

WORLD

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD:

GROUND BREAKING NEWS FROM GABON



SUMMER 2025

 THE
ASPINALL
FOUNDATION
Registered Charity No. 326567

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HOW YOU
CAN HELP US...

It is always a pleasure to share with you some updates about the work being carried out by our dedicated teams across the world. However, this edition is particularly special to me as we are celebrating an achievement which sits at the very core of our mission.

In 2003 a young male Western lowland gorilla named Ima, bred at Howletts in Kent, made the journey to start a new life at our Gorilla Protection Project in Gabon. As a baby, he initially joined a nursery group, before making the transition to living life fully in the wild.

Our team and I continued to monitor Ima over the years, and we have witnessed him mature into a splendid silverback. Now I can bring you the next chapter in Ima's inspiring story as he expands his group and family in the wild!

Read on for world-first news for captive-bred Western lowland gorilla introduced into the wild...

showing the impact of our work on the dwindling wild populations for this Critically Endangered species at high risk of extinction.



In other news, we bring you updates from our projects in Indonesia and Madagascar. We have been operating in both countries for fifteen years. We continue to see success at our project sites, but – as always – there is more work to be done.

It is because of your support that all our work around the world can be undertaken!

We know our teams will continue to bring about positive changes, but it wouldn't be possible without you.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Wildcry, and that these uplifting stories show you the incredible impact that all donations, no matter the size, have on the lives of the animals we protect.

THANK YOU



AMOS COURAGE
OVERSEAS PROJECT DIRECTOR
THE ASPINALL FOUNDATION

GROUND BREAKING NEWS FROM GABON

We have celebrated yet another world first which will see the fragile populations of Critically Endangered Western lowland gorillas strengthened, thanks to your support.

Ima, a 22 year-old silverback male, has fathered two offspring from the two females in his group. Any gorilla birth is good news, but what makes this groundbreaking is that Ima was born in the UK, and the two mothers are wild-born.

2002:

Ima started life in the leafy countryside of Kent, at Howletts Wild Animal Park. Shortly after birth, he was rejected by his mother and the Howletts gorilla keepers stepped in to hand-raise the precious infant. He quickly showed a brave, confident character and was identified as a perfect candidate for our successful rewilding programme.

2003:

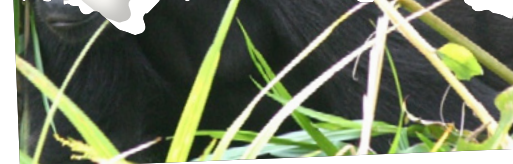
Ima 'graduated' from our partner park in the UK to our Gorilla Protection Project in Gabon. There, he spent a year with other young gorillas in a nursery setting, adapting to the new environment and participating in monitored excursions into the forest, before being fully released in the Batéké Plateau National Park to live the wild life.

EARLY YEARS:

Ima's early years in the forest were spent exploring with a group of other young males. Known as black backs, young male gorillas will often join forces after they leave their mothers and travel together as they mature and develop essential forest skills.

2018:

By 2018, Ima had started the physical changes which mark him as a sexually mature male. His muscles developed, he gained bulk and the black fur on his back started to show the first dusting of silver hairs.



OKÉLI AND INFANT
2024

2020:

By 2020, Ima had completed his transformation and was living as a solitary male silverback, looking for love.

2022:

Male gorillas compete directly for the attention of females. However, females will often choose to leave their current dominant male if a more appealing prospect catches their eye, especially if that prospect is physically powerful. In 2022, we were delighted to observe that two females had left their current group to form a new one with Ima.

Over the next few years, our monitoring team would occasionally catch sight of Ima and his ladies – a pretty pair named Okéli and Amvemande – but their protective silverback rarely allowed us more than the most fleeting glimpses. Then, in 2024, we spotted something truly incredible.

2024:

Okéli was observed with a youngster on her back, and Ima is the father! Then, a couple of weeks later one of our camera traps caught Amvemande with a baby too. Ima is now part of a family of five and a proud father of two.

He continues to show his protective side and has become adept at keeping his family hidden from prying eyes. Despite our best efforts, we have not yet been able to establish the sex of the babies, but we will keep trying!

Ima is the first captive-born, reintroduced male to sire offspring with wild-born females that he has acquired from other groups in a totally wild setting.

This is exceptionally important, not just for Ima, as it provides proof that a captive-bred Western lowland gorilla can make the transition to not just live in the wild, but to live a productive life that can strengthen the wild population of a species highly vulnerable to extinction.

A WORLD FIRST

NEW YEAR NEW HOME

INDONESIA

New Year celebrations for The Aspinall Foundation were extra special this January following the successful transfer of ten primates from the UK to their native homeland of Java in Indonesia.

THE GROUP:

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Javan gibbons

♀ 1 ♂ 6

West Javan ebony langurs

♂ 3

VULNERABLE SPECIES

Both species are unique to the island of Java, with gibbons currently classified as Endangered and West Javan ebony langurs as Vulnerable. All of the primates who made the journey to Java were born at one of our two partner parks - Port Lympe Reserve and Howletts Wild Animal Park.



TRANSPORTATION:

During the transportation, each primate was safely housed in custom-built transportation crates with access hatches to allow for food and water to be given during transit, as well as for observation and monitoring.

It was a long journey, but thanks to the dedication and expertise of our teams in the UK and Indonesia all ten primates arrived safely at our Javan Rehabilitation Centre.

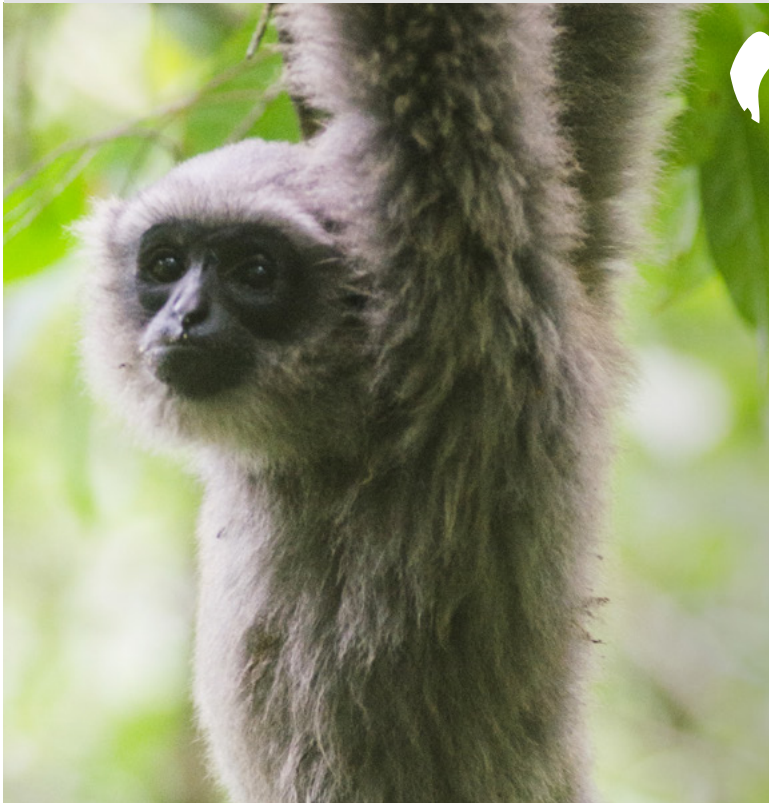


SOCIALISATION:

As with all new arrivals there must be a period of quarantine, usually at least 3 months, at the end of which each primate will receive a post-quarantine medical checkup by the veterinary team at the Centre. Once this has been completed the new arrivals will be transferred to socialisation cages where they are expected to be integrated with wild-born primates rescued from the illegal pet trade.

We never operate a strict timetable for the socialisation phase of the rehabilitation process as each animal is allowed to adjust at their own pace, which has led to great success and more than 290 releases across five species so far!

We are sure it won't be long before all ten of the UK-bred primates are released into protected areas to live their lives in freedom alongside their wild-born kin.



We are very proud of our projects in Indonesia, these projects not only allow the authorities to implement wildlife crime law by providing a solution for confiscated pets, but also help protect depleted forest and water catchment areas where the animals are released, helping to restore habitats and protect vital resources.

I am sure our partner parks, Howletts and Port Lympe will miss this group of characters, however, they all deserve a highly enriching life, that only the forests in Java can truly give them.

AMOS COURAGE
OVERSEAS PROJECT DIRECTOR

WORKING WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES IN *MADAGASCAR*

We began our work in Madagascar in 2009 at two sites: CAZ West and Andriantantely.

THESE SITES ARE HOME TO FOUR CRITICALLY ENDANGERED LEMUR SPECIES



GREATER BAMBOO LEMUR

SIZE: 45cm

WEIGHT:
Up to 2.3kg

DIET:
Bamboo shoots,
leaves and stems



BLACK-AND- WHITED RUFFED LEMUR

SIZE: 100-120cm

WEIGHT:
Up to 4kg

DIET:
Predominantly fruit

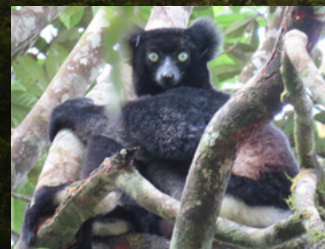


DIADEMED SIFAKA

SIZE: 105cm

WEIGHT:
Up to 6.5kg

DIET:
Varied and seasonal,
includes fruits,
flowers and seeds



INDRI

SIZE: 72cm

WEIGHT:
Up to 9.5kg

DIET:
Mainly young leaves
with some flowers,
fruits and seeds

Both of our project sites are surrounded by rural farming communities. Whilst this proximity to human populations can be a threat to the forests and the species within, it also has the potential to provide some of their most effective protection.

SOME OF THE THREATS WE FACE IN MADAGASCAR INCLUDE:



Subsistence farming – Locals have no choice but to convert forests to farmland to feed themselves and their families.



Slash and burn agriculture – A lack of agricultural knowledge leads local farmers to simply cut down new sections of forest when their existing plots lose productivity.



Cyclone intensity – Climate change has led to more frequent and stronger cyclones.



Drought and flood – Rainfall patterns have become increasingly unpredictable, leading to droughts and floods.

SUPPORTING MALAGASY CHILDREN TO DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE LIFE SKILLS:

Working with farming families including children:

We provide support and training for farming communities, increasing awareness of climate-smart approaches, reducing the reliance on slash and burn techniques.

Creation of school market gardens:

Our teams work with local schools to create market gardens, which provide food for children who are often forced to leave education due to poor nutrition. By helping them to stay in school, literacy rates rise and poverty decreases. In addition, the gardens teach children about sustainable farming, giving them the skills to create a better future for the forests of Madagascar and the lemurs who live within.

Training for schools:

We work with local NGO Fanambinantsoa to provide practical support and assistance to schools, monitoring their results and tailoring ongoing training sessions to the needs of the children and their communities.

Looking to the future:

Our market gardens are successful, but further training is required. We also continue to look for opportunities for further development. For example, future projects may include the creation of wells on the high ground where schools are usually located to make watering easier during the dry season.



SCHOOL GARDEN
AT MAHAVELONA

Our work with teachers and schoolchildren is just one aspect of the activities carried out by The Aspinall Foundation Madagascar team. We and our partners have long understood that the needs of human populations, wildlife and vital habitats are deeply intertwined. Human/wildlife conflict can be effectively managed, and beneficial co-existence is not just possible, but essential, for survival.

Through your support, we can continue to work with the people of Madagascar to improve the lives of not just lemurs, but the entire ecosystem which connects us all.

RHINOS ON THE MOVE

TANZANIA

Preparations are well underway for our latest rewilding mission – the return of three female black rhinos to the lands of their ancestors!

There's still important work ahead, but excitement is growing! We'll keep you updated and will soon share how you can help bring this incredible vision to life.

CHANUA

DOB:
03.10.2023

PLACE OF BIRTH:
Chester, UK

WEIGHT:
1228KG

FUN FACT:

Chanua is rather bossy (especially if Mizi is around) and she can also be occasionally grumpy. Chanua likes to be comfy and in charge wherever possible.



MIZI

DOB:
16.10.2016

PLACE OF BIRTH:
Bekesbourne, UK

WEIGHT:
1260KG

FUN FACT:

Playful Mizi is a sweet rhino who loves nothing more than charging around her paddock before flopping down for a nap in the sunshine.



KISIMA

DOB:
01.07.2012

PLACE OF BIRTH:
Folkestone, UK

WEIGHT:
1414KG

FUN FACT:

Kisima is a big girl and is noticeably long and tall. She's particularly nosy, especially if she thinks goats' willow might be on the menu.



WIN UP TO £25,000



THE ASPINALL
FOUNDATION
Registered Charity Number: 326567

Taking part in The Aspinall Foundation Lottery is a quick and easy way to support our vital work. From as little as £1 a week, you have the chance to win huge prizes whilst also supporting our groundbreaking conservation projects around the world!

TO PLAY VISIT
THE UNITY
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EXCITING NEWS

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NUMBER OF CHARITY
PLACES AVAILABLE
FOR THE 2026 TCS
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