



It Is On: The Second “Sweep” of the Mountain Gorilla Census



*Silverback of Rushegura group having his midday meal.
Photo by Alice Mbayahi/IGCP*

After two and a half months of business as usual, the census teams are back to their rigorous and exciting task of sweeping the Virunga Massif in search for gorilla signs and collection of fecal samples. The second sweep has started with a refresher training for the field teams on the use of hand-held electronic devices, data entry, map and compass use, how to conduct the

survey and planning the daily survey routes to ensure thorough coverage of the entire Massif. During the training, the teams are also sharing experience and lessons learned from the first sweep conducted October to December 2015, and brainstorming on how to make this sweep more efficient and effective. In the case of new members on the team, the training is expected to equip them with knowledge about the task ahead and also inform them about their roles and responsibilities hence putting them on the same page with the more experienced members. After the training these first teams, will be deployed in the transboundary forest on 22nd March for two weeks before another team moves in to continue with the sweep while they rest – rotation every two weeks, until the whole area is covered. According to Jena Hickey the IGCP Conservation Scientist the teams are glad to be back, full of energy and ready to canvas the Virunga Massif.

IGCP, in conjunction with GVTC and Protected Area Authorities, facilitated a lot of work in preparation for the second sweep among which included arranging, replacing, and packing required equipment and logistics, securing cross border documents for the teams and meeting key stakeholders like immigration and security agencies to alert them about the activity and secure their support. “The collaboration from these institutions is immeasurable, sweep one would not have been successful without their effort, we are grateful and look forward to stronger and better collaboration during sweep two,” says Benjamin Mugabukomeye the Rwanda Country Coordinator for the IGCP.

IGCP Conducts Third Annual TAG Meeting

On 3rd – 5th March the IGCP held its third annual Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting at Hotel Panorama in Bukavu, DRC. The TAG meeting is conducted every year to allow for in-depth technical support and guidance on the implementation of the IGCP strategy by the technical advisory group members. This year’s TAG meeting aimed at improving understanding and input on IGCP’s intervention in the conservation efforts for Grauer’s gorillas, to update and seek input from the members on the Gorilla Friendly™ initiative being initiated by IGCP in partnership with Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network, with support from Conservation Capital, and to get input into the pending mid-term strategy review and refinement of the programme.

Participants in this year’s TAG in addition to all IGCP technical staff were IGCP Board Chair, Dr. Carlos Drews, and representatives from coalition offices of WWF in Cameroon, DRC, USA, UK, and



*The IGCP director Anna Behm Masozera speaking at the TAG meeting.
Photo by Alice Mbayahi / IGCP*

Uganda joined by representatives from coalition offices of Fauna & Flora International in DRC and UK.

Some participants experienced the Grauer's gorillas of Kahuzi-Beiga National Park, while others opted for nature walks or a visit to Lwiro Research Institute and Chimpanzee Sanctuary. The field activities were later followed by a meeting with the Director for

Kahuzi-Beiga National Park, Mr. Radar Nshuli, during which he shared the status of protection and conservation activities to address the real challenges of occupation and mining and other extraction activities by rebel groups in the Park's low altitude zone, and the promise of tourism as a conservation tool in the high altitude zone.

Let Better Photography Begin

With the support of Joakim Odelberg, a conservation photographer and filmmaker, nine IGCP program staff and four IGCP drivers received a fun and hands-on training in photography in January 2016. Additional and more specific training was done for the IGCP science team as well as three park rangers from Mgahinga, Bwindi, and Virunga National Parks, and two staff from partner organizations who were invited to benefit from Joakim's training related to gorilla photography, a key component of gorilla identification and monitoring.

During the training, participants were taken through the basics but also key requirements of photography, how to handle a camera, how and when to adjust the camera settings and lenses to ensure quality photos, how to shoot wildlife (gorilla photography) and how to edit/improve taken photos. Besides the classroom session, participants were sent out to the field to apply the knowledge they had acquired and later re-grouped to share their shots (and experience) which were reviewed with positive criticism and guidance from the facilitator. The hands on training and positive criticism/guidance facilitated in-depth understanding and appreciation of quality photography amongst the participants. The participants acquired increased understanding and enhanced skills in photography; this was evidenced in the amazing shots that the individuals captured in the field. To aid in the uptake of the training, 11 new user-friendly cameras (Panasonic Lumix DMC-



*IGCP staff practice how to take landscape photos during the training.
Photo by Joakim Odelberg.*

FZ300K) were issued to IGCP staff. IGCP looks forward to building its photo gallery with quality photos from its work with the help of the trained staff. IGCP also expects the trained rangers to pass on the acquired knowledge and skills to their fellow rangers and those who conduct gorilla monitoring and demography work.

Learning from Our Past and Moving Forward

It is always a good practice to sit back as a team and reflect on what has been done/accomplished, what is pending, what needs to be improved and how. This practice most often facilitates efficiency and effectiveness of work. In light of the same, IGCP

staff on 25th – 26th January 2016 retreated at Foyer de Charite' Remera Ruhondo to jointly evaluate the concluded sweep 1 of the gorilla census and to also discuss key administrative issues and build each other as a team.

Giving Value to the Volcanic Rock

"Koperative Heshu Ikoro Agaciro (KOHIA)" loosely translated as "give value to the volcanic rock", is the name of the cooperative spearheading the use of energy saving stoves. Supported by the USAID-funded CAFEC project with the aim of mitigating climate change through the reduction on the quantity of firewood used by local communities around the park, KOHIA has since 2011 been making energy saving stoves, tiles, ventilators and bricks from the Volcanic rock, marketing and selling them to the community and local governments in Rwanda. According to the Chairman of the cooperative Mr. Ntarekeyaho Donath about 3,080 cooking stoves have been made and sold for between 3000 – 5000 francs each (about 4 – 7 USD). Donath explains that the income earned has improved his members' livelihoods and that tree cutting has



*Energy saving cooking stoves ready for sale.
Photo by Ngenzi Jean Jacques.*

gradually decreased since most households now use the energy saving stoves that use less firewood/charcoal.

Commenting on the importance and uniqueness of the energy saving stoves, Nyirabigega Esperance who has four stoves in her kitchen says, “This innovation has helped us a lot. They cook fast, use less firewood and stay hot even without wood inside for a long time, plus their outer surface does not heat; so I do not have to worry about my little ones getting burnt when they come closer to it. I love the energy saving stoves so much”.

A study conducted by then Yale University graduate student, Zoraya Hightower, compared fuel wood consumption of households before and after the artisanal cookstoves were distributed through a local government project. Hightower found significant reductions in household fuel use after the distribution of the artisan cook stoves: 27 percent reduction per household in Ryambungira; and a 23 percent reduction per household in Bwamazi.

Stretching Water Resources in Buhoma

Constructed in 2005 with twenty one (21) tap stands, Buhoma gravity water flow scheme has over the last twelve (12) years expanded to supply now seventy four (74) tap stands. With its source at the park edge in Nkwenda Village, the gravity water scheme supplies water to the three (3) villages of Nkwenda, Buhoma and Kanyashande. While this expansion of the gravity water flow scheme is consistent with population growth and the increased demand for water, it highlights a big challenge that water supply to front-line communities to gorilla parks are facing.

The gravity water flow scheme has expanded to serve almost the whole of Buhoma town; water taps have been installed at households, in camps, and institutions in addition to the public tap stands. Commenting about the scheme’s operation and functionality, Mr. Byaruhanga Vallence the scheme plumber notes that, all the 74 taps stands are functional, but the system is already at or has surpassed its capacity which has impacted on the pressure of the water; accordingly some tap stands have very little/slow water flowing while at some other tap stands the water dries up for a day or two.

Buhoma gravity flow scheme is the only current source of clean water in the area. “The situation in Buhoma demonstrates the real challenges faced in ensuring those who live next to gorilla parks



*A woman fetching water from one of the community tap stands in Buhoma village.
Photo by Joakim Odelberg.*

throughout the region have access to basic needs like water,” says Anna Behm Masozera, IGCP Director. Anna adds that “the parks, and their continued protection, can contribute to addressing this issue, both in protection of water catchment and water sources, as well as providing some funding for these projects from the income generated through mountain gorilla tourism.”

Reviewing Physical Plans to Facilitate Well – Planned Towns Around Bwindi

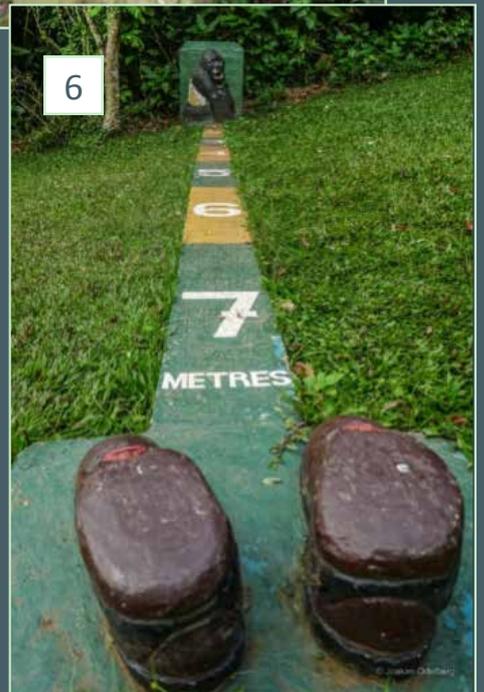
Physical plans are key tools in sustainable development planning. They give guidance in developing cities/towns in a sustainable way. IGCP had in previous years supported Kisoro, Kanungu and Kabale districts in developing and implementing physical plans around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP). Following the realization that the existing physical plans are not being implemented, the physical plan for Rubuguri parish in Kisoro district is being updated with more details through a participatory process which is anticipated to have the outcome of better planning and implementation of the plan as Rubuguri continues to grow.

In November 2015, IGCP supported the district to contract a consultant to review the existing physical plans, with the aim to identify gaps and also elaborate on the plans.

The contractor GEO – Mik Consultants Africa conducted a situation analysis to assess the actual situation – gaps, and opportunities in Rubuguri and also collected data about the same. The collected data and a detailed physical plan (draft) are yet to be presented to the stakeholders (civil and political leaders, land owners, and business/private investors) at a meeting. The stakeholders are expected to discuss the findings and also critique it, providing valuable input into and/or approve the draft of the detailed physical plan.

The developed detailed physical plan will guide future infrastructure development in Rubuguri and also mitigate human wildlife conflicts and allow for sustainable conservation of the mountain gorillas.

PHOTO GALLERY



- 1 IGCP staff at Lake Ruhondo for a team building session. Photo by Joakim Odelberg.
- 2 Census trainers Anne-Céline Granjon MPI (in black) and Jena Hickey IGCP demonstrating to the participants how to collect a faecal sample. Photo by Vicent Mukwege, GVTC.
- 3 Adult female Kibande of Rushegura group in Bwindi N.P holding her two weeks old baby. Photo by Joakim Odelberg. Photo by Alice Mbayahi.
- 4 The IGCP Board Chairperson (Carlos Drews – in green T-shirt on right) handing over a souvenir to the Director of Kahuzi Biega National Park (Radar Nshuli – in army green trouser & shirt on left) in appreciation of the partnership between IGCP, FFI, WWF, and PNKB.
- 5 Some of the plastics, sardine tins and metals collected during the 2016 park cleaning of Volcano NP being parked for disposal. Photo by, Fidele Nzeyimana/RDB.
- 6 A photo demonstrating the 7 Meters distance required between tourists and gorillas. Photo by Alice Mbayahi.

