



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** November 28, 2017

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*Note: Associate curator of mammals, Michael Frushour, will be available for interviews from 1 – 1:30 p.m, tomorrow, Wednesday, November 29. Please RSVP to the Communication Team. A picture of the new gorilla is attached- please credit Toledo Zoo.*

## **Gorilla Born at the Toledo Zoo**

TOLEDO, Ohio – It's a boy! The Toledo Zoo is proud to announce the birth of a male Western lowland gorilla born late Thursday, Nov. 23 / early Friday, the 24. Mokonzi, (Moh-khan-see) which means governor in Swahili, is baby number three for 23 year old mother, Kitani, and baby number five for 29 year old father, Kwisha. Mokonzi is healthy and bonding well with his parents. The new family will be on exhibit indoors at Kingdom of the Apes exhibit with the whole troop as of tomorrow, November 29.

Baby gorillas are born quite tiny, averaging only four pounds, after approximately an eight and a half month gestation period. Offspring are born with a small white tuft of hair on their rump that will remain until they are around four years old. Babies are also born with an instinctive grasp behavior which allows them to hold on to mom's chest as she moves around. Studies have shown that gorilla babies grow at twice the rate of human babies. At approximately three months of age, gorilla offspring learn to crawl and move to riding on mom's back until approximately four years of age.

Adult western lowland gorillas (*gorilla gorilla gorilla*) are the largest of all great apes at four to six feet tall and anywhere from 150 to 500 pounds depending on sex. They live in the heavy rainforests of west central Africa and eat a vegetarian diet of roots, fruits and plants. Western lowland gorillas live in troops consisting of four – eight animals, with one silverback male, a few females, young offspring and occasionally a few young males. The troop maintains a  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 16 square mile home range. Western lowland gorillas are listed as critically endangered and declining on the IUCN Red List for Threatened Species due to three main interconnected threats: habitat loss, bushmeat hunting and human encroachment.

"We are always thrilled to announce new additions, but are even more excited to showcase the continuation of our mission of caring for animals and conserving the natural world through new births. Helping to maintain insurance populations of endangered species is not only a testament to our outstanding animal care staff, but also to our Species Survival Plan partnerships and the support of our members and visitors. We are excited to watch this little gorilla grow and for future generations to appreciate these amazing creatures," said Shayla Moriarty, Toledo Zoo's director of communication.

*The Toledo Zoo is committed to inspiring others to join us in caring for animals and conserving the natural world. As part of that mission, the Toledo Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), a leader in global wildlife conservation. AZA member institutions are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for visitors and a better future for all living things. Submitted by: Kim Haddix:*

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