

Not enough hours in the day for endangered apes

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A study on the effect of global warming on African ape survival suggests that a warming climate may cause apes to run 'out of time'. The research, published today in *Journal of Biogeography*, reveals that rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns have strong effects on ape behaviour, distribution and survival, pushing them even further to the brink of extinction.

The researchers, from Roehampton University, Bournemouth University and the University of Oxford used data from 20 natural populations to model the effects of climate change on ape behaviour and distribution. The results suggest that rising temperatures and shifts in rainfall patterns alone may cause chimpanzees to lose up to 50% and [gorillas](#) up to 75% of their remaining habitats.

This loss of habitat, according to the researchers, is caused by the fact that [apes](#) run out of time, as with increasing environmental temperatures apes will have to spend more time resting to avoid over-heating, making some habitats uninhabitable. The study further suggests that [chimpanzees](#) will also experience a shift in diet from containing predominantly fruits to leaves.

Lead author Julia Lehmann, from Roehampton University, said: "In reality, the effects of climate change on African apes may be much worse, as our model does not take into account possible anthropogenic effects, such as [habitat destruction](#) by humans and the hunting of apes for bushmeat."

"Our results highlight that solving the direct local threats, such as hunting and habitat loss due to human activities, may not be sufficient to prevent the [extinction](#) of African apes. Ensuring safe havens in optimal habitat must be a critical component of any conservation strategy, lest all current conservation efforts prove to be in vain."

More information: Lehmann. J, Korstjens. A, Dunbar. R, 'Apes in a changing world - effects of global warming on African ape behaviour and distribution', Journal of Biogeography, Wiley-Blackwell, July 2010, [DOI:10.1111/j.1365-2699.2010.02373.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2699.2010.02373.x)

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