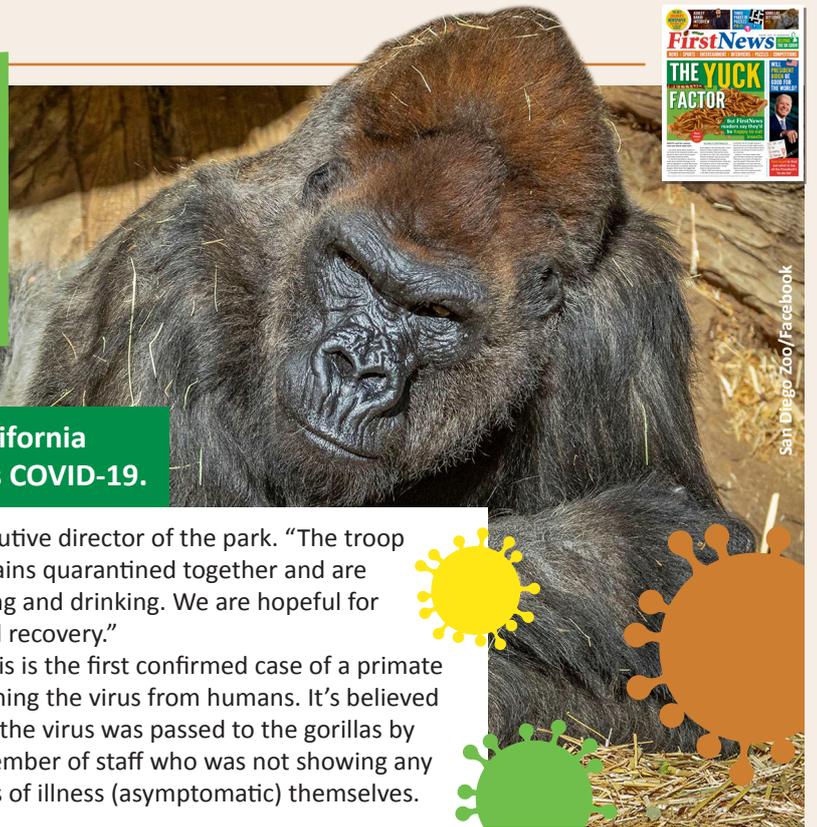


ANIMAL NEWS

GORILLAS GET COVID-19



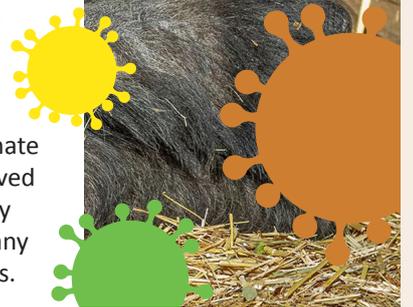
GORILLAS at San Diego Zoo Safari Park in California have tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19.

Keepers at the zoo tested the poo of the gorilla troop at the park after noticing two of the gorillas were coughing. The results showed they were carrying the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. Experts think that the rest of the animals in the troop may have the virus without showing any symptoms.

“Aside from some congestion and coughing, the gorillas are doing well,” said Lisa Peterson,

executive director of the park. “The troop remains quarantined together and are eating and drinking. We are hopeful for a full recovery.”

This is the first confirmed case of a primate catching the virus from humans. It’s believed that the virus was passed to the gorillas by a member of staff who was not showing any signs of illness (asymptomatic) themselves.



INDONESIA

Monkeys go for riches

Researchers have found that the thieving monkeys who live in Bali’s Uluwatu Temple can spot high-value items. The macaques in the ancient Hindu site will pinch possessions from tourists, refusing to return them until they’re offered food as payment. Scientists at the University of Lethbridge in Canada say the macaques will target mobile phones and wallets – and demand more food for them. The lead author of the study says that the behaviour has been “maintained across generations of monkeys for at least 30 years”.



GOODBYE QUEEN

One of the Tower of London’s beloved ravens is believed to have died. Keepers say ‘queen’ raven Merlina went missing just before Christmas and has not been seen since, leading them to think she has passed away. There is a legend that if the ravens ever leave the tower, the kingdom will fall. Thankfully, there are still six ravens left at the Tower.



SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING

SCIENTISTS at Harvard University have created robot fish that can realistically recreate the movements of a school of fish.

Seven robotic fish, known as Bluebots, have been created. They have cameras in their eyes and LED lights to sense direction and distance.

It took about a year of testing in water tanks to get the Bluebots to perform various actions successfully. For instance, they can swim around in circles without crashing into each other, or scatter to the edges of the tank as if a predator has appeared.

Florian Berlinger, who is the lead author of the research published in *Science Robotics*, says the Bluebots could be useful for search operations and monitoring underwater environments.



Self-organizing Systems Research Group

ANIMAL NEWS



GLOSSARY

COVID-19 – The name of the disease caused by the coronavirus currently circulating in the human population
quarantined – To be kept apart from other people or animals for a certain period of time, to prevent disease being passed on
primate – Monkeys, apes and humans

Tower of London – A castle in London founded by William the Conqueror in the 1070s. It was famously used by kings and queens to imprison and torture their enemies
synchronised – When things are planned to happen at the same time

1. Name the animals in the news and where they live, or ‘live’.

The animal	Location

■ Look at the article about the gorillas

2. What prompted the zookeepers to test the gorillas for COVID-19, and how did they test the animals?
3. Some gorillas and a member of staff are thought to be ‘asymptomatic’. It’s a word that is in the news a lot at the moment. Can you explain what it means?

■ Look at the article from Indonesia

4. Monkeys at the Uluwatu Temple are famous for what criminal activity?
5. Can you explain how this research demonstrates the monkeys’ intelligence and ability to learn?

■ Look at the article ‘Synchronised swimming’

6. What was the aim of this engineering project?

- to make robots that mimic the movements of a group of fish
- to make a robot that can be used to monitor underwater environments
- to make a life-like robotic fish that can swim and react

7. Find the details of the project.

Number of fish created	
Technology built into the fish body	
Time taken to develop	
How do we know about this American university project?	

8. What movements have the fish been programmed to do that mimic fish behaviour?

■ Consider all the news

9. A collective noun is the name for a particular group of animals or things. Two are used in the articles.

What is the collective noun for a group of gorillas? a _____

What is the collective noun for a group of fish? a _____

10. Which of these stories do you predict will be back in the news in the future? Explain why it might appear in the news again.

ANIMAL NEWS



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- 2.

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TEACHER ANSWERS

AIM OF THE NEWS COMPREHENSIONS: News reports are unique non-fiction texts. Being real, they naturally engage students, and with the range of topics that are covered, help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world outside the classroom. The reports are ideal for short, focused comprehension or discussion activities. Along with the opportunity to find fascinating facts and appreciate the opinions of those involved, there is plenty to be inferred and deduced to understand in more depth what is being reported. Like authors, journalists play with language, so news 'stories' are rich nuggets of text to investigate and provide the opportunity for literacy programmes.

TEACHER ANSWER GUIDE: The teacher answers are intended to provide a quick reference guide. Suggestions are given for the 'Expected response' or starting point that pupils could give. The 'Development' then gives more in-depth ideas that students can work towards as they develop their reading comprehension skills.

For a list of the reading skills used, please email schools@firstnews.co.uk.

1. Name the animals in the news and where they live, or 'live'.

READING SKILL – Find and explain information

(NC 2a)

Expected response

The animal	Location
• gorillas	• San Diego Zoo Safari Park, California
• ravens	• Tower of London
• macaque monkeys	• Uluwatu Temple, Bali, Indonesia
• Bluebots	• Harvard University

Look at the article about the gorillas

2. What prompted the zookeepers to test the gorillas for COVID-19, and how did they test the animals?

READING SKILL – Find and explain information

(NC 2a)

Expected response

- The zookeepers decided to test the gorillas because they were coughing.
- The poo of the animals was tested for the virus.

3. Some gorillas and a member of staff are thought to be 'asymptomatic'. It's a word that is in the news a lot at the moment. Can you explain what it means?

READING SKILL – Understand vocabulary in context

(NC 2a)

Expected response

- It means to be infected with a disease without showing any signs or symptoms.

Look at the article from Indonesia

4. Monkeys at the Uluwatu Temple are famous for what criminal activity?

READING SKILL – Find and explain information

(NC 2a)

Expected response

- Stealing belongings from tourists and only giving them back when they are given food.

5. Can you explain how this research demonstrates the monkeys' intelligence and ability to learn?

READING SKILL – Infer information and justify with evidence

(NC 2c & 8)

Expected response

- The monkeys are able to identify expensive belongings.
- They do it to get more food.

Development

- This research shows that the monkeys are able to recognise items that are valuable to tourists.
- They have learned that these items will earn them more food than other items.
- They have either learned this behaviour themselves – by trial or error – or from other monkeys.

Look at the article ‘Synchronised swimming’

6. What was the aim of this engineering project?

READING SKILL – Infer information and justify with evidence
(NC 2c & 8)

Expected response

- to make robots that mimic the movements of a group of fish
- to make a robot that can be used to monitor underwater environments
- to make a life-like robotic fish that can swim and react

7. Find the details of the project.

READING SKILL – Find and explain information
(NC 2a)

Expected response

Number of fish created	• 7
Technology built into the fish body	• Cameras, LED lights, sensors
Time taken to develop	• About a year
How do we know about this American university project?	• The research has just been published in <i>Science Robotics</i> .

8. What movements have the fish been programmed to do that mimic fish behaviour?

READING SKILL – Find and explain information
(NC 2a)

Expected response

- Swim in circles without crashing into each other
- Scatter to the edges of the tank as if a predator has appeared

Consider all the news

9. A collective noun is the name for a particular group of animals or things. Two are used in the articles.

READING SKILL – Understand vocabulary in context
(NC 2a)

Expected response

- What is the collective noun for a group of gorillas?** • a troop
- What is the collective noun for a group of fish?** • a school

10. Which of these stories do you predict will be back in the news in the future?

Explain why it might appear in the news again.

READING SKILL – Make justified predictions
(NC 2d)

Answers such as:

- The gorilla story – to find out if the gorillas are alright
- The raven story – if more ravens die

Development

- The gorilla story – If more gorillas become sick, or if any become seriously ill, this story may well be in the news again. There could also be an article about which other animals catch the virus and how they respond.
- The raven story – If more ravens die, this story will be back in the news, because of the old legend.
- The Bluebots may be back in the news if the robots are developed further, or if they are used for a particular purpose.