



Media Contact:

Jeff Sell
Detroit Zoological Society
(248) 336-5757
jsell@dzs.org

Detroit Zoo Welcomes First-Ever Baby Gorilla

History made as critically endangered western lowland is first to be born in Zoo's 96-year history

ROYAL OAK, Mich. (Aug. 9, 2024) – The [Detroit Zoo](#) is excited to announce that a baby gorilla has been born for the first time in the Zoo's 96-year history!

26-year-old Bandia, a first-time mother, gave birth in the early morning hours of Thursday, August 8 – and the Zoo is pleased to report that mom and baby, along with the father, 36-year-old Mshindi, are all doing very well.

"Bandia had a very smooth pregnancy, which is so important for a first-time mom," said Tami Brightrall, associate curator of mammals for the Detroit Zoological Society (DZS). "Throughout her eight-and-a-half-month pregnancy, she continued to participate in routine ultrasounds using positive reinforcement training methods, which allowed our team to check on the baby along the way and ensure everything was going well."

The new gorilla, who does not yet have a name, is now the fifth to [call the Zoo home](#). The baby joins the troop with mother Bandia and father Mshindi, along with 20-year-old Tulivu and 11-year-old Nayembi – all who arrived at the Detroit Zoo in August 2023.

DZS mammal and primate teams, along with veterinary staff, have been working for months to not only prepare Bandia for motherhood, but to also make sure the rest of the troop was ready for the baby's arrival.

"Animal care staff actually carried a stuffed gorilla around the habitat while interacting with the troop to properly demonstrate how to carry a baby," Brightrall said. "Our teams also taught the gorillas how to gently touch the stuffed animal, pick it up off the ground and bring it to a member of the team over at the mesh barrier."

Bandia and her baby will be closely monitored in the coming days and weeks. Animal care staff will carefully be watching for maternal and nursing behaviors while tracking milestones such as eye movements, sound recognition and object grasping along the way. The other gorillas will continue to be observed as well to see how they behave and react to the addition of the baby to their troop.

As with all the animals who call the Detroit Zoo home, Bandia and her baby will soon have the option to come and go as they please throughout the 4-acre [Great Apes of Harambee habitat](#) – meaning they can eventually be viewed either inside the great apes building or outside in their spacious yard. It is important to note, however, that it might be a while before guests are able to actually view the gorillas.

"The time we open the habitat for guests to see the gorillas, including the baby, all depends on Bandia's behavior and needs, especially as a first-time mom," said Melissa Thueme, a mammal supervisor for the DZS. "We want to keep things calm and quiet for Bandia, the baby and the rest of the troop to provide them time to settle in, and the area will reopen once the animal care team determines mom and baby have had enough time to bond and become comfortable in their habitat."



Media Contact:

Jeff Sell

Detroit Zoological Society

(248) 336-5757

jsell@dzs.org

The DZS is involved in a number of partnerships and programs that all have a common goal of helping gorillas thrive and saving them from extinction, including:

- [The Great Ape Heart Project](#): Based at the Detroit Zoo, this program addresses a critical need within the zoo community to investigate and understand cardiovascular disease (CVD or heart disease) in great apes, including gorillas.
- [Gorillas on the Line](#): A partnership with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Gorilla SAFE (Saving Animals from Extinction) program to raise money from recycled cell phones and small electronics. Proceeds from this program directly support gorilla conservation initiatives in Africa.
- [The Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education \(GRACE\) Center](#): A nonprofit organization located in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The DZS provides financial support to help introduce orphaned eastern lowland gorillas into the wild.
- [The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund](#) uses an integrated approach to collaborate closely with local governments, communities and partners worldwide, including the DZS. The nonprofit organization is dedicated to conserving, protecting and studying gorillas and their habitats in Africa.

###

About the Detroit Zoological Society:

The Detroit Zoological Society – a renowned leader in humane education, wildlife conservation, animal welfare and environmental sustainability – operates the Detroit Zoo and Belle Isle Nature Center. One of Michigan's largest paid family attractions, the Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak hosts more than 1.3 million visitors annually. Its 125 acres of award-winning naturalistic habitats are home to more than 2,000 animals representing more than 200 species. The Belle Isle Nature Center sits on a 5-acre site on Belle Isle State Park in Detroit. For hours, prices, directions and other information, call (248) 541-5717 or visit detroitzoo.org.