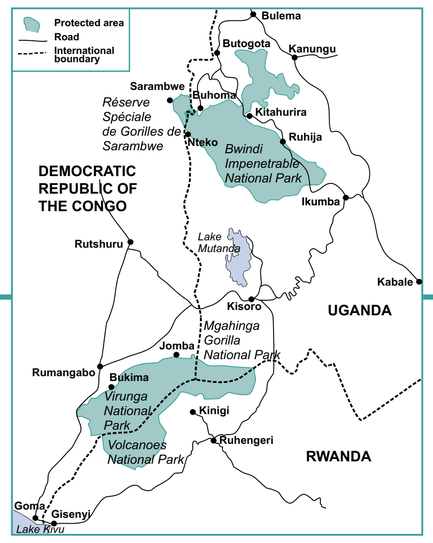
Contributions of a Small NGO to Mountain Gorilla Conservation

Some Examples from Uganda

Angela Meder

Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe e.V.

Habitat loss and encroachment of forests have been the main threat to gorillas in Uganda, and these dangers still persisted after 1991, when the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park were created to conserve the forests where the gorillas live. The threat from hunting has decreased in recent years, however, because of regular monitoring and patrolling.



In the management plan of the *Uganda Wildlife Authority* for these two national parks, responsibility for some functions is handled by a number of international NGOs. But there are also additional NGOs which contribute to gorilla conservation in a support role for UWA activities or by taking their own initiatives.

Since 1987, *Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe* has been supporting gorilla conservation in Uganda. Some of our activities during the early years were the purchase of land in Buhoma for the construction of park and community buildings, and the supply of equipment and clothing for the rangers in Mgahinga and Bwindi. This poster presents some recent activities.

Photo: Angela Meder

Bandas for tourists on the purchased land in Buhoma

Strengthening efficient protection of national parks

Protected areas are absolutely necessary in a highly populated, largely deforested country like Uganda to save endangered species. Gorillas react very sensitively to disturbances by humans and survive only in forests. We have funded the following activities, among others:

* Renovation of three ranger outposts in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park – this improved the conditions for law enforcement.
* Donation of a digital camera to the Bwindi/Mgahinga warden – this improves the documentation of incidents of encroachment.
* Provision of equipment, uniforms and raingear to the rangers in the Sarambwe Gorilla Special Reserve (the continuation of the Bwindi forest into D. R. Congo) – this supports transboundary gorilla conservation.

Photos: Dieter Speidel

Ruhija outpost before and after renovation

Bicycles for the Sarambwe Gorilla Special Reserve

Public awareness activities

Our newsletter *Gorilla Journal* has been published twice annually for 15 years and is available on the internet in English, French and German. Our website www.berggorilla.org provides all kinds of information on gorillas. We also support public awareness activities for the local population.

* Distribution of printed copies of *Gorilla Journal* to tourists – if visitors are well informed, they pose less danger to the gorillas and their visit will be more rewarding.
* Reliable and up-to-date information on the internet – the primary source of information in today's world.
* Printing of a gorilla book for schools – to raise children's appreciation for nature is the best guarantee for the future of conservation.

Gorilla Journal

Journal of Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe

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The Stories of Mugaruka and Chimanuka | Bwindi-Impenetrable: 15 Years as a National Park | The Cross-Sanaga Gorillas: Northernmost Gorilla Populations | Humans and Gorillas – what Kind of Relationship?

Pupils in Kisoro reading "A Day in Gorillaland"

Photo: UWA

From grass-root support to scientific publications

We support the employment of local scientists and conservationists in gorilla research projects, and we encourage and assist the creation of job opportunities locally:

* Sweaters produced by a local cooperative – women near Kisoro earn their living by producing clothes for rangers who protect the mountain gorillas.
* Partial funding of the Bwindi gorilla census – this is necessary for the efficient planning of conservation activities and provides jobs for local experts.
* Publication opportunities for Ugandan researchers and conservationists – *Gorilla Journal* and our website disseminate information to other experts.

Photo: Waltraud Ndagijimana

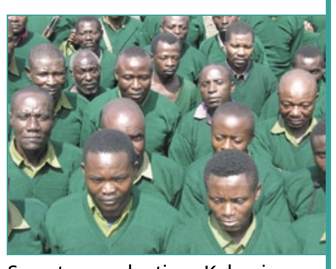
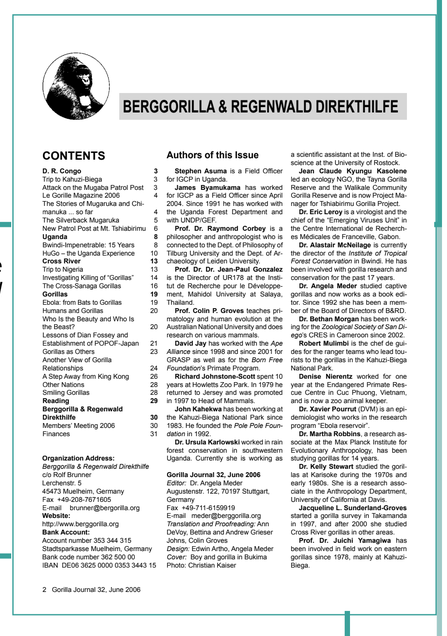


Photo: Carlos Schuler

Sweater production; Kahuzi-Biega rangers with sweaters



BERGGORILLA & REGENWALD DIREKTHILFE

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Authors of this Issue

Contents and authors of the new *Gorilla Journal*

Conservation of protected areas is our primary objective. We try to further this aim by supporting law enforcement and public awareness activities through cooperation with the national parks authorities, as well as international and local NGOs and the local population.

Photo: Iris Weiche

This cooperation is essential because we do not have conservation projects of our own; instead, we take part in joint projects and fund activities that cannot be funded by others. Our strength is to provide urgently needed support individually, quickly and directly.

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