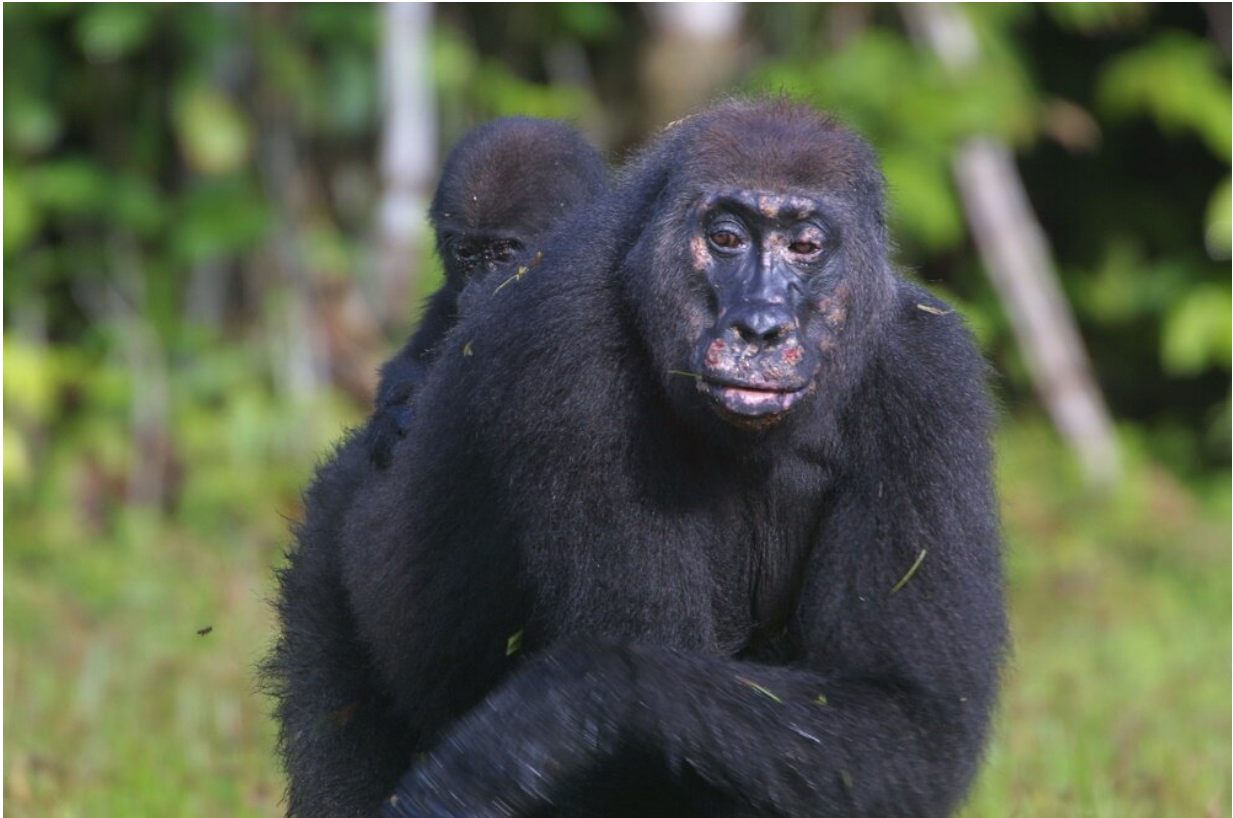


Female gorillas detect and avoid sick groups

September 4 2019



Female gorilla with yaws. Credit: Romane Cristescu

Gorillas are social animals, living in groups that females will migrate to join, becoming members of harems.

Though some factors motivating these migrations were previously known, a research team affiliated with the CNRS and Université de

Rennes 1 has just demonstrated that female [gorillas](#) are able to avoid conspecifics liable to transmit yaws, which leads to conspicuous ulcers on the animals' faces.

While studying 593 gorillas for over a decade, the scientists observed that females leave males and overly diseased groups to join healthier ones, avoiding other sick groups at all costs.

The team's findings, which are published in *Ecology*'s September issue, suggest gorillas learn the disease is contagious and are able to detect one of its symptoms in others, namely disfigurement.

More information: Alice Baudouin et al. Disease avoidance, and breeding group age and size condition the dispersal patterns of western lowland gorilla females, *Ecology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1002/ecy.2786](https://doi.org/10.1002/ecy.2786)

Provided by CNRS

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