

# THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER



## About Our Cover

Gorillas are among the world's most impressive animals because of their size, status as conservation icons, and human-like appearance and nature. There are thought to be at least two species. Approximately 850 mountain (eastern) gorillas (*Gorilla beringei*) live in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda; and approximately 125,000 lowland (western) gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*) are found from Angola to Gabon.

This image is likely that of Karungi, an adult female member of the Mubare Group, which lives on the steep slopes of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in western Uganda. In 2017, when this photo was taken, the family included seven adult females, three infants, and one silverback male. Most mountain gorilla families are led by one silverback, who defends his group rather than a territory. These animals are highly social, spending much of their day eating vast amounts of plant material while intermittently playing and resting.

In 1993, the Mubare group was the first of twelve families to be habituated in Uganda. This process familiarizes the animals with humans so that they will tolerate short visits (just an hour) from eight tourists per day. Although humans have caused population declines through poaching and habitat destruction, current conservation efforts are showing success. Gorilla trekking has become a major source of income for local villages and those employed as guards and guides. There are no mountain gorillas in zoos, so the only place to see them is in the wild where an encounter with these magnificent creatures from a few meters away is an incredible experience.

This image was recorded with a Nikon D810 camera using an 18-200mm zoom lens with image stabilization. The photographer is William F. McComas, who is editor of the *American Biology Teacher*, as well as Parks Family Professor of Science Education and Director of the Project to Advance Science Education at the University of Arkansas (mccomas@uark.edu).

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