

young times

Deadly climate for a primate

Hunting, logging, mining and war are all wiping out gorillas in the wild.

Chloe Lambert reports on 2009, the Year of the Gorilla

They are humankind's closest relatives, fascinating gentle giants that have roamed the Earth for 70 million years. But experts are warning that gorillas could become extinct in the wild in the next few decades.

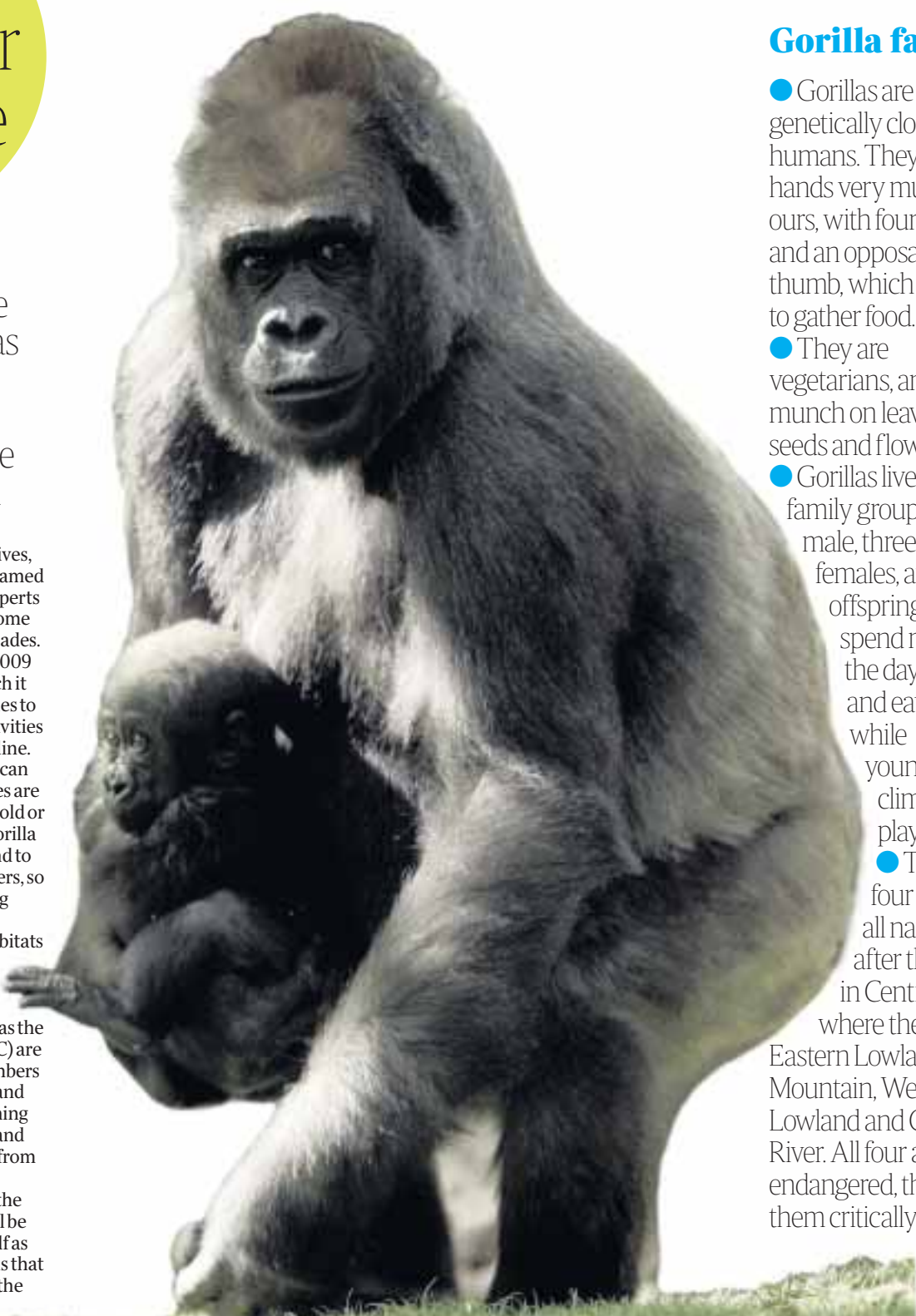
In response, the UN has named 2009 the Year of the Gorilla, during which it wants governments and communities to work together to stop the human activities that are causing populations to decline.

One big threat is hunting. In African countries such as Cameroon, the apes are hunted for their meat, which is then sold or used in medicine. The Year of the Gorilla team plans to boost eco-tourism, and to show local people how to be beekeepers, so that they no longer rely on selling bushmeat for their livelihoods.

Gorillas are losing their natural habitats because people are mining the region for gold and zinc, and cutting down trees for wood and charcoal.

Armed conflicts in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are also harming the animals. Huge numbers of people are fleeing their homes, and using natural resources at an alarming rate. The number of Eastern Lowland gorillas in the DRC has plummeted from 17,000 to 5,000 in just ten years.

In 2009 thousands of homes in the region around the River Congo will be given "rocket stoves", which use half as much fuel as regular ones. The hope is that this will reduce the destruction of the forests where gorillas live.



Gorilla facts

- Gorillas are genetically close to humans. They have hands very much like ours, with four fingers and an opposable thumb, which they use to gather food.

- They are vegetarians, and love to munch on leaves, fruit, seeds and flowers.

- Gorillas live in family groups of one male, three or four females, and their offspring. Adults spend most of the day resting and eating, while

youngsters climb and play.

- There are four species, all named after the area in Central Africa where they live: Eastern Lowland, Mountain, Western Lowland and Cross River. All four are endangered, three of them critically so.

PUZZLES

Dingbat

Which word or phrase is this? Say what you see



Yesterday's answer Back to school

Riddle

The man who built it doesn't want it. The man who bought it doesn't need it. The man who needs it doesn't know it. What is it?

Puzzle of the day: anagrams

Each clue below can be rearranged to spell the name of an item of footwear. Can you unscramble them all?

- 1** LNSTENILWGO
- 2** PLIF LSOPF
- 3** ARNTEIRS
- 4** DNALSAS
- 5** PESLRPIS

Yesterday's answer Hot Cocoa

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