



Berlin, 5 February 2019

Press release

The new guy in town

Zoo Berlin welcomes silverback Sango

He's big, muscular, and has gleaming silver hair all over his back. As of 5 February, the gorilla troop at Zoo Berlin has a new commander: Sango has arrived! The burly vegetarian travelled here from Belgium and is unquestionably the largest primate at Zoo Berlin.

Full-grown adult male Sango (14) was selected as a mate for the female gorillas at Zoo Berlin by the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP). He was born on 12 August 2004 in La Vallée des Singes – a primate park in Romagne, France. At the age of 12, Sango and his half-brother Lomako moved to Belgian zoo Pairi Daiza, where the two of them lived in a bachelor group. Now, Sango has replaced Ivo as the incumbent silverback at Zoo Berlin in the hopes that the females here will soon fall pregnant. Western lowland gorillas are a critically endangered species, so every new baby is a gift.

In advance of the move, curator Dr André Schüle and head ape keeper Christian Aust travelled to Pairi Daiza to get to know Sango. The silverback proved to be a relaxed, even-tempered fellow who was remarkably patient with his younger half-brother. "Our female gorillas can be rather temperamental at times," said Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem, a qualified veterinarian. "So a chilled-out silverback like Sango should have a calming influence and be an ideal addition to our Berlin troop."

Gorilla Ivo will leave Zoo Berlin for Saarbrücken. To make the acclimatisation period easier for the big ape, one of his trusted keepers from Berlin is keeping him company for the first few days.

Sango will be given time to get used to his new environment at Zoo Berlin before he meets females Djambala (17), Bibi (21), and Mpenzi (33), one after the other. A total of five western lowland gorillas live at Zoo Berlin. In addition to Sango's group is elderly lady Fatou (61). As the oldest gorilla in the world, she has a separate adjacent habitat so she can enjoy her autumn years in peace.

To ensure that the gorillas can get to know one another without being disturbed, Zoo Berlin's ape house will be closed to visitors for the time being. The smaller primates in the other section of the building will remain on view to the public.

**Background information:**

Male gorilla Ivo arrived at Zoo Berlin in 2005. Although he mated with the females on several occasions, none of them fell pregnant. After some years, Ivo was thoroughly examined by a vet, who discovered that Ivo is sadly infertile. To ensure that the females in Berlin are able to pass on their valuable genes, Zoo Berlin decided to replace Ivo, in consultation with the EEP. An ideal new home was found for Ivo at the zoo in Saarbrücken. Here he will live with three female gorillas who are too old to bear young.

Gorillas are threatened with extinction because of illegal hunting and the devastation of their natural habitat. That means every gorilla baby born in captivity represents an important contribution to the survival of the species.