

SHINDA'S STORY:



Shinda

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:

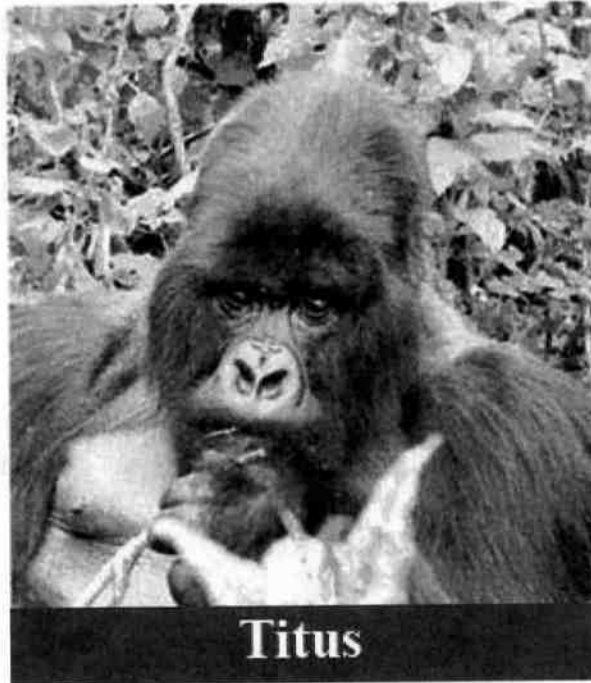
- 1). Shinda was born in 1977. What year were you born in? How old is Shinda now?
- 2). What physical features did Dian Fossey notice about Shinda when he was a baby? Ask your parents to show you a photograph of when you were a baby. What did you look like when you were little?
- 3). How do mountain 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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TITUS' STORY:



Titus, now the dominant silverback of Beetsme's group, has been observed throughout his entire life, first by Dian Fossey and then by subsequent staff of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International. He was born in August, 1974, as recorded in Fossey's journals and in her book, *Gorillas in the Mist*. Fossey said his birth was a surprise, because his mother (Flossie) did not appear to be pregnant.

At birth, Fossey said that Titus seemed to be "underdeveloped and spindly" and that he had difficulty with his breathing. She also said that Flossie seemed to treat infant Titus with indifference, perhaps because she was rather elderly by this time. But Titus survived his tough beginnings, as well some upheavals in his group. When newcomer Beetsme arrived in the group some five years later, Titus' father and younger brother were killed, and then his mother and sister left to join another group. This left a small group consisting of three males: young Titus, Beetsme, and Tiger. Another lone male, named Peanuts, soon joined them. Beetsme continued to lead various versions of this group, while Titus grew stronger and more handsome, eventually taking over and establishing a strong group with a good variety of males and females, young and adult.



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Gorilla Stories

Titus is said to be a "low-key" yet strong leader of his group. Once, when Shinda (a dominant silverback from another group) came nearby, Titus sat and calmly ate bamboo leaves, completely ignoring Shinda's displays around him. Eventually, Shinda became frustrated with Titus and left to taunt a group of younger, more excitable blackbacks. Finally, Titus must have decided that enough was enough and he stood up, aimed himself at Shinda and gave one fantastic and finalizing chest-beating display. He then led the rest of the group away in the opposite direction, far away from Shinda.

TITUS' Q&A:

- 1). What was Titus' mother's name? What is your mother's name?
- 2). What hardships has Titus faced in his life? How did he overcome them?
- 3). How is Titus' personality described? If you could describe your personality in one word, what would it be?
- 4). How did Titus challenge Shinda? Was he successful?



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