



# Approaches to Gorilla Conservation

## Examples from the Democratic Republic of Congo

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#### Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe

##### Direct Aid for the Mountain Gorillas and their Forests

Since 1982, the *Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe* has been dedicated to the conservation of gorillas, especially eastern gorillas, and their habitats. We also support projects for the conservation of certain western gorilla populations that are particularly at risk.

Activities in Zaire/Congo have always been especially important for us. We support **national parks** and **local initiatives** and work together with other organisations in **international projects**. In addition, we support **surveys** and **research activities** of local scientists.

Another important goal is raising **public awareness**. Our magazine *Gorilla Journal* has been published twice annually for more than 10 years. The latest issue can be downloaded in German, English and French from our website ([www.berggorilla.org](http://www.berggorilla.org)). This website also publishes news and various information.

Our work is funded by donations and members' contributions. We are recognised as a non-profit organisation in Germany.

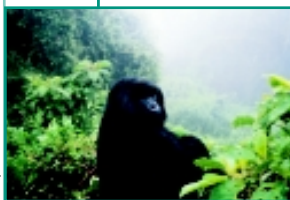


Photo: Carl Göttsche

#### Conservation in Protected Areas

##### Border Demarcation, Sarambwe Gorilla Special Reserve

Gorillas react very sensibly to disturbances by humans. To ensure their survival, **protected areas** are needed. The Sarambwe Forest is the Congolese continuation of Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park; gorillas from Bwindi often cross the border into it. Previously it was a part of the domaine de chasse de Rutshuru. To improve conservation and support **reforestation**, it was now upgraded to a **special reserve**.

The Congolese national park authority ICCN met with the traditional chief, local NGOs and representatives of the population. Fifty families who had settled within the area agreed to leave it if they received compensation. With our support, the border demarcation of the reserve began in April 2003.

**Erythrina trees** were planted along the border. A few months later, the plants around the trees were removed to help them grow, signs were erected and **Cordia trees** were planted to **mark the border permanently**.



Photo: Werner Hildebrandt

#### Public Awareness Activities

##### A Magazine for the Communities near Kahuzi-Biega

The magazine *le Gorille* is produced, with our support, by and for the people living close to the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. It shows why **conservation** is important for everybody and why **the park's resources should not be destroyed**. It contains articles about the rangers, the people, the park's activities, the animals and the present situation. For entertainment, it provides puzzles and jokes.

At the same time, **radio programs** are informing about the park and a tape with pop music was recorded.



*Le Gorille* is printed in French. Usually, the text is read in the community and interpreted to those who do not understand it. **Eight issues** have been published and distributed in the communities near the park.



#### The Situation in Congo

##### Gorillas – Victims of War, Greed and Poverty

In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo live two subspecies of eastern gorillas: The endemic eastern lowland or **Grauer's gorilla** (*Gorilla beringei graueri*) and the **Virunga mountain gorilla** (*Gorilla beringei beringei*). During the past few years,

the populations of Grauer's gorilla in particular have been devastated.

Since 1994, the Great Lakes region has been suffering from wars. The **exploitation of resources** has led to a dramatic **habitat destruction** as well as **bushmeat hunting**. Probably thousands of gorillas have been hunted for food and orders for baby gorillas have been placed to be kept as pets.

Among the human population, the consequences of the wars are visible everywhere – poverty, diseases, trauma, constant fear and a general hopelessness. Militia groups terrorize the population and destroy the natural heritage. To continue support for conservation activities under such conditions is especially critical and only possible with the help of reliable local partners.



Photo: Christian Lohrer



#### Law Enforcement

##### Equipment for the Rangers of the Kahuzi-Biega Park

In a protected area, wildlife conservation has to be secured by **law enforcement patrols**. Rangers **control human activities**, especially hunting and deforestation, and **arrest violators**. They remove material that humans left behind, especially wire snares, which are very dangerous for great apes. They also confiscate animals that were captured as well as plants and other resources that were collected in the park.

We have been supporting the Kahuzi-Biega National Park with ranger equipment for many years. Our support has so far included **uniforms clothing** and **equipment for patrols medicine** and various **technical equipment**. Recently, we provided



Photo: Carl Göttsche

#### Cooperation with the Local Population

##### Dialogue Committees Support the Virunga National Park

Conservation efforts require the **collaboration of the local population** To promote the conservation of the Virunga Park, dialogue committees between the ICCN and the communities were established. A dialogue committee is a framework incorporating all the parties involved in the conservation of a protected area for its **common management** and for **sustainable community development**. It is apolitical and without any financial object. It aims to establish a space for a frank dialogue between park and people and to contribute to the **promotion of development** and the **maintenance of biodiversity** in and around the park (including gorilla conservation).

With funds from the Basel Zoo (Switzerland) we supported the Jomba committee by supplying office equipment, field equipment, office furniture and communications equipment, by supporting small projects (e.g. potato seeds and small credits among members) and by motivating them to visit the fields, talk with the farmers about their problems and help solve them.



Photo: Werner Hildebrandt