



GREATER VIRUNGA TRANSBOUNDARY COLLABORATION

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Bwindi-Sarambwe mountain gorilla population grows to 459; global count now stands at 1,063

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Kampala, UGANDA

A recent survey documented 459 mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*), the largest number of mountain gorillas ever recorded in the transboundary Bwindi-Sarambwe ecosystem, one of the two remaining areas where this Endangered great ape is still found.

When combined with the published figure of 604 mountain gorillas from the Virunga Massif as detected as of 2016, the global figure of known mountain gorillas increases to 1,063.

In the area encompassing Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, and Sarambwe Nature Reserve, DRC, an area of 340 km², 459 individual gorillas were found in 50 groups and as 13 solitary individuals. This is compared with an estimated 400 individual gorillas in 36 groups and as 16 solitary individuals from a survey of the same area in 2011.

This is the fifth population count for this area, and the first to include Sarambwe Nature Reserve.

As in the previous mountain gorilla census conducted in the Virunga Massif, 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.

The survey teams also collected data on signs and sightings of select mammals, such as chimpanzee and elephants, and human activities, such as snares or tree cutting. While exercising caution due to the limitations of the study, there were no indications of declines in populations for the select mammals surveyed, including elephants, since 2011.

The survey was conducted by the Protected Area Authorities of Uganda and DRC (Uganda Wildlife Authority and l’Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature, respectively) under the framework of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration with support from Rwanda Development Board and many other partners and donors.

“QUOTE GVTC ES”

This Mountain Gorilla Census conducted in the Bwindi-Sarambwe ecosystem and the one conducted in the Virunga Massif before that, are excellent testament to the importance of transboundary collaboration as envisaged the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) treaty. “People can only protect things properly if they know them properly”.

We thank specifically the scientific teams that provided with trainings and other logistic aspects; the Protected Areas Authorities that availed staffs; the security agencies in the three countries that kept everyone safe and the donors who supported financially this census; the three partner states that made this collaboration possible and the almighty God that created and gifted the Mountain Gorillas to us the global citizens.

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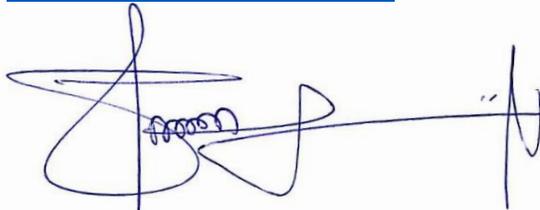
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Notes to Editors:

- 1) 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.
- 2) The Bwindi-Sarambwe ecosystem encompasses approximately 331 km² in Uganda and 9 km² in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 3) 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>



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