



**Fauna & Flora International**  
***Mountain gorilla conservation in Central Africa***



Coltan with spoon and gun  
J P Moreiras/Fauna & Flora International

**Answer the call**

***A joint initiative between Australia Zoo and Fauna & Flora International  
supported by Aussie Recycling Program***

**Fauna & Flora International (FFI)**

Founded in 1903 in response to over-hunting in Africa, FFI is a pioneering organisation. Throughout its 100 year history, FFI has championed the conservation of species and ecosystems through collaboration with, and empowerment of, local governments, NGOs, institutions and communities. Today FFI is a leading international conservation organisation working globally to address these threats. We aim to protect threatened habitats and species with an emphasis on developing our partners' capacity to conserve their own environments and integrating human needs into sustainable conservation strategies. FFI believes strongly that local people are the best stewards of the natural environment and as such our approach focuses on improving knowledge and skills, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability.

Fauna & Flora International Australia  
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T: +61 (3) 9416 5220; E: FFIAustralia@fauna-flora.org W: www.fauna-flora.org  
Vice Presidents include: Sir David Attenborough, Dr Lisbet Rausing, Stephen Fry, Lord John Browne, and Rove McManus  
Patron: Her Majesty Queens Elizabeth II



Innovative Conservation since 1903

FFI operates through:

- Engagement with businesses, communities and governments to build financially and socially sustainable conservation solutions;
- Using philanthropy to develop infrastructure for the development of sustainable income streams;
- Building livelihoods and improving community welfare;
- Safeguarding havens of biodiversity – not just those with greatest natural appeal;
- Addressing, reducing and mitigating against climate change impacts; and
- Helping businesses to reduce their impacts on biodiversity.

***Our vision is of a sustainable future for the planet, where biodiversity is effectively conserved by the people who live closest to it, supported by the global community.***

***Our mission is to act to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and take into account human needs.***

### **Supporting gorilla conservation**

Only two isolated populations of the Critically Endangered mountain gorilla, numbering approximately 790 individuals, are left in the world. Their final refuges are found in Central Africa on the border between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda. Over the past thirty years, FFI has worked in this difficult cross-border region to maintain the gorillas' habitat so they can thrive once again.

'Answer the call' was developed in cooperation with Australia Zoo and Aussie Recycling Programme (ARP), to help support the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) in its vital work to conserve gorilla habitat, through the simple process of recycling mobile phones. FFI receives a financial contribution for every phone donated, and through IGCP is ensuring the survival of the gorillas and helping to prevent further decline of their habitat through mining for coltan. This is the only programme in existence that is able to encompass the Mountain Gorilla's entire range and all aspects of their conservation.

### **University of New South Wales (UNSW)**

In early 2012, FFI Australia was delighted to welcome UNSW as a new partner in this exciting and important initiative. The Sustainability Office has worked tirelessly to promote Answer the Call and as a result FFI Australia is thrilled to have received 205 phones in 2012, which represents a total donation of AUD 1025.

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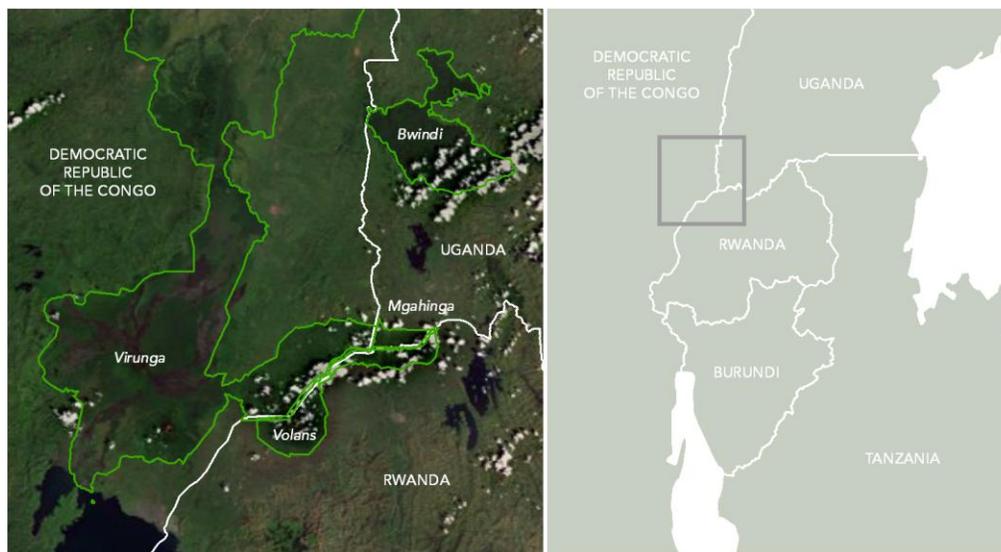
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## Activities in 2012

In 2012, FFI assisted the effective management of the national parks in which the gorillas reside, trained and equipped park rangers and managers to deliver effective monitoring and conservation and reduced the conflict between gorillas and the growing local population.



IGCP area, covering the national parks of Virunga (DRC), Volcans (Rwanda), Bwindi (Uganda) and Mgahinga (Uganda).

We have had great success in our conservation efforts this year, yet there are growing threats to the gorillas' survival. Most significantly was renewed conflict in the eastern DRC, which saw local staff working in tremendously difficult – and dangerous - conditions to stop gorillas being caught in the crossfire. Without our on-going support, deforestation, population growth and poaching will have a devastating impact on the success of this species after decades of progress. With your support we were able to expand and maintain conservation activities.

In 2012 we aimed to increase the effectiveness of our current projects and maintain support for our in-country partners by carrying out the following activities:

- 1) **Worked with local communities to reduce human-gorilla conflict** by training local people to monitor and respond to incidences of conflict – for example by using non-lethal deterrents and responses if gorillas raid nearby crops and fields.



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- 2) **Reduced local peoples' dependence gorilla habitats for resources** by developing incentives and alternative livelihoods. This involves establishing livestock farms, improving access to clean water access and reaching out to local schools which will relieve pressure on the local environment.
- 3) **Improved the management and research of key species** within the Virunga-Bwindi ecosystem to improve the wider understanding of the gorillas' precious habitat and reduce the transmission of diseases from human to gorilla.
- 4) **Strengthened the management of the cross-border parks** through staff training, scientific surveys and providing essential equipment for rangers. The result will be coordinated patrols to discover and destroy snares, improve law enforcement and reduce poaching.
- 5) **Conducted a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme** and management oriented research to provide information.
- 6) **Improve people's understanding about the mountain gorilla** by sponsoring Rwandan secondary school students and their teachers to visit the mountain gorillas. So far 450 Rwandans from secondary schools neighbouring Volcans National Park have visited the park.

### Significant Events

The year began with the Rwandan government increasing the cost of foreigner's permit to see the gorillas rising from \$500US to \$750US. Rwanda is one of the most popular parts of the gorilla's habitats for tourists to visit and 5% of each permit goes directly towards local communities.

Sadly, in February a young mountain gorilla was found dead in a poacher's snare. Snares are set to catch bush meat, usually deer, but their indiscriminate nature means gorillas are caught in the wire. In response, FFI, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and WWF were able to provide supplies to support additional anti-poaching patrols in Virunga National Park in the DRC and Volcans National Park in Rwanda. It is only through donations to the IGCP partners that such activities are possible.

As 2011 marked 20 years of the IGCP partnership, a comprehensive review was undertaken and a new strategy was produced, which went into force in mid-2012. The new strategy coincided with the collection of 5,000 days of ranger-based monitoring over the past 15 years. This data covers a diverse set of factors crucial to the gorilla's wellbeing, including tracking the gorilla's movements and habits, monitoring of wildlife crime and the relationships communities living near to the gorilla's range. This data also helps to properly plan conservation initiatives to focus resources where they will have the most impact.

In April 2012 the director of IGCP, Eugène Rutagarama, stepped down and handed day-to-day management to Dr Augustin Basabose, who was previously the IGCP Species Conservation Coordinator. During Eugène's many years as director, he was responsible for the remarkable success and continued recovery of mountain gorilla populations.

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Unfortunately, from May 2012 the situation in the DRC took a turn for the worse. A military general instigated a rebellion against the government, creating a M23 rebel army which based themselves in Virunga National Park. Non-essential park staff and their families were evacuated from Rumangabo and the situation became so serious that the remaining rangers had to fortify their positions with sandbags and negotiate with the military so that artillery would not be placed in their compounds.

Fortunately, both the military and M23 rebels respected the neutrality of the park staff and, unlike in previous conflicts, mountain gorillas were not targeted. After several weeks of being under siege and relying on supplies being flown into old airfields, the rangers were able to re-establish contact with gorilla troops. Fortunately, the gorillas had avoided the crossfire and were unharmed. By the end of August 2012, the situation had improved (although it has not yet been resolved) and the families of the rangers were able to return home to Rumangabo. The conflict however underlines the instability of life in the eastern DRC and the real dangers which rangers in trying to protect the gorillas.

### Conclusion

By working through IGCP in the Virunga-Bwindi region we will ensure that our work in DRC, Rwanda and Uganda is properly coordinated and unified, that efforts are not duplicated and international expertise from FFI, AWF, WWF and other conservation NGOs is effectively shared. Over the past few years, the gorillas' habitat has been conserved and numbers have increased by just over 3% annually. If we are able to continue our work in the Virunga-Bwindi region then we will be able to maintain or even improve on this success.



Credit: J P Moreireas/Fauna & Flora International

Aaron, thank you for your support in this important initiative. We are delighted to include UNSW as a key partner in the fight to save the beautiful and iconic mountain gorilla.

*For more information, please contact:*

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