



International Gorilla
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THE SILVERBACK STANDARD



The science committee members for the Virunga Massif survey of mountain gorillas, large mammals, and illegal activities at White Horse Inn – Kabale, Uganda.

Analysis Continues on Virunga Massif Mountain Gorilla Count; Preparations Begin for Bwindi.

On February 28, 2017, the science committee for the Virunga Massif survey of mountain gorillas, large mammals, and illegal activities convened at White Horse Inn in Kabale, Uganda, to discuss the progress of the processing of samples and data collected in 2015/2016.

Ten different institutions and organizations were represented at the meeting convened by the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, including the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature, Rwanda Development Board, Uganda Wildlife Authority, International Gorilla Conservation Programme, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International, Gorilla Doctors, and Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation. North Carolina Zoo, also a participating organization to the census, was unable to participate.

The scientists discussed some of the preliminary spatial results from the census and outlined various roles and responsibilities leading to a target release of the results by the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration towards the end of 2017/ beginning of 2018, dependent upon the continued processing of samples for genetic analyses necessary for the count.

Attention now turns to planning for the survey of mountain gorillas, large mammals, and illegal activities in Bwindi Impenetrable national park. On March 1, 2017, a pre-planning meeting was held at White Horse Inn by the afore mentioned participating organizations. The meeting was also joined by Fauna & Flora International, WWF, and Conservation Through Public Health. Mobilizing the equipment, finances, personnel, methods, and partnerships are underway for a target for field work to begin in early 2018.

When Technical Advisors Meet



IGCP staff and coalition (WWF and Fauna & Flora International) representatives during the TAG annual meeting in Virunga National Park.

It is always exciting to travel somewhere and meet colleagues, friends, family or even new people; it is even more refreshing to go out there and break the office routine, share/exchange ideas and meals with others. This is the practice at IGCP and its coalition partners. Every year since 2013, the technical advisory group (TAG) for the IGCP meets to discuss the progress and performance of the programme.

The group also advises and makes recommendations on how and where to improve to achieve the programme goals and objectives.

This year the TAG meeting that brought together 20 participants (from both IGCP and local and global coalition offices) was held on 25 – 28th April in Virunga National Park, Rumangabo and Goma, DRC. “This year’s technical advisory group (TAG) meeting was another successful learning and exchange visit for IGCP, helping to further orient IGCP following our recent midterm strategic review”, says, Anna Behm Masozera, IGCP Director says.

The main objective for the meeting was to present and validate the IGCP theory of change/result chain and scoping of the landscape planning approach among others. By the end of the meeting two main outputs - validation of the IGCP theory of change/result chain process and orientation of the habitat strategy and landscape approach had been registered.

Commenting on the 4th TAG meeting the DRC Country Coordinator for the IGCP, Altor Musema, says “It’s an honor for us to host two consecutive TAG meetings in DRC supported by FFI and WWF, the 3rd in Kahuzi Beiga and the 4th in the Virunga. The recent meeting was very exciting and unique because it’s the first-time TAG was held in the Virunga – our main operating area”.

The meeting also hosted those who support IGCP work like the CEO of WWF – Sweden, Håkan Wirten and the Fundraising manager of FFI - UK, Liz Eaton. “It was humbling to share moments and hold discussions with them” Altor adds.

DNA Library Work Takes Off in Virunga National Park

Collection of gorilla faecal samples for habituated mountain gorillas in the Virunga National Park – Mikenko sector kicked off in May 2017. The exercise is being conducted by IGCP science team and rangers in Virunga National Park. The collected samples will be subjected to a genetic analysis; after the genetic analysis, a clear identification of each known gorilla will be on permanent record, and this will all be combined to contribute to the transboundary DNA library.

Primary benefits of DNA library include determining paternity and family relationships among individual gorillas, tracking individuals' movements, and assessing the level of in-breeding in mountain gorilla population, while the secondary benefits also include improved identification of individuals and corrections in identifying their sex.

Similar actions were done in the Volcanoes and Mgahinga Gorilla national parks last year.



*Some members of the team collecting fecal samples in Virunga NP.
Photo Credit: Eustrate Uzubaho/IGCP.*

Water As a Means to Bring Parks and People Together

"The project itself is good for the adjacent communities to the park especially in transboundary areas. This is because it addresses one of their biggest challenges – lack of water", notes Wellard Makambo, Program Manager – IGCP. The community around Virunga is faced with limited access to reliable water. This forces the communities to fetch water from streams inside the park, especially during the dry season. In the bid to address this challenge IGCP in collaboration with MDF, Wageningen University,

and Witteveen & Bos earlier this year secured funding from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) project in partnership with the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, including water provision in target areas.

As part of the project's implementation plan the team is currently conducting a situation analysis in the project area. The collected data will be analyzed and used to guide/determine priority water sites for intervention. It is still the hope of the implementing team that the provision of water to these communities will reduce conflict between the protected areas and neighboring communities; reduce human presence in the park and the risk of disease transfer and ultimately contributing to biodiversity and gorilla conservation.

The availability of water outside the park will also avail more time to the community to attend to their other activities – and this in one way or the other will facilitate development.



A community member sharing about a Muhabura water project with the team during a field exercise to learn about the performance of related water projects in the project area. Photo Credit: Salvatrice Musabyeyezu

SMART Electronics Get New Boost

Everyone loves an efficient electronic gadget. Everyday new electronics are made, improved and or purchased. The new digital/technology era has definitely taken over traditional means of work, communication and transport. Needless to say it makes life a lot easier. Every sector seems to be getting integrated into this new world order, wildlife conservation inclusive.

Cognizant of the fact that traditional tools, technologies and resources were not adequately taming the illegal killings, trading of endangered species and the resulting loss of threatened and highly valued biodiversity.

A tool called SMART (Spatial monitoring and reporting tool) was developed to address this challenge. SMART is a tool for measuring, evaluating and improving the effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement patrols and site-based conservation activities. In Uganda, SMART was introduced by the Uganda Wildlife Authority with support from Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). IGCP supported the introduction of SMART in Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area, inclusive of integration of past data collected with MIST. ➡

◀ SMART Electronics Get New Boost



Charles Kayijamahe demonstrating to UWA officials how the SMART device is used.

Last year the SMART system in Bwindi and Mgahinga conservation area encountered a couple of challenges including unsuccessful data download from the hand held devices to the computer laptops hence limiting download and

management of data. The concern was raised to IGCP and the faulty SMART computer and CAT devices were picked for trouble shooting. During this trouble-shooting phase, several other technical issues were identified and fixed. All the electronics were equipped with the newest version of SMART including incorporation of historic data and returned to BMCA management at a meeting held in February-2017.

“We trust that this latest update of the electronics with the newest SMART version and troubleshooting done will ensure efficiency in the use and implementation of SMART in BMCA” says, Charles Kayijamahe, IGCP Field Officer.

In June, 2017, IGCP will be supporting an upgrade of the SMART handheld devices from the current CAT devices to Panasonic Tough pads to further improve the GPS accuracy and durability of the equipment in Bwindi and Mgahinga’s difficult and dense terrain.

Empowering CBOs to Influence Decisions and Policy in Natural Resource Management (NRM)

After several decades of working with CBOs in the Virunga-Bwindi landscape, IGCP learnt that most of the CBOs have limited technical and institutional capacity to deliver their mandate, and, that it is pertinent for them to be supported in these areas if they must remain relevant to their communities and effective in gorilla conservation.

“There’s a general need for structures. If empowered CBOs can ably represent communities and influence policy and decision making in NRM; and also help in/spearhead channeling conservation benefits to the community” reveals Salvatrice Musabyeyezu IGCP’s Tourism Specialist and project focal person.

IGCP with support from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) through WWF – Sweden is set to empower CBOs in the greater Virunga - Bwindi landscape to exercise their rights in decision making and influence policy in natural resource management. The project “Strengthening governance of CSOs in the Virunga-Bwindi landscape” plans to build on IGCP’s existing collaboration with umbrella organizations like NCCDF, SACCOLA and AFEGARU as one

way of consolidating existing initiatives but also reaching many CBOs in the process.

According to Salvatrice, strengthening the institutional capacity of the selected CBOs will secure better governance of the institutions and facilitate strong inclusive leadership, while strengthening the technical capacity will create deeper understanding of their roles and rights in natural resource management. This understanding will influence equity and fairness in sharing benefits from gorilla tourism and other opportunities from gorilla conservation.

Highlighting on the sustainability of the project Salvatrice says “This is the beginning of a long-term process of creating a strong CSO network in the Virunga - Bwindi area that can influence policy and decision making in natural resource management and gorilla conservation”.

GVTC, Protected areas, communities and other CSOs doing similar work in the region are some of the other institutions that IGCP will work with in the implementation of this project.

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