

These action plans are essentially based on the Gorilla report outlined by the IRSNB for the CSM in 2005; The World Atlas of Great Apes and their Conservation (published in 2005), the existing National Action Plans (NGASP), various workshops reports (Brazzaville, 2005; Limbe Botanic Garden, 2003; Calabar, 2006), and many other publications.

Action plan *Gorilla beringei graueri*

Version of July 2007

The actions plan for *Gorilla beringei graueri* only concerns the Democratic Republic of Congo

Democratic Republic of Congo

One of the three largest, and one of the two most forested countries in Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has had to endure several decades of poor economic policies, bad governance, and wars. It appears that the right policies are now being put in place to pave the way for a restoration of economic growth (Akitoby, B., Cinyabuguma, M., 2004).

The Eastern lowland gorilla, *Gorilla beringei graueri*, is an endemic to DRC. It has a discontinuous distribution east of the Lualaba River and west of the Albertine Rift, and from the northwest corner of Lake Edward in the north to the northwest corner of Lake Tanganyika in the South.

The rate of habitat loss for the eastern lowland gorilla is probably the highest of any of the gorilla subspecies (The Rainforest Foundation, 2004). Its range went down from 21.000km² in 1959-1960, to 15.000km² in the 1990s. In 1998, the global population was estimated around 16.900 individuals. Most gorillas lived in Kahuzi-Biega NP, where gorilla populations suffered a severe decline in the late 1990s, and are now down to only a few thousands according to some sources (Caldecott and Miles, 2005).

Although no firm figures are available, the eastern lowland gorilla seems to have been very badly affected towards the end of the 20th century.

Before the 1996-2002 conflict, eastern DRC already had some of the highest human densities in Central Africa. About a million refugees entered DRC from Rwanda in 1994, and settled in the vicinity of Virunga NP and near Kahuzi-Biega NP. Large areas of forest were cleared and the huge demand for fuelwood and food led to

incursions into both PA (Caldecott and Miles, 2005). Following this, in 1996, civil war broke out in DRC. Soon after, all eastern PA were within rebel territory.

Many eastern lowland gorillas in both Kahuzi-Biega and Maiko NP were slaughtered by fighters or refugees. The high price given for coltan (columbium and tantalum) in 1998-2000 led to an increased invasion of Kahuzi-Biega NP and the Okapi Faunal Reserve by an estimated 10.000 people (Caldecott and Miles). Professional hunters accompanied these minors and their families. Coltan was sold by warlords and rebel leaders in order to raise funds for their operations.

Following these troubled times, it is difficult to know how many eastern lowland gorilla remain. Population surveys have only been carried out in a few sites. It is certain that by 1999, the highland sector of Kahuzi-Biega NP had lost 50% of its gorilla population, including 88% of the gorillas habituated for tourism, particularly easy to shoot.

The rate of habitat loss for the eastern lowland gorilla is frighteningly high. It has already lost more than 87% of its range, and the global population is now highly fragmented. The small Masisi (28 individuals in 1998) and Mt Tshiberimu (16 individuals in 1998) populations are particularly vulnerable. Extensive agricultural encroachment took place on the boundary of Mt Tshiberimu during the refugee crisis (Butynski and Sarimento, 1995).

The country's poor infrastructure has limited so far extensive logging operations, which has effectively protected much of DRC forests. It is estimated that 5.320km² of forests is cleared each year (FAO, 2003).

1. Legislation

National

The Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism is the government body in charge of nature conservation. The Nature Conservation Act Ordinance-Law 69.041, 1969 defines national parks. Law 82.002, 1982, defines faunal and game reserves and lists species for which hunting and trapping are prohibited.

There are 4 main categories of PA in DRC:

- National parks (9)
- Game reserves (1)
- Forest reserves (7)
- Faunal reserves (2)

There are also areas set aside for hunting purposes, for scientific purposes. All these are managed by the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN). A Forest Code was established in 2003, under which the state owns all forests and defines legitimate uses for them. Legal mechanisms and zoning system are to follow.

There is concern as to the fact that forest people's rights are recognised, and there has been little civil society involvement in the formulation of this code.

Forest exploitation taxes are very low, 0.06 US\$/ha; WBank estimate that 600.000km² will be zoned as production forests. Timber extraction will be facilitated by more than 270 millions dollars promised donors funds, equivalent to more than 5000km unpaved roads, or more than 1000km paved roads.

International:

- CMS, 1990
- CBD, 1994
- WHC, 1974
- ACCNNR, 1976
- CITES, 1976

There are 5 World Heritage Sites, all five listed as WHS in Danger, due to human pressure: Garamba NP, Kahuzi-Biega NP, Salonga NP, Okapi Faunal Reserve, Virunga NP. DRC participates in UNESCO's MAB Programme.

2. Conservation action

- Protected Areas of importance to Gorillas conservation:

- Kahuzi-Biega NP
- Maiko NP
- Tayna Gorilla Reserve (700km²) was set up between the Maiko and Virunga NPs by two local communities (the Batangi and Bamate Nations), recognised officially in 2002 by DRC as a "private reserve". Preliminary surveys suggest that between of 225-360 eastern lowland gorillas occur in the reserve.

- Current projects/activities with direct or potentials implications for Gorillas conservation:

- Ecotourism, and eastern lowland gorilla viewing has generated important revenues between 1986 and 1991 in Kahuzi-Biega NP (2000 visitors, 200.000 dollars). For the last decade, wars have considerably slowed things down, and the slaughter of habituated gorilla group in the park is a major setback (Caldecott and Miles, 2005).

- The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International supports the Tayna Gorilla Reserve community project, and is working with other local communities on seven other proposed reserves in the vicinity (Bakumbule Reserve, Usala Reserve, Bakano Reserve, Ngira'Yitu Reserve, Punia Reserve): there might be between 700 and 1400 gorillas in Tayna and these adjacent areas (Caldecott and Miles). The eight communities have formed the Union of Associations for Gorilla Conservation and Community Development in Eastern DRC (UGADEC).

- Initiative Locale pour la Sauvegarde de la Nature (ILSN) is active over the Masisi territory;

- Action Communautaire pour la Protection de la Nature Itombwe Mwenga (ACPN-IM) is involved in the Itombwe area (prior to 1998, Itombwe forest gorilla population was estimated around 1150 individuals, with a moderate hunting pressure at the time). Two nature reserves are proposed, the Monts Itombwe NR and the Mont Kabobol NR, as well as a forest reserve (Maniema) and a game reserve (Luama).
- Several research projects continued to work throughout the civil war, in particular WCS, the Max Planck Institute, and in Kahuzi-Biega NP a project on sympatric gorillas and chimpanzees, with Kyoto University.
- National organisations active in ape conservation are focusing on community projects and alternative livelihoods (POPOF, AFECOD, PAIDEK).
- WCS is currently undertaking a series of rapid assessment surveys, to try to evaluate the current status of the population.

3. Needs and recommended priority actions:

Overwhelming and immediate priorities for gorillas conservation are:

Nationally:

From: Grasp report (2002) Kinshasa, NGASP, Trilatéral DRC/Uganda/Rwanda Agreement (January 2004)

Policy and legislation

- Crisis management, damage assessment and limitation
- Reclaim parts of Kahuzi-Biega NP still outside rangers control
- Surveys the KB park to estimate surviving gorilla population
- Focus on lowland sector of KB park and Kasese region
- Maintain corridor between lowland and montane populations
- Support the Itombwe forest gorillas conservation initiative
- Develop community conservation initiatives
- Rehabilitate neglected Maiko NP
- Strengthen existing laws to protect gorillas
- Improve awareness among law enforcement agencies and the courts

Designation / strengthen of AP

- Strengthen the application of the existing legislation.
- Create and keep a Reserve at Itombwe, covering Mwenga, Fizi, Walungu areas for the eastern lowland gorilla.
- Create and keep a Reserve at Walikale for the preservation of the eastern lowlands gorilla and create a corridor between Maiko and Kahuzi Biega National Parks.
- Keep a Reserve at Tayna for the preservation of the eastern lowland gorilla.
- Create and keep a Constellation of Communal Reserves for the preservation of the eastern lowlands gorilla and support for the creation of a corridor between Maiko and Kahuzi Biega.
- Create and keep a Reserve at Sarambwe for the preservation of the eastern lowland gorilla.

Education and awareness

- Develop communal projects for preservation and sustainable projects for gorillas' habitats use.
- Support cooperation agencies and developed countries to encourage preservation and awareness initiatives for the local communities for the preservation of the eastern lowlands gorilla.

Communal development

- Contribution of preservation measures for the eastern lowland gorilla to the concerned regions economical development. Reducing poverty of the riparian populations around the reserves, cooperating with the private sector and the bilateral and multilateral partners. Communal development projects will be supported, in particular road planning and development, the development of schools, health centres, waterworks, et the supply to alternate activities generating incomes.
- Promote the participation of riparian communities in the reserves' management with the supply of the private mining and forest sector and of the partners to the internal and external development.
- Re-develop progressively a respectful "Gorillas" vision tourism.

- Analyses and promotion of the cultural customs and traditions beneficial for the gorillas preservation.
- Translate the gorillas preservation's lawful wordings into the local language (swahili).

Long-term financing

- Analyse and put a long term financing system in place allowing the involved national and local NGOs in western lowlands gorillas habitat and preservation