



International Gorilla
Conservation Programme

VOL. 20 | DECEMBER | 2018

THE SILVERBACK STANDARD

2018: A YEAR OF FIELD WORK: MOUNTAIN GORILLA SURVEY IN BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NATIONAL PARK AND SARAMBWE NATURE RESERVE



*Leads plotting on the map, checking their location, how far they have moved against the planned Recce.
Photo Credit: Census teams*

Dr. Andrew Seguya, Executive Secretary Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration

The Mountain Gorilla Census conducted in the Virunga Massif and in Bwindi-Sarambwe is a joint activity between conservation partners, including Protected Areas Authorities, conservation partners, donors and security agencies, under the framework of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC). This collaborative activity falls under the Treaty signed by the GVTC Partner States (DRC, Rwanda and Uganda) in 2015, aiming at promoting wildlife conservation and tourism development in the Greater Virunga Landscape. The outcome of the census is the information on the number of the Mountain Gorillas, the status of their habitat and other mammals as well as the conservation threats. This information is very crucial for the adequate planning of the activities aiming at ensuring the long-term conservation of the Mountain Gorillas and their habitat, since "People can only protect things properly if they know them properly." On behalf of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the stakeholders who contributed in a way or another to make this census effective. We thank specifically the scientific teams that provided with trainings and other logistic aspects, and the Protected Areas Authorities that availed staffs, the security agencies in the three countries as well as the donors who supported financially this census.

Prosper Uwingeli, Chief Park Warden, Volcanoes National Park.

The importance of the gorilla census to the conservation of mountain gorillas is implicit, but the capacity to organize, coordinate and conduct the censuses in the Virunga massif and Sarambwe-Bwindi Impenetrable National Park has demonstrated the outstanding commitment of institutions and individual stakeholders involved. When I meet rangers from Volcanoes National Park who participated in the Bwindi census, I realize the joy of having contributed to a significant cause, and on the other hand it seems they have been on a study tour. Therefore, while we recognize the importance of the census to assess the effectiveness of the current management strategies, we also emphasize the importance of the census as a platform to test and boost our collaboration spirit, at different levels. The recent resolution by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to remove the mountain gorillas from the list of critically endangered species is a milestone and a testimony. It is so encouraging to be part of this collaborative effort, and there is reason to be optimistic as we strengthen the achievements and deal with new challenges. In Rwanda, at the Volcanoes National Park we take the task ahead very seriously. We are so excited and looking forward to many more collaboration opportunities, taking forward the spirit of gorilla census to the next levels.

Invest in Collaborative Action – It Works

Anna Behm Masozera, Director, IGCP

As I write this, we are in the final days of field work for the survey of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Sarambwe Nature Reserve. Survey teams – Congolese, Rwandans, and Ugandans – have done an extraordinarily professional service and I look forward to celebrating this effort and milestone with everyone involved in the coming weeks.

It is the cumulative daily effort by each individual and each institution which has led to the change in status of the mountain gorilla from Critically Endangered to Endangered, as announced by the IUCN in November. Another greater milestone to recognize and celebrate as we close 2018.

www.iucnredlist.org/species/39999/17989719

The reality is that no institution or single range State, could have achieved not only this survey, but this improvement in status alone. Nor could it have been achieved without the support of the people sharing the landscape with mountain gorillas. This is markedly true for mountain

gorillas, and for most other threatened and endangered species we share this planet with.

“Although the recommendation to down list the Mountain Gorilla from Critically Endangered to Endangered is a positive sign, confirming the effectiveness of conservation measures implemented by the governments of DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda, it is imperative that these protective measures continue and that emerging threats are addressed. The threat of potential disease outbreaks due to close proximity of humans could, in the near future, rapidly reverse the gains made during the last three decades. The Mountain Gorilla will remain a conservation-dependent species for the foreseeable future and all IUCN best practice guidelines for great ape conservation should be implemented and effectively enforced throughout the Mountain Gorilla range.”

There is therefore no room for complacency in our efforts, and instead we need to build on what works – engagement, dialogue and collaborative action – so that we secure the future for mountain gorillas.



Mountain Gorilla

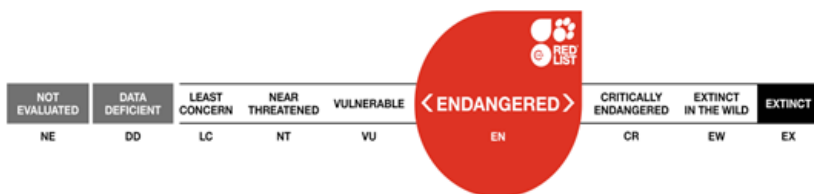
Gorilla beringei ssp. beringei

CITATION

Hickey, J.R., Basabose, A., Gilardi, K.V., Greer, D., Nampindo, S., Robbins, M.M. & Stoinski, T.S. 2018. *Gorilla beringei ssp. beringei*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2018: e.T39999A17989719. Downloaded on 06 December 2018.

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LAST ASSESSED

31 July 2018

SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

Global

Assessment in detail

Bwindi-Sarambwe Census: Perspectives from the Census Partners

Assoc. Prof. Robert Bitariho, Institute of Tropical Forests Conservation

Playing the central role of logistics, coordination, supply and being the field base for all census activities has been a very demanding but worthwhile task. It has been a great experience for ITFC and its staff with lots of lessons learned and key accomplishments registered. We are grateful to the collaborative efforts of all the census stakeholders we've been working with to get challenges addressed and keep the census going on. The capacity of the ITFC field staff in conducting surveys and research has been strengthened, our image and profile as ITFC has also been boosted in the process. One of the key successes we are proud of is harmonizing the expectations of the surrounding communities. Before the start of the census, we sensitized the communities about the census, its objectives and their role in this; doing this helped in securing their genuine support as trail cutters, porters and living in harmony with the in and out census teams. No problems with the community have been witnessed like in the past. In a nutshell for every census to be successful, adequate prior planning, collaboration and involvement of the surrounding community are key.

Drs. Benard Ssebide, Ricky Okwir and Fred Nizeyimana, Gorilla Doctors

This year's census of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest mountain gorilla population has presented the ultimate opportunity to evaluate our collective conservation efforts. It has also enabled us to non-invasively collect biological samples from the entire population, which gives Gorilla Doctors the unprecedented opportunity to assess the health of both habituated and non-habituated gorilla groups. The census effort requires a well-planned, coordinated effort of several stakeholder groups, both governmental and non-governmental, each serving an important purpose: it is truly inspiring to see that such cooperation is accomplishing a critical conservation objective.

David Duli, Country Director, WWF Uganda

WWF is excited to learn that the mountain gorilla is no longer categorized as a Critically Endangered species but rather an Endangered species. This development plus the recent results of the Virunga massif census are encouraging and reward the efforts of the various stakeholders working towards conservation of the magnificent mountain gorillas. We feel more spirited to advance the brand of the Mountain Gorilla habitats/ parks for tourism and work more closely with the communities to improve the habitat and enhance livelihoods.



*Phase 2 members of the Bwindi - Sarambwe census.
Photo Credit: Joakim Odelberg*

Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH)

We enjoyed sending new members of the CTPH team for the Bwindi and Sarambwe gorilla census who learnt so much. Over the past 20 years, the census techniques and sample collection for genetic and parasitology have progressively improved to minimize human contamination and the team spirit between the conservation partners is growing. We are pleased that the population of mountain gorillas is now over 1,000 after the recent results of the 2016 Virunga census and hope that the 2018 Bwindi and Sarambwe gorilla census will increase that number even further.

Simon Takezekibi Nampindo, Ph.D. Uganda Country Director, Wildlife Conservation Society

The Bwindi- Sarambwe census has proved successful due to effective coordination and agreed partnership responsibilities by all collaborating institutions. In addition, the framing of this activity in the spirit of transboundary collaboration has helped to build trust among agencies and states and strengthened the ownership of gorillas. Conducting

trainings of field assistants, the organization of research teams into groups was a good strategy. WCS is very optimistic that the increase in gorilla population in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and their dispersal to the northern part, including Sarambwe Forest Reserve in DR Congo has created opportunities for effective conservation planning and management of the gorillas and their habitat.

Moses Akantorana, Research Assistant, Max Planck Institute

Mountain gorilla census is both fun, educational and a challenging activity.

It was a great pleasure for MPI to participate in BINP census 2018 and specifically for me as an instructor and team leader. The teamwork from all stakeholders involved was a paramount factor for the success of this census. From the organizers, instructors, team leads, assistant team leads, rangers, trackers, cooks to drivers and porters everyone was outstanding in their roles! Regardless of the enormous field challenges we still sailed through to the end of the census, thanks to team work and commitment of everyone. So many skills and knowledge have been acquired to improve our personal works, networks have also been created and others strengthened.

Stephen Asuma, Country Program Manager, Fauna and Flora International Uganda

The collaborative approach used in conducting the census is one incredible thing I have appreciated about the census. Different stakeholders ranging from conservation institutions both government and non-government to the community working together for a good cause. The census is not a cheap undertaking, so hopefully with improvement in technology more accurate results will be realized, with a lot of time and other costs saved. While the every 5-year census is important showing significant increase in the numbers over the last two decades, it is important that everyone starts reflecting as well as acting on habitat viability – the implication of the increase in numbers viza-viz the available habitat space and quality.

What Comes Next?

It Was A Team Effort: IGCP Staff Roles In The Bwindi-Sarambwe Census



Anna Behm Masozera, Director

Served as principle investigator on behalf of a large collaborative effort with 13 institutions (listed below) convened under the framework of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration. Solicited and managed donor resources to support the effort. She thanks WWF, Fauna & Flora International, and Partners in Conservation at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium for their commitment to this collaborative survey.



Jena Hickey (PHD), Conservation Scientist

Led all technical aspects of the Bwindi-Sarambwe survey of mountain gorillas, select large mammals, and illegal activities. Collaboratively developed the survey protocols, built the program for electronic data entry, designed the 7-day curriculum, led the training for over 70 field staff, and curated immense amounts of resultant data, which she will analyze and write up into a peer-review publication in partnership with contributing colleagues. Her favorite part was working side-by-side with the field teams, who are the bedrock of this enormous and incredible effort.



Charles Kayijamahe, Field Officer

In-charge of equipment, samples and sample supplies management. Training instructor and also offered support to ITFC in coordinating logistics.



Eustrate Uzabaho, Field Assistant

Training instructor and census team lead, also supported in equipment management and preparation of sample supplies.



Henry Mutabazi, Uganda Country Coordinator

Supported management and coordination of logistics in collaboration with partners involved in this noble activity.



Benjamin Mugabukomeye, Rwanda Country Coordinator

Trained census participants in leadership and camp management. Coordinated logistics, participation and travel of Volcanoes National Park staff to and from Bwindi.



Makambo Wellard, Programme Manager
Coordinated and played an oversight role to ensure that all census actions were in line with IGCP programming. Closely collaborated with IGCP staff to ensure that census activities didn't conflict with other IGCP programs and that all are smoothly conducted and reported. His favorite part was seeing all of the IGCP team members doing their part with passion for the survey, the survey teams, and the gorillas.



Altor Musema, DRC Country Coordinator
Training instructor and translator (English to French and Swahili). Also coordinated ICCN (Virunga NP and Itombwe reserve) involvement and staff movement to and from Bwindi and Sarambwe Nature Reserve.



Alice Mbayahi, Communications Officer
Shared routine updates about the progress of the census with IGCP partners and census funders. Captured experiences of census participants and shared them with IGCP publics to create understanding about the census and secure support for the same.



Wilbur Kaiire, Driver
IGCP's lead driver in support of the survey teams – facilitated their movements, supported and coordinated delivery of supplies, and part of IGCP's core logistics team for the entire survey.



Jerome Baguma, Driver
Supported team movements and logistics not only in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but Rwanda and Uganda as well.



Diogene Kamezusenge, Driver
Supported team movements and logistics between Rwanda.



Richard Chota, Finance and Administration Officer
Was at the core of all local procurement of census equipment, facilitating fund transfers to ITFC for census operations, performing value for money and desk review of all expenses.



Kabera James, Finance Manager
Managed the subgrant agreement with ITFC from a financial perspective, as well as supported strong equipment and financial transaction processes to make best use of the resources available.



Ngenzi, David Jean Jacque
Supported team movements and logistics between Rwanda.

Bwindi-Sarambwe Survey Participating Institutions

1. Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC)
2. Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN)
3. Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)
4. Rwanda Development Board (RDB)
5. International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP)
6. Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (MPI-EVAN)
7. Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund (DFGF)
8. Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC)

9. Gorilla Doctors/Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (MGVP)
 10. Conservation through Public Health (CTPH)
 11. Wildlife Conservation Society Uganda Country Office (WCS-UCO)
 12. WWF Uganda Country Office (WWF-UCO)
 13. Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT)
- Also, the following research institutions for genetic analyses of fecal samples collected:
- 1) University of California at Davis, USA (mountain gorilla)
 - 2) University of Oregon, USA (elephant)

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A Coalition of

