

Gorilla Stories

SHINDA'S STORY:

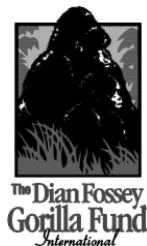


Shinda is the leader of a group of gorillas in Rwanda's Parc National des Volcans, and has been observed by scientists for many years. In fact, Dian Fossey was in the mountain forests studying the gorillas when Shinda was born in February of 1977.

The first things Fossey noticed about Shinda were his large nose and his sparse hair, as he clung to his mother's belly. As a youngster, he also seemed whiney and nervous, according to Fossey.

But today, Shinda is a large, handsome, full-grown adult. He is called a "silverback," because his gleaming silver back stands out against the long black hair on the rest of his body. Silverbacks are the leaders and defenders of their groups and must use their large size to keep the group safe from danger, such as other animals, human intruders and even gorillas from other groups. They are also in charge of directing the group's movements and travels each day. Generally, a group of gorillas living together has only one full-grown silverback, but Shinda's group now has a number of other silverbacks just coming into adulthood, and they may soon begin to challenge Shinda's authority over the group.

Even though they are large and strong, Shinda and other silverbacks can be affectionate and playful, especially with their youngsters. Silverbacks like Shinda also form special bonds with the females in their groups. Shinda has come a long way since Dian Fossey first noticed him as a clingy, scrawny infant, holding on to his mother's belly, reluctant to explore his world. His success and long life have played a significant role among the mountain gorillas of Rwanda.



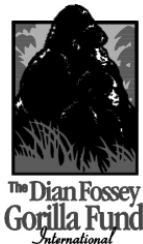
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SHINDA'S Q&A:

- 1). Shinda was born in 1977. What year were you born in? How old is Shinda now?
- 2). What physical features did Dian Fossey notice about Shinda when he was a baby? Ask your parents to show you a photograph of when you were a baby. What did you look like when you were little?
- 3). How do mountain gorillas protect their families?
- 4). Shinda often plays with the young gorillas in his group. What types of games do you like to play with your family members?



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