



Media Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Global mountain gorilla population count grows to 1,063

Results released from the most recent survey conducted in 2018 in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, and the contiguous Sarambwe Nature Reserve, DRC

Kampala, UGANDA 16th Dec 2019

Uganda's Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities and the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration reveal that the number of mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) in the 340 square kilometer transboundary protected forest have increased to 459 from an estimated 400 in 2011.

This announcement brings the global wild population of mountain gorillas to 1,063 when combined with the [published results from the Virunga Massif 2015/2016 survey](#). Bwindi – Sarambwe is one of the two places on earth where mountain gorillas can still be found.

“Slowly but surely a solid future for mountain gorillas is emerging, proving that long-term, collaborative conservation efforts can pull species back from the brink of extinction. This was demonstrated last year with the IUCN reclassification from Critically Endangered to Endangered.” said Anna Behm Masozera, Director of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP), which provided technical and financial support to the exercise under an agreement with the intergovernmental Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration.

She continued, “While the IGCP coalition celebrates these results, mountain gorillas still face many threats and as a subspecies will always need to be carefully protected and their habitat and tourism well managed. [We cannot be complacent](#), but we can take a moment to acknowledge the efforts and results of the latest census and recognise how far we have come.”



The survey findings also indicated that the threat of illegal human activities to mountain gorillas and other wildlife has not declined in Bwindi-Sarambwe since 2011, despite the positive developments in community engagement, in conservation and tourism initiatives. For instance, survey teams found and destroyed 88 snares during the course of their work.

The exercise involved more than 75 trained survey members from thirteen participating institutions along with the support of local governments and communities living around the protected areas. Survey teams walked pre-determined “recces” (reconnaissance trails) ensuring a thorough coverage of all forest areas to sweep the Bwindi-Sarambwe and search for signs of gorillas, other key mammals, and human activities. When fresh gorilla signs were detected, the teams followed the gorilla trail to locate three recent night nest sites. At each of these nest sites, the teams collected fecal samples from nests.

The process was completed twice; first from March to May 2018 (62 days), and second from October to December 2018 (60 days). A second sweep allows to find gorillas that were undetected during the first sweep and thus provides more reliable numbers of gorillas. Fecal samples were analyzed genetically to determine individual genotypes. Additional scientific publications are expected from the survey.

The survey provides valuable information for the continued monitoring of wildlife populations that depend on the Bwindi-Sarambwe forest ecosystem, as well as the human communities that rely on ecosystem services, tourism benefits and revenue.

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Notes to Editors:

1. Full technical survey report to be available at <http://igcp.org/library> and <http://igcp.org/blog/>.

2. Mountain gorillas are found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda, in two isolated, transboundary populations - the Virunga Massif and Bwindi-Sarambwe.

The Virunga Massif is a 451 km² area spanning the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda - including Mikeno Sector of Virunga National Park in DRC, Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in Uganda - and is just one of just two places on earth where mountain gorillas can still be found. The other is Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda, contiguous with Sarambwe Nature Reserve in DRC. The Bwindi-Sarambwe ecosystem encompasses approximately 331 km² in Uganda and 9 km² in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The 2018 survey in Sarambwe Nature Reserve was the inaugural count for the mountain gorilla in the area.

3. The previous mountain gorilla census in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park took place in 2011 resulting in an estimate of 400 individuals in 36 social groups and 16 solitary mountain gorillas. The data and samples for this more recent survey were collected between March – May and September - December 2018.
4. In 2018, the threat status for mountain gorillas was downgraded from 'Critically Endangered' to 'Endangered' in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species <https://www.iucn.org/news/species/201811/fin-whale-mountain-gorilla-recovering-thanks-conservation-action-iucn-red-list>
5. The 2018 Bwindi-Sarambwe population surveys of mountain gorillas, known as census, were conducted by the Protected Area Authorities in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Uganda Wildlife Authority and l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature) under the transboundary framework of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration. The census was supported by the Rwanda Development Board, International Gorilla Conservation Programme (a coalition of Conservation International, Fauna & Flora International and WWF), Mammalian Ecology and Conservation Unit (MECU) of the UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation, Gorilla Doctors, Conservation Through Public Health, Wildlife Conservation Society Uganda Country Office, WWF Uganda Country Office, and Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust. The census was funded by Fauna & Flora International, WWF, and Partners in Conservation at the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium.
6. The surveys were carried out with support from players of People's Postcode Lottery.



About International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) (www.igcp.org)

IGCP is a coalition programme of Conservation International, Fauna & Flora International and WWF with a mission to secure the future for mountain gorillas. IGCP achieves this through working in partnership with State and non-State actors in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. Its Directorate is located in Kigali, Rwanda.

About Conservation International (CI) (<https://www.conservation.org/>)

Conservation International uses science, policy and partnerships to protect the nature that people rely on for food, fresh water and livelihoods. Founded in 1987, Conservation International works in more than 30 countries on six continents to ensure a healthy, prosperous planet that supports us all.

About Fauna & Flora International (FFI) (www.fauna-flora.org)

FFI protects threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and take account of human needs. Operating in more than 40 countries worldwide, FFI saves species from extinction and habitats from destruction, while improving the livelihoods of local people. Founded in 1903, FFI is the world's longest established international conservation body and a registered charity.

About WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) (<http://www.panda.org>)

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.
