The Mountain Gorilla, one step from going extinct

The world's largest gorillas have been pushed to the brink of extinction by a surge of illegal hunting, and are now critically endangered. With just 5,000 Eastern gorillas left on Earth, the majestic species now faces the risk of disappearing completely.

In the wild their only predators are leopards, which can attack vulnerable youngsters and the biggest threat to gorillas is man. In recent decades gorilla populations have been affected by habitat loss, disease and poaching. Subsequently all gorilla species are classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Due to the vast dense areas in which they live it is difficult to monitor and protect gorilla populations and therefore difficult to implement successful conservation techniques. However conservation efforts persist and several governmental and non-governmental organizations named 2009 the 'Year of the Gorilla' with the aim of working together to further improve gorilla conservation.

Gorillas are gentle giants and display many human-like behaviors and emotions, such as laughter and sadness. In fact, gorillas share 98.3% of their genetic code with humans, making them our closest cousins after chimpanzees and bonobos.

There are some factors to take into consideration if you want to help save this animal:

1. Make your voice heard
Support the Great Ape Conservation Fund, which provides money and access to additional funds for a number of field projects around the world.
2. Recycle cell phones and electronics
There are metals mined from gorilla habitat in the Democratic Republic of Congo that are used in cell phones and other electronics. If you commit to recycling your cell phones and other electronics, this will help reduce the demand for these metals (and the hunting that often occurs due to mining camps in the forests) and thus help protect gorillas and their habitat.
3. Look for sustainable palm oil, wood and other eco-friendly products
Similar scenarios affect other wildlife, such as endangered orangutans, whose forest habitats in Asia are being decimated by harvesting of trees for palm oil, which is used in food and cosmetics. A good conservationist will look for products that either avoid palm oil or use palm oil from sustainable sources.
4. Learn more about wildlife
It is important not only to learn more about gorillas and the conservation needs of all wildlife, but to help others become more aware as well. Our natural environment, including endangered species, desperately needs our care, attention and awareness.

Answer the following questions:

1. How many gorillas are left on Earth?

There are ..... gorillas left on Earth.

2. Which is their biggest predator in the wild?

Their biggest wild predator is the .....

3. Which one is their biggest threat?

Their biggest threat is the .....

4. Which year is known as the "Year of the Gorilla"?

..... is known as the "Year of the Gorilla".

5. Which animal is the gorilla quite similar to?

The gorilla is quite similar to the .....

6. What products can you recycle in order to help their habitat?

We can recycle ..... and ..... in order to help

the gorillas' habitat.

7. What is palm oil used for?

Palm oil is used for ..... and .....

8. What does our natural environment desperately need?

Our natural environment desperately needs our .....,

..... and .....