

Name _____



The Life Cycle of a Gorilla

Gorillas are fascinating creatures that go through different stages in their life. Like humans, they begin life as babies and grow into strong adults. The life cycle of a gorilla can be divided into four main stages: infancy, juvenile, young adult, and mature adult.

Gorillas are born after a pregnancy lasting about 8.5 months. At birth, a baby gorilla, called an infant, weighs around 4 pounds. The infant is very dependent on its mother for food, warmth, and protection. During the first few months, the mother carries the baby close to her chest to keep it safe. Infant gorillas drink their mother's milk for about three years.

After the infant stage, gorillas enter the juvenile stage. This stage lasts from about three to six years of age. Juvenile gorillas begin to explore more and play with other young gorillas in their troop. They still stay close to their mothers but are more independent. During this time, they learn important skills like finding food and social behaviors.

At around six years old, gorillas become young adults. They continue to grow stronger and larger. Males begin to develop the silver patch of hair on their backs, earning the name "silverback." Females may begin to have babies of their own once they reach maturity.

Mature adult gorillas are fully grown by 12 years old. Males can weigh up to 400 pounds and lead the group, called a troop. A troop often includes a silverback male, several females, and their young. Gorillas can live up to 40 years in the wild, though some in captivity have lived longer.

Gorillas play an important role in their ecosystems by spreading seeds and helping forests grow. Protecting their habitats is vital for their survival.