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## **Press release**

### **A tiny new arrival for the gentle giants**

#### **Baby gorilla born at Zoo Berlin**

The little ape with its small, delicate body and big dark eyes hides shyly in the arms of its mother Bibi (24). Following a gestation period of about eight and a half months, the infant was born at Zoo Berlin on the night of 15 February. The last time a gorilla came into the world here was 16 years ago. For the Zoo Berlin team, it is now a case of watching from the sidelines with wonder and bated breath: "We are very relieved that the baby looks fit and healthy and that the mother appears to be taking good care of her offspring," says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. During these crucial early days, only division head Christian Aust and his team of animal keepers will enter the Primate House – which is currently closed to visitors anyway due to coronavirus restrictions. "Peace and quiet are top priority," says Knieriem.

Bibi spent the first nine years of her life in a gorilla family at Apenheul Primate Park in the Netherlands. During this time, she observed other gorillas taking care of their young, which provided her with a good example of how to raise her own infant. At birth, a baby gorilla is greyish pink in colour and has just a few dark hairs on its head and back. The skin starts to turn black only after a couple of days. This is the first offspring for both Bibi and Zoo Berlin's silverback Sango (16). "For the first few months, a baby gorilla is completely dependent on its mother's care and lives off her milk for four to five years," explains Zoo Berlin's veterinarian Dr. André Schüle. "Little gorillas can hold on to their mother's fur from the moment they are born, and she carries them around wherever she goes – initially on her tummy and later on her back." As mother and baby are not yet being approached by either animal keepers or veterinarians, the baby's sex is not known and its birth weight could not be determined. Generally, newborn gorillas weigh about two kilos. "Happily, we have already observed the young gorilla suckling," reports Schüle. Although the whole gorilla group is showing a lot of interest in the new family member, the mother is solely responsible for rearing her infant. As well as Sango and Bibi, Zoo Berlin's gorilla family includes females Djambala (19) and Mpenzi (35). Elderly Fatou (63), the oldest known gorilla in the world, is spending her retirement in a separate, neighbouring habitat.

Gorillas are the largest and heaviest of the great apes. An adult male can measure up to two metres when standing upright and weighs about 220 kilos. On the recommendation of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP), male gorilla Sango moved from Pairi Daiza in Belgium to Zoo Berlin in February 2019 to complete Berlin's gorilla family. Tragically, these remarkable herbivores are threatened with extinction in the wild because of habitat destruction and illegal hunting.