

Study examines foraging of mountain gorillas for sodium-rich foods

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A new *Biotropica* study examines mountain gorillas in Rwanda and their foraging for sodium-rich food in both national park areas and lands

managed by local communities.

Obtaining sodium likely creates an incentive for the gorillas to leave park areas and make forays into high-altitude habitat. Both locations are not without risks: exiting their [natural habitat](#) and feeding on crops may increase human-wildlife conflict and visiting high-altitude areas may increase the risk of hypothermia.

The results may advance the discussion of how to adapt local human land use to effectively curb human-wildlife conflict.

"When gorillas raid eucalyptus stands outside the national park, they come in contact with local inhabitants, which puts both ape and human at risk. To discourage the gorillas from crossing into farmlands near the forest, agricultural practices may need to be reconsidered," said lead author Dr. Cyril Grueter, of The University of Western Australia, in Perth. "Ideally one would want to favor plant species that are nutritionally unattractive to the gorillas."

More information: Cyril C. Grueter et al, Going to extremes for sodium acquisition: use of community land and high-altitude areas by mountain gorillas *Gorilla beringei* in Rwanda, *Biotropica* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/btp.12598](https://doi.org/10.1111/btp.12598)

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