



digit news

saving the world's last gorillas

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the gorilla organization



Illegal artisanal mining is contributing to the destruction of the gorilla habitat in DR Congo



Letter from the Virungas

Covering 3,000 square miles and incorporating a variety of diverse habitats including marshlands, rainforests and savannah plains, the Virunga National Park in DR Congo is Africa's oldest national park. Throughout much of its history the park has suffered from political upheaval, military conflict and rampant deforestation and sadly the turmoil continues today.

In recent months the Virunga Park has seen a growing number of serious poaching incidents, which have affected the park's elephant, lion and buffalo populations. The elephant population in particular has suffered, with 90% of the population being lost during the past 20 years – just last month five elephants were killed in four days. The 500 strong ranger force does its best to protect and monitor the park and its inhabitants, but the sheer scale and complexity of the area makes the task extremely challenging.



The Congolese Wildlife Authority (ICCN) is currently looking into the possibility of purchasing an aircraft to help with the surveillance of the park. An aerial perspective would enable rangers to see poachers before they reach the animals and it is hoped that this would dramatically reduce the number of lives lost. In addition the aircraft would also be able to help with medical evacuation in an emergency and allow supplies to be delivered to rangers working on the more remote areas of the park.

TUVER WUNDA

Goma, DR Congo

The gorilla's last stand?

Gorillas may disappear from large parts of their range by the mid-2020s unless urgent action is taken to safeguard habitats and counter poaching. This is the alarming conclusion of a new report from the United Nations and INTERPOL.

Entitled *The Last Stand of the Gorilla – Environmental Crime and Conflict in the Congo Basin*, it assesses the threats facing all four sub-species of gorilla and makes urgent recommendations for action. It also revisits projections made in 2002, which indicated that by 2030 only 10% of African ape habitat would remain unaffected by human development.

New data suggest that this earlier estimate was too optimistic: with the illegal commercial bushmeat trade linked to mining and logging, outbreaks of Ebola haemorrhagic fever, the capture of infants for the live animal trade and the incremental conversion of ape habitat to agriculture, the outcome is clear. If we carry on with business as usual,

apes will be locally extinct across most of their current distribution within 15 years. Moreover, this will accelerate the impacts of climate change whereas better conservation of ape habitat would help counter global greenhouse gas emissions.

The participation of INTERPOL highlights the fact that this bleak prospect is linked to international organised criminal networks. Illegal logging and mining is not just a matter of not filling in paperwork correctly – it is the systematic destruction of globally important ecosystems for profit. Worse than that, in some cases the profits are used to buy arms for rebel militias who terrorise civilians and commit crimes against humanity whilst occupying mineral rich areas of gorilla habitat.

The *Last Stand* pays particular attention to the plight of the eastern lowland gorilla – a sub-species found only in eastern DR Congo. Here, local terrorist militias control the mining of minerals such as coltan

and gold but these valuable resources are still bought by intermediaries and end up in products on sale in the developed world. One of the report's most important recommendations is for MONUC, the UN peace-keeping mission in DR Congo, to be given a mandate to help the authorities control the illegal export of minerals.

There are some positive signs in this region, however, including the Walikale Community Gorilla Reserve in eastern DR Congo, supported by the Gorilla Organization since 2003. This is an example of a new approach to gorilla conservation which might – if adopted across the gorillas range – help turn the tide.

When peace is restored, these communities might one day share in the benefits of gorilla tourism and payments for forest carbon in the fight against climate change.

The full report can be downloaded at www.grida.no/publications/rr/gorilla/

London Marathon runners save the gorillas!

Among the tens of thousands of runners at this year's Virgin London Marathon, a group of six dedicated Gorilla Organization supporters ran their way to victory, completing the 26.2 mile run and raising thousands of pounds to save the gorillas.

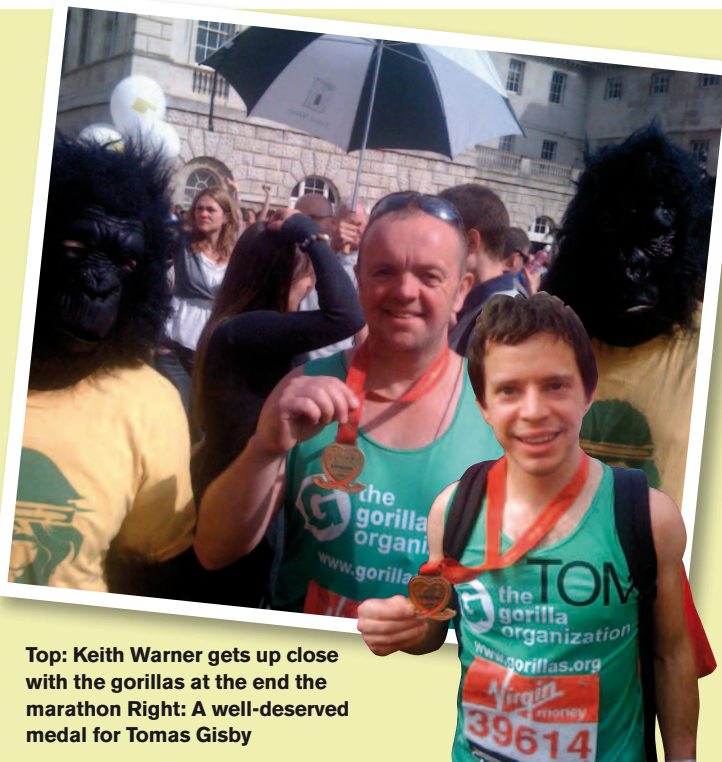
Many thanks to Dan, Duncan, Jane, Jen, Keith and Tomas for taking part in the London Marathon on behalf of the Gorilla Organization.

These six exceptional individuals are on their way

to raising a combined total of over £7,500 (\$10,900) for the Gorilla Organization's conservation, education and community development projects in Africa.

Animal lover Jen was lucky enough to get her own place for the marathon through the ballot and chose to run for the gorillas. Jen will also be running this year's Great Gorilla Run.

Many thanks to our volunteers Debbie, Paul and James who came along on the day to cheer the runners along the route.



Top: Keith Warner gets up close with the gorillas at the end the marathon Right: A well-deserved medal for Tomas Gisby

Events in 2010

- 19 June – Gorilla Zipline
- 4 July – Gorilla Abseil
- Summer – Music Festivals
- 26 September – Great Gorilla Run
- October – Gorilla Adventure

Go to www.greatgorillas.org for the latest information, follow us on [Twitter@Buddy_Gorilla](https://twitter.com/Buddy_Gorilla) and join our Great Gorillas group on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/gorillas).



Gorilla Organization launches exciting new membership scheme

Joining the Gorilla Organization as a member is a great way to show your

support for these great apes, and to help us fund the vital work we do to ensure a safe future for the last remaining gorillas in the wild.

We have put together a fantastic new pack for 2010. As a member you will receive exclusive newsletters straight from the field three times a year, giving you an insight into the work we are doing on the frontline of gorilla conservation.

On joining, you will be sent a welcome pack including:

- Field information leaflet and map of our projects
- Sheet of handy personalised address labels
- Stylish silver pin badge
- Membership card entitling you to a discount on merchandise from our shop

To become a member for as little as £3 per month, simply go to www.gorillas.org/membership, or call us on 020 7916 4974.



Emma's word with the gorillas

Courageous, promotion, contemplate...are just a few of the tricky words that Emma Carney (pictured) learnt as part of her sponsored word-learn.

The determined six-year-old from Redbourne, near St Albans in the UK, learnt 400 new words in under three months and in doing so raised over £400 (\$583) for the

endangered gorillas. Emma has always loved animals, but after reading the book *Gorillas in the Mist* that she received as a Christmas present, she was inspired to do something to help.

The sponsored word-learn is just part of Emma's bold effort to help save the gorillas and other endangered animals. With the help

of her web designer uncle and the support of her mum, Emma has set up her very own website www.endangeredanimals.org. The website hopes to inspire other children to get involved with conservation by providing lots of fun games and information about endangered animals.



Great Gorilla Run

This September, hundreds of people will run through London in gorilla suits. Join the Great Gorilla Run – the Gorilla Organization's flagship event – and help us raise funds to save the world's few remaining gorillas.

Sign up today by going to: www.greatgorillas.org/london or call for information on: **020 7916 4974.**

Great Gorilla Raffle Winners 2009

Congratulations to the winners of our Great Gorilla Raffle 2009, which was drawn on 25 January 2010 by the Gorilla Organization's Executive Director Jillian Miller, witnessed by Daniel Collins and Liz Dobson.

- 1st prize of £1,000 – S Ogden, Malvern
- 2nd prize of £500 – A Lawrence, Penarth
- 3rd prize of £100 – J Bratt, Devon

Thank you so much to everyone who took part and helped to raise vital funds for gorilla conservation.

The circle of life

The small and endangered mountain gorilla population in Africa is particularly sensitive to births and deaths as each can have a huge impact on the dynamic of a group and its breeding potential for the future. Each birth brings great promise and hope and each death reminds us just how fragile this sub-species really is.

2010 started very positively for the mountain gorillas in Rwanda. Two births were celebrated in January, one to Maggie, a 29-year-old female who had sadly lost three infants previously, and one to Bukima, an adult female who had recently moved from the Titus group to the Isabukuru group. Both infants are being monitored closely by rangers and are reportedly doing very well.

Sadly, January also saw the loss of Cyiza, an elderly female aged 42. Cyiza had been lagging behind her group for a few weeks before her death but had been eating well and was even climbing trees. In the days running up to her death she grew increasingly weak and as she followed her family across the Susa River she slipped and bruised her face badly. On 25 January rangers found her body and whilst the causes of her death were unclear, the autopsy report

revealed that she was extremely thin and had been suffering from a severe bout of tapeworm.

In March, the Pablo group, the largest mountain gorilla group, became even larger with the birth of a new infant. Mitimbili, an adult female of the group gave birth to a new baby on the 9th of the month. Mitimbili has two older children living with her in the Pablo group, which now stands at an impressive 47 individuals!

Rangers in DR Congo were deeply saddened to find the body of Buhanga, a 23-year-old solitary silverback. Buhanga had been sick but had appeared to make a full recovery. He was an extremely charismatic silverback, of whom the rangers were extremely fond – he was the first gorilla to be sighted amidst the recent conflict in DR Congo and gave us all hope that the gorillas would be ok. Buhanga's body was found in March, face down in a stream, and the autopsy had revealed that despite his young age he had been suffering from severe dental disease.

Just a few weeks later spirits in DR Congo were lifted once more as Mapendo, an adult female of the Kabiriza family was seen with a brand



Positive start to year for mountain gorilla population with four births

new baby. This is Mapendo's fourth known baby and she has proven herself to be a very successful mother.

In Uganda, there is only sad news to report. One of the much-celebrated twins born towards the end of 2008 died at the end of April this year. The female twin Katungi was being monitored closely by rangers, who had realised that the infant was unwell. When her

body was found lying motionless the veterinary team desperately attempted to revive the little gorilla who had fallen unconscious but to no avail, and Katungi's last breath was taken as the vets looked on.

A new count of the mountain gorillas is taking place at the moment and it is hoped that the results will be published in October.

Making waves in DR Congo – the Gorilla Organization's environmental radio show

The Gorilla Organization has always understood that for gorilla conservation in Africa to be successful it is vital to work with the local communities; to help them to understand the importance of preserving the gorillas and their habitat and most importantly to listen to what they have to say –

which is exactly what we do. And in an area where many of the local

population are illiterate the best way to communicate with a large audience is via the radio. So 11 years ago, the Gorilla Organization set up its own radio programme known as *Cosmos, Our Word*.

Cosmos, Our Word broadcasts from Goma in Eastern DR Congo and is hosted by Tuver Wundi, an experienced Congolese journalist and the Gorilla Organization's African communications manager. Each week Tuver discusses an environmental issue that is relevant to



Tuver interviews rangers for the Gorilla Organization radio show

the area and he invites members of the local community to come in and express their opinions live on the radio. The topics discussed are sometimes shocking and often challenge people's opinions but they are always extremely interesting to listen to and attract a huge local audience. In May, Tuver talked about World Environment Day and previously he discussed the Nyamulagira volcanic eruption. "There are many, many things that have an impact on conservation and our environment and I talk about

as many as I can on *Cosmos, Our World*," says Tuver.

In the 11 years that *Cosmos, Our World* has been broadcasting it has attracted the attention of many Congolese politicians and chiefs and it is widely recognised for the positive impact it is having on gorilla conservation in the Virungas.

Digit News readers in DR Congo can tune in to *Cosmos Our World* every Monday from 19h30-2000h on 90FM RTNC Goma.



The Gorilla Organization
110 Gloucester Avenue
London NW1 8HX
Tel: 020 7916 4974
info@gorillas.org
www.gorillas.org
Reg. Charity No. 1117131

Trustees:

Stanley Johnson, *Chairman*
Sandra Bakker
Dr J.E. Clarke
Martin Hay
Jon Hobbs
Sandra Horley OBE
Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka
Ian Redmond OBE

Executive Director: Jillian Miller

Patrons:

Richard Adams, Michael Backes,
Prof. Richard Dawkins FRS,
Leonardo DiCaprio, Daryl Hannah,
Dr Nathan Myhrvold, The Hon. Mrs
Claire Ward

Digit News:

Editor: Jillian Miller

Deputy Editor: Abi Girling

Contributors: Dan Collins, Sam
Davies, Liz Dobson, Abi Girling,
Aimee Long, Ian Redmond,
Tuver Wundi

Photographs: Lucinda Carney, Sam
Davies, Abi Girling, Gavin MacGregor,
Tuver Wundi

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Stanley I presume...

It is with great pleasure that the Gorilla Organization announces Stanley Johnson (pictured right) as its new chairman.



Stanley Johnson is one of those people who makes things happen, and with a Greenpeace Prize for Outstanding Services to the Environment and the RSPCA Richard Martin award for services to animal welfare under his belt, he is certainly well placed to take on the issues facing Africa's gorillas today.

Stanley has spent much of his life travelling to remote places, working as a serious, pioneering environmentalist, and in

the seven years that he has been a Gorilla Organization trustee he has also been on numerous missions to help the gorillas.

He is dedicated to raising funds to help protect Africa's gorillas and has always done whatever he can to raise awareness of their plight.

With every welcome there is always a sad goodbye and it is with much gratitude that we say farewell to Roger Wheeler OBE who has been a dedicated chairman to the Gorilla Organization for the past two years. Roger is stepping down from the position to enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Stanley's memoir *Stanley I Presume* has recently been published in paperback by Fourth Estate.

Social Networking

To find out more about the world of gorilla conservation and our gorilla activities both here in London and elsewhere in the world follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/Gorillas_org and www.twitter.com/buddy_gorilla

You can also join our Great Gorillas group on Facebook and our Gorilla Organization Facebook fan page.



Stoves for survival in Congo

In eastern DR Congo, the majority of families living alongside the Virunga National Park lack basic amenities, including electricity, and are therefore reliant on charcoal for their cooking and heating.

But charcoal production is causing deforestation at an alarming rate, threatening the critically endangered mountain gorilla and severely damaging its forest home.

Fuel efficiency

To address this, the Gorilla Organization began working with local partner NGO Aide-Kivu in January 2008 to implement a fuel-efficient stoves project in the communities surrounding the gorilla habitat. Fuel-efficient 'Jiko' stoves, which reduce charcoal consumption by around 75%, are constructed in a local workshop and sold for \$2, and the funds generated are reinvested in the project.

Families are taught how to use their stoves efficiently, and are now spending less money on charcoal than ever before. In addition to saving money, the stoves also benefit families' health, as they produce far less smoke than traditional models. So far, over 250 Jiko stoves have been produced and distributed through the project, and demand is growing as news of the initiative spreads.



Women in DR Congo use 75% less fuel by using Jiko stoves

Last year was the UN Year of the Gorilla (YoG), which brought together a great variety of conservation organisations dedicated to saving the greatest of the great apes.

In October, YoG ambassador and Gorilla Organization trustee Ian Redmond OBE, travelled to the US on a lecture tour, giving a talk at Los Angeles Zoo on gorilla biology, the threats to their survival and the need for conservation efforts. Fundraising efforts by the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association over the course of the tour generated £12,300 (\$18,000), and it was recently decided by Year of the Gorilla partners that this would be awarded to the Gorilla Organization's stoves project.

These funds will run the project for an entire year, helping to construct and distribute 1,000 stoves, which will significantly reduce the amount



of charcoal used by families around the Virunga National Park, in turn reducing pressure on the mountain gorillas and their forest home.

Gorilla blogs

If you are interested in hearing more from the Gorilla Organization's African field staff, please visit our blogs! The blogs are updated regularly from the field with all the latest news from our projects around the gorilla habitat. Visit <http://tshiaberimu.wildlifedirect.org/>



THANK YOU

A big thanks to... Ian Redmond, Laurel Colton, YoG partners and all at LA Zoo, Marjorie Coote Animal Charity Trust, Mrs S H Adlam Will Trust, Rowan Charitable Trust, St Katharine's Fund, Roger Vere Foundation, Stella Symons Charitable Trust, Miss M.S. Rickard Animals Charity, Evan Cornish Foundation, James Gibson Charitable Trust, Aylesford Family Trust, European Commission, UNDP Protected Areas and Biodiversity Project, Chris Redston, Colin McLean, Debbie Orr, Paul Downes and James Booth. Finally, thank you to all our African staff, wildlife authorities, government departments and trustees for their continued support, and also our wonderful volunteers and fundraisers.

