

Take a Field Trip to a Local Zoo!

Have your students ever wondered what a gorilla's favorite snack is? Did you know that the snacks that they eat (and later excrete!) can play an important role in what a forest looks like? Explore a local zoo with your students to find out more about these amazing primates and just how crucial they are to supporting a healthy ecosystem!

Objective: To develop a deeper understanding of the ecological needs and natural history of the Grauer's gorilla (or another gorilla species).

Materials:

- Clipboard
- Pencil
- Science notebook
- Binoculars
- Camera

Process:

- 1) [Find a local AZA accredited zoo](#) with gorillas*
 - a. *Please note that you may not find Grauer's gorillas specifically at your local zoo, but you may find others! There are two main gorilla species, each with their own sub-species:
 - i. Eastern gorillas
 1. Grauer's gorillas (also known as eastern lowland gorillas)
 2. Mountain gorillas
 - ii. Western gorillas
 1. Western lowland gorillas
 2. Cross River gorillas
- 2) Students will use their science notebooks to do the following:
 - a. Sketch and label the living and non-living components of the exhibit.
 - b. Record their observations, with the goal of answering the questions:
"What are the ecological needs of gorillas?
What role do they play in the ecosystem?"
 - c. Students should also utilize some of the graphics in the exhibit to further develop some inferences based on their observations.

3) When students return to the classroom, ask them to share their observations with a partner and then the whole class.

4) Next, have students answer the following question:

- a. Based on your observations, what do you think are some things that could potentially impact the population size of the Grauer's gorilla (or another gorilla species)?

5) EXTENSION:

- a. The Interactive Reading Guide activity will explore how changes in the environment impact gorilla populations by introducing students to a science text called "How does war affect gorillas?" written by WCS Senior Scientist of the Africa Program, Andy Plumptre, and colleagues. See the Interactive Reading Guide activity for details.



Julie Larsen Maher ©WCS

▲ Visitors at the Bronx Zoo's Congo Gorilla Forest with female Western Lowland Gorilla

Supplemental Resources:

- a. [Recommended Book: Keeping a Field Journal by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth](#)
- b. [Our Work with Gorillas](#)

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