



Berlin, 29 January 2018

Press release

A “silver” anniversary

Gorilla Ivo celebrates his 30th birthday

Human beings aren't usually that delighted about getting silver hair – even less so if the hairs are on their backs. But for gorillas, it's an entirely different matter. The shining hairs on the back of an adult male – a silverback – is a sign of maturity and dominance. Zoo Berlin's male gorilla Ivo has sported an impressive silver coat for many years now, and today the head of Berlin's gorilla family is celebrating the big three-oh.

Western lowland gorilla Ivo was born in Munich on 29 January 1988 and has lived in Berlin for the past 13 years. This morning, on his 30th birthday, he woke up to a surprise gift hanging from his new climbing frame: a piñata filled with things gorillas love to eat. But rather than falling upon the feast as children might at a birthday party, Ivo approached his piñata very cautiously. He began by snuggling up to his present – an edible container made of willow twigs and banana leaves – before carefully taking it into his arms. The brawny but gentle vegetarian then sat quietly picking out the hidden treats, which included apples, eggs and bell peppers.

“We usually only feed our gorillas vegetables, as they contain less sugar and fruit acid,” says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. “So Ivo was particularly pleased to be given some sweet fruit on his special day.” And, indeed, Ivo quickly fished the fruit out of his piñata before letting his lady friends take a turn.

Gorillas are critically endangered in the wild due to illegal hunting and the rampant destruction of their habitat. Ivo shares his home in Zoo Berlin with four female Western lowland gorillas.