



International Gorilla
Conservation Programme

Data and Sample Collection for Mountain Gorilla Count in Virunga Completed



Census teams establishing the age of the Gorilla that dropped this dung based on dung size, before sampling and recording it. **Photo by: Tuver**

On 23rd May the last data and samples were collected for the survey of mountain gorillas, large mammals and illegal activities within the transboundary Virunga Massif.

The intensive exercise involved participation of over 100 men and women from more than 10 institutions to accomplish the systematic and complete coverage of the 451 km² transboundary area twice – from October to December 2015 and March to May 2016.

Two “sweeps” were conducted to collect sufficient data on which to calculate the most robust estimate of the gorilla population.

As teams surveyed the area, they recorded signs of mountain gorillas, other large mammals such as elephants and golden monkeys, as well as illegal human activities like bamboo cutting or discovery of snare/animal traps. Gorilla faecal samples were collected for pathogen and genetic analyses. The analysis of data and samples collected will continue throughout the year, with the final results expected to be

released by the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration in 2017.

The enormous effort has already yielded results, even as everyone eagerly awaits the estimated population size (expected in 2017). Outcomes already realized include reopened channels of communication and increased trust built among the three countries based on this collective achievement and successful collection of data. This time exclusively using electronic devices – no more writing on paper in the rain, no more piles of data sheets, and no more tedious data-entry into computers.

Furthermore, the distribution of snares discovered by the teams is already being used by park authorities and GVTC to find ways of overcoming this persistent threat.

The goal is to ensure that these rope and metal traps are eliminated from parks because gorillas can, and unfortunately do, become ensnared in them – which can cause injury, loss-of-limb, or even death to the gorilla.

IGCP Board Meeting & Coalition Office Visits by Director

On April 19th the IGCP Director participated in the 2016 IGCP Board meeting held at the Athenaeum Club in London. Issues on the agenda included an updated agreement between FFI and WWF regarding IGCP, IGCP midterm review, and the existing and emerging partnerships outside of the coalition.

Accompanied by the board Chairperson Carlos Drews, the Director also paid a visit to the WWF-UK in Woking. She then also visited FFI and the Arcus Foundation in Cambridge as well as WWF-Sweden office near Stockholm, assisting WWF-Sweden raise awareness of the plight of Grauer's gorillas and the 'success' of mountain gorillas in the media and with close supporters.

Lessons learned from Tea growing in Bujengwe Parish

IGCP's support of the tea growing in Bujengwe parish in Kayonza Sub county, Kanungu district through UWA and the local community is aimed at addressing the challenge of problem animals. Baboons, bush pigs and sometimes gorillas are some of the common animals that raid crops grown close to the park area.

IGCP through UWA supplied funds for tea seedlings and technical guidance. Currently about 167,000 seedlings have so far been planted on 35 acres belonging to 55 households, six of whom are female.

The 35 acres belong to the community members who own land close to the park and had abandoned growing food crops because of untold animal raids. UWA mobilized these communities, with support and guidance from the Rainforest Alliance representative in Uganda, and they agreed to participate in the project.

According to Stephen Asuma the IGCP Country Coordinator for Uganda, the community is excited about the project's progress and likely prospects.

***"Their joy is evident, many other community members are begging us to support them utilize the remaining untilled land."* Stephen notes.**

IGCP is assessing the pilot in Bujengwe in order to capture key lessons in order to help make tea investment as a buffer income generation crop work for both conservation and livelihood improvement small scale land owners neighbouring the Park.

Planning For The Year Ahead

As part of its annual activities, IGCP staff on 19th – 20th May conducted their annual operation planning meeting.

The meeting that was held at Tour land cottages, Kisoro district in Uganda brought together thirteen IGCP program and finance staff to reflect on the ending annual operation plan for the year FY/2015 -2016 and to plan for the new FY/2016 -2017.

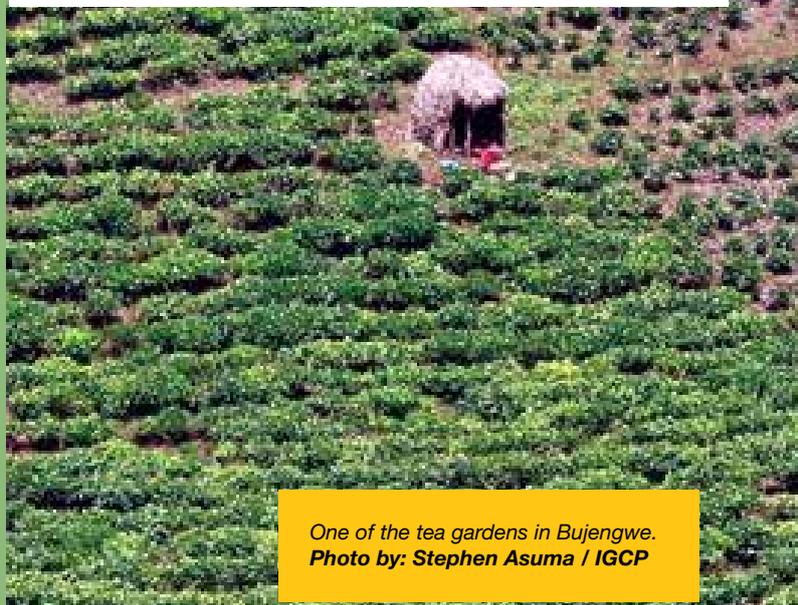
Pending, incomplete and on-going activities were carried over to the new year. A general assessment of the year 2015/2016 indicated great progress in terms of program implementation with a number of milestones registered like the completion of the data and sample collection for the mountain gorilla census in the Virunga Massif.

Team work and commitment towards achieving results contributed to the noted progress.

Priority activities planned for the next year include a midterm evaluation of the IGCP strategy for mountain gorilla conservation, analyses of census data incorporating a research-uptake approach, support of the successful implementation of SMART for law enforcement monitoring in Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area, strengthening of transboundary law enforcement mechanisms such as coordinated patrols and regional meetings, establishment of the legal framework for the buffer zone around Volcanoes National Park, and planning (research and tourism) support to Kahuzi Biega National Park.

Also, IGCP plans to work with Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network to advance work on the Gorilla Friendly™ initiative and continue to explore with Rainforest Alliance and other partners about tea growing around Bwindi.

Another big year ahead!



*One of the tea gardens in Bujengwe.
Photo by: Stephen Asuma / IGCP*

Celebrating a Job Well Done

As the last census teams exited the forest on 24th May, a ceremony to recognise their efforts was held at Muhabura Hotel in Musanze, Rwanda.

The participants who included census team members, staff from the participating institutions, representatives from the Protected Area Authorities, local government, security and police forces, and the media – ate, drank, danced and chatted the evening away as they celebrated their efforts, collaboration and most importantly the successful completion of data and sample collection for the mountain gorilla census in the Virunga Massif.

Speeches were made by the current Chairperson of the Board of Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, and the Chief of Tourism of the Rwanda Development Board as the host. Also, three team leaders shared their experiences with the audience – Jacques Katutu from Virunga National Park (DRC), Jean Damascene Hakizimana from Volcanoes National Park (Rwanda), and Joseph Arinaitwe from Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area (Uganda).



*Census participants displaying their certificates at the function.
Photo by: Charles Kayijamahe/IGCP*

Each census team member received a certificate of recognition and appreciation and a commemorative t-shirt.

It was recognition well received for census participants; all of whom demonstrated great leadership and technical skills, while enduring many weeks and months in the tough terrain and through the heavy rain season.

Six Hundred Households get Access to Safe and Clean Water in Nyabigoma Cell

Following their introduction to community based planning; what it is, its importance and how it is done, the community in Nyabigoma cell, Kinigi sector, Rwanda did village profiling of their development challenges and ranked the lack of water as the main problem faced by the community.

It was noted that the average person trekked 1.5 KM to get to a water source and paid 35 francs (\$0.05) for a jerry can of water (20Ltrs). With guidance from IGCP, the community developed a project proposal to address this need and IGCP mobilized funds to complete the project in partnership with WASAC (Water and Sanitation Corporation). Community members offered man power and dug the 2.5 KM trench for the water pipes and also offered land where the three community tap stands were erected.



*Community members digging the 2.5KM trench.
Photo by: Jean Jacque Ngenzi/IGCP*

The scheme, whose source is from river Mutobo in Gataranga sector, is currently serving about 600 households in Nyabigoma cell. Since the completion of the gravity flow scheme, the community is happy to have water closer and at a lower cost – 20 francs per 20 Litres jerry can of water.

“Having water this close in our community, is like a dream come true; for so long many people promised to draw water to Nyabigoma but none of their promises came to pass. We are grateful to IGCP and all its donors for this help” remarks Josephine, a mother in Nyabigoma.

Community based planning empowers communities to assess their community problems, identify local solutions to them and be instruments of their own development.

This work is part of IGCP’s interventions to ensure effective and equitable use of tourism benefits (revenue sharing, lodge income, etc.) towards conservation and development and to ensure increased community participation in development.

Environmental Auditing for Better Tea Growing Practices

Environmental audits (EA) are done to determine whether environmental safeguards are being met by a project underway. It is intended to interrogate a project's social, economic, environmental and political impact as well as recommend any remedial actions.

An environmental audit was commissioned by Uganda Wildlife Authority and Nkuringo Community Conservation and Development Foundation, who are co-owners of the Nkuringo Buffer Zone, to ensure that tea production in the buffer zone will be done according to best practice. Upon establishment of the tea, several concerns were noted potentially affecting the health and safety of people as well as gorillas – including lack of sanitation facilities for tea workers, and improper disposal of plastic seedling sleeves.

In 2015, WSS Services Uganda Ltd was contracted for this task, with terms of reference endorsed by the National Environment Management Authority in Uganda; a draft report was developed and submitted to stakeholders in March 2016 for review.

After the review, a meeting to validate the findings will be conducted. After all is said and done, the environmental impact assessment is expected to ensure best practices in tea growing/management and realization of the project objectives; reduce crop raiding and improve community livelihood in Nkuringo.

A tea plantation in Nkuringo buffer zone, Uganda. Photo IGCP

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