



13.04.2026

## Press Release

# Happy Birthday, Fatou!

## Senior gorilla celebrates her 69th birthday at Zoo Berlin

She is and remains a living legend: female gorilla Fatou celebrates her 69th birthday on April 13, 2026, and continues to hold the title of the world's oldest gorilla. Having lived at Zoo Berlin for more than six decades, she is not only the zoo's oldest resident but also a truly remarkable personality. Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr. Andreas Knieriem explains that Fatou is a fascinating and calming presence who captivates visitors with her dignified nature, inspiring countless people over the years and serving as an important ambassador for the protection of western lowland gorillas. He also emphasizes that this species is critically threatened by habitat loss and poaching, and that animals like Fatou highlight the importance of taking responsibility for endangered species and protecting their natural habitats.

With her advanced age come special requirements in terms of care and husbandry. Fatou's health and well-being are closely monitored by a team of veterinarians, curators, and keepers, who regularly assess her condition together. It has become evident that she now moves more slowly, as expected for her age, and requires more time for her daily activities. Curator Dr. Jennifer Hahn explains that at this stage of life it is essential to pay close attention to individual needs and adapt care accordingly. Fatou lives in her own enclosure, separate from the more active gorilla group, allowing her the peace and quiet she deserves.

An important part of this tailored care is a recent adjustment to her diet by the Zoo Berlin's Animal Health, Welfare, and Research Department. Fruit has been removed from her diet due to its high sugar content and associated health risks such as obesity and metabolic diseases. Instead, Fatou now receives several small meals throughout the day, each consisting of selected food items. This feeding approach supports natural behavior and ensures optimal nutrient intake. Additionally, food is distributed throughout her enclosure or placed in enrichment devices to keep her mentally stimulated. When weather conditions allow, Fatou continues to use her outdoor area and enjoys spending quiet moments in the fresh air.

Fatou arrived in Berlin in 1959 and has witnessed many changes in both the city and the zoo. The ape house is one of the last post-war animal houses yet to undergo comprehensive



renovation. Plans for a new gorilla habitat on the Zoo Berlin's extension grounds are currently underway. To support this project, Zoo Berlin is collecting donations: <https://www.zoo-stiftung-berlin.de/unterstuetzen/zoo-berlin/tillas-villa>. Alongside Fatou, the zoo is home to silverback Sango (21), as well as females Djambala (24), Bibi (29), Mpenzi (40), and Tilla (5).

### **Background: The oldest animals at Zoo Berlin**

A retirement home with full care: elderly animals are a phenomenon made possible by the protected conditions of zoological institutions. In the wild, natural selection often eliminates older or weaker individuals, as they may fall prey to predators, be driven out of territories, or be unable to find sufficient food. In zoos, however, animals often live significantly longer thanks to high-quality veterinary care and the absence of natural threats.