

Research on primates at the zoo

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



[pic] A Zoo for a PrimateObservation11/15/2012 For this paper I decided to visit Zoo Atlanta to observe lowland gorillas. I got to the zoo at around eleven in the morning and found out the feeding times for the gorillas. Once I found them, after watching them for a little while I selected the most active group to go watch during feeding. The point of this trip was to make me feel as if I was doing a field laboratory observation of primate social behavior and it definitely did.

As you read my paper I will include what I saw, my feelings towards it, and also any questions or facts I received during my visit from volunteers or signs throughout the exhibit. To put this paper into perspective with this anthropology class I will be using five terms that are from chapter seven to relate the field observation. I hope you enjoy my paper, cause I sure enjoyed writing it. At Zoo Atlanta there are four troops of Lowland Gorillas although only three are located on the yards right now.

The three different groups are Taz's group, Ozzie's group, and the Bachelor males. While observing the different groups Taz's was the most active and therefore I decided to observe them especially during feeding. Feeding was at two fifteen in the afternoon and the feeder stood on top of the building that had a huge glass window to watch out. A volunteer gave the following information to me or I observed it for myself during my visit. Every group eats about six times a day including snacks.

The most important meal being breakfast just like anatomically modern humans is served right before or right as the park opens. This meal is cute up in small pieces and scattered throughout the park so that they must forage for the foodsince this is what they would have to do in the wild. Before

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this meal they are served pre-breakfast which is considered a primate chow very similar to what dogs eat made my pedigree. They also get snacks throughout the day, mainly fruits. One thing that really shocked me is that they are ALL vegetarian.

They are all so big and by first glance you would never imagine that. The thing that shocked me the most was during the feeding when every single gorilla got into a certain spot and that's where he or she was fed this is mainly because they are not good at sharing, especially mothers. This process of them learning that they must get into their own spot is a great example of enculturation. Enculturation is the process of learning culture and transmitting it throughout generations. The last thing with feeding is that they do a process called RNR if they are still hungry.

This act is known as regurgitation and re-eating. As nasty as that sounds they do it over and over until they are finally full. One crazy interesting fact is that on an average day a male gorilla consumes sixty-six pounds of vegetation a day. Other than food, other interesting things I found were the similarities of the lowland gorillas compared to humans. Can you believe they take the same medications as us? Well they do! They take heart medications due to genetic heart problems and see cardiologist just like us.

Another similarity is when females are pregnant, their pregnancy last just about the same length of time, eight to nine months and they have only one at a time. One of their females actually had twins within the last couple years and the lady I spoke with kept repeating herself at how rare twins are between gorillas. She made a joke and I thought it was kind of funny, she said " she gave birth on Halloween so I think that was her way of saying "

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trick or treat". The Atlanta Zoo is actually the only zoo with mother-reared twins, isn't that awesome?

Another thing is when the little gorillas were playing they were pretty rough just like little kids are when they are playing around. This is more of a comparison than a similarity but a sign in the zoo in the area that the gorillas were in, said " Gorilla's have distinct nose prints like humans have distinct fingerprints. " Just like when the police are trying to identify someone they use fingerprints, well when people are trying to identify the gorilla they can use the different nose prints. I am now going to tell you what I learned while at the zoo and I will start that with the gorilla's social behaviors.

First off the gorillas were in the back of the park in the Ford African Rain Forest. Ford Company sponsors this area and they actually named one of the gorillas, Henry Ford. The first group I observed was the Bachelor's and only two were out that you could see but three is apart of the yard. Their names are Stadi, Kekla, and Charlie. The two that were showing any social interest was Kekla and Charlie according to the volunteer but all they did was either sit down or move from branch to branch and sit again. I decided to move on after about ten minutes and that is when I saw Taz's group.

This group was constantly moving around, playing, " being rough", climbing on rock figures set up for them in the exhibit, eating leaves, or relaxing in the sunshine. Henry Ford is also apart of Taz's group. Gorillas live in families of two to twenty members, with usually one being male and the rest female and offspring. This is exactly the case with Taz's group. There is nine altogether and I will list them from oldest to youngest: Kuchi, Taz, Kudzoo,

Sukari, Lulu, Kazi, Macy B, Henry, and Merry Leigh (Willie B's granddaughter).

Within that group Taz is the only male other than Henry who is his offspring. Since these gorillas were actively on the move I did get the chance to hear and see a couple noises they make. The first was when Henry started running it sounded almost like drums, but vocally I did not hear anything and I asked the attendant and she said that all you really ever hear is them running around. The other thing that caught my attention that I thought was so cute was when Merry Leigh came up to the glass and thumped her chest.

I thought that only happened in movies but it was the cutest thing. The volunteer said that this is her way of showing that she is the cutest one out there but can also be a sign to intimidate. Before Taz's group was fed I observed their behavior for a couple hours. They were active especially compared to the Bachelor's. The first thing I noticed was that Taz was sitting to the left of everyone at the back close to the fence/window. This brought me to question why and I was assured it was due to him being the "silverback" of the group.

That means he is the protector, which is the father's place. He sits there just about all day watching to make sure everything is going smoothly and that no one is acting up or is unsafe. He makes sure everyone is cooperating or using cooperative behavior. Just like in human families how the dad's are the protectors it is the same scenario here. The children or "baby" gorillas played with each other throwing their arms around on each other while the mothers sat and watched. When they were done playing they would go climb on things or just be active.

During my visit there was no conflict but at any point it could arise but the father, in this case Taz would take care of it. Some really interesting facts I found are that they do not have to drink water because they receive enough in their diet, although they are the largest primates. The average male gorilla weighs about three to four hundred pounds and can end up being six foot tall. Gorilla's love sleep and an important thing to them is making a new nest to sleep in every night. As long as they stay healthy, especially ones in captivity can live to their late forties to early fifties.

Overall, these little, well should I say big fellows are becoming endangered and unfortunately there is only about one hundred thousand left running around in the wild. One thing that really stuck out to me was that they have opposing thumbs, which is used for grasping and climbing. The full definition for opposing thumb is a thumb that can touch all the other fingers. Also, they see in color and in three-dimensional. Not only are they unique but also smart. At this point, they are undergoing cultural transmission along with the orangutans, which is a transmission through learning, basic to language.

Overall, I must say they are very interesting mammals. In this paper I went over the socialization of lowland gorillas, along with their eating habits, similarities to humans, and also included some random facts in that I thought were very interesting. This trip to the zoo was enjoyed to the fullest and I hope this paper reflects that. Lowland Gorilla's are actually very interesting and there is a lot more to them than I ever expected. Learning all this stuff about the gorillas makes me wonder what all I am really missing out there and what else there is to know about everything.

Gorillas, lowland in particular live in troops usually with one head male and the rest females with offspring. They usually reach three hundred to four hundred pounds and have only one baby at a time. Their pregnancies last for nine months or just about, just like humans. They eat their vegetarian meals about six times a day, and do not have to drink water to survive because they receive enough in their meal. Some seem very active, especially younger ones while the bachelor troop seemed very laid back but that may be because they are older.

On average, gorillas range from two to twenty per troop but the biggest I saw on my trip was nine. They can take prescription medications just like you and me! Even have some of the same problems such as cardiovascular problems and arthritis. Overall, we are very much alike although the chimpanzees are the closest versions of mammal to us. They have their own forms of communication, birth is very similar, we eat some of the same things, take some of the same medication, can reach the same heights, and we all have bodies with hair.

This has definitely opened my eyes to things I have never seen or thought of before but learning new things is great so I believe this experience was well worth the price. My impressions of the zoo was that it was very well maintained and clean, yet kind of pricy but I understand that they need to make money to feed those beautiful animals. I enjoyed this assignment a lot, and I am glad I had the opportunity to do this. ----- One of my favorite pictures I took at Zoo Atlanta while observing Taz's group.