or messages on them (see “Downloads” section for prop signs or create your own). Assist guests in using the props to stage a photo and encourage them to post their pic publicly on social media with #worldgorilladay and maybe even an additional conservation message.

Interpretation: Staff, volunteer, teen volunteers can help run this activity, taking photos with guests phones and helping them post to social media if needed/wanted.

Sign a petition (*teens, adults*)

Focus: To provide guests the opportunity to take direct conservation advocacy action on behalf of gorillas.

Activity: Provide pre-printed letters or tablets open to online petition signing for gorilla-related issues (Stop Coltan Mining, Reauthorize the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, etc.) Guests can sign their names and add their voice to the cause.

Electronics Recycling Station (*intergenerational, teens, adults, family groups*)

Focus: promote cellphone and electronics recycling as a way to contribute to gorilla conservation, to make the connection between coltan, gorilla habitat and our electronics.

Activity: Promote electronics recycling and encourage people to bring unused electronics to the Zoo to recycle at World Gorilla Day celebration. This can also be done as a collection drive at schools, community groups, etc. Electronics can be collected and then brought to the zoo or mailed directly to EcoCell, the official electronics recycling company of Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI), proceeds benefit DFGFI gorilla conservation fund. (More information about this can be found in the EcoCell resources linked from worldgorilladay.org)

Other Ideas

Keeper/Researcher Talks

Feature your own zoo staff and the incredible work they do with gorillas by offering 15-30 minute Keeper Talks at the exhibit or around Zoo grounds throughout the day.

Enrichment for Interpretation

Zoo staff, docents, or volunteers can have example gorilla enrichment items for the public to explore and touch out on zoo grounds or at the gorilla exhibit. Staff member or volunteer can talk with guests about the importance of providing enrichment to gorillas in human care.

Special Feedings or Enrichment Times

Animal care staff might provide special feedings or enrichment items to gorillas on exhibit for World Gorilla Day. Staff from animal care, education, or volunteers can interpret the details of this special experience to guests.

Toot your own horns for gorilla conservation

Share with your community all the incredible ways YOUR zoo is taking action on behalf of gorilla conservation every day. Through interpretive stations, graphics, social media posts, media spots, or other means, highlight the unique things that your zoo does when it comes to caring for gorillas in zoos and in the wild.

Gorilla Information and Fun Facts

Use this information to help guide educational messaging during your event

- Gorillas are the largest of all primate species in the world and are well adapted to life in the forests of equatorial Africa.
- Gorillas communicate within their family group and with outside groups using a number of vocalizations, body language and facial expressions.
- Gorillas are social apes and typically live in either a harem society with multiple females and one dominant male leader or a bachelor group consisting of multiple young male gorillas.
- Male gorillas and adult females play different roles in gorilla society and in parental care. The silverback plays the role of protector of his troop.
- Gorillas are primarily herbivores, eating leaves, shoots, stems, fruits and other plant materials. An adult male gorilla may consume up to 50 pounds of vegetation per day so gorillas spend a good bit of their day foraging for food and eating.
- Gorillas are among the longest studied primate species. Research on wild gorillas began in the 1960's with the pioneering work of George Schaller and Dian Fossey studying the behavior and ecology of wild mountain gorillas. Since then, field research on gorillas has expanded to cover all four subspecies and includes topics ranging from population dynamics and behavioral ecology to cognitive ability and epidemiology. Gorillas in zoos have also been the subject of extensive research, providing insights into their behavior, and management. Though research has come a long way, there is still much to learn.
- For more information on gorillas, visit www.gorillasp.org or www.gorillafund.org/learning-fun/