



GRASP

Newsletter

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The Growing GRASP Partnership

The UNEP-UNESCO partnership for the conservation of great apes is nearing its third anniversary since its launch at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002¹; and signs of the partnership's impacts and influence on global great apes conservation efforts are increasingly evident.

In May 2005, UNEP learned of a European Commission decision to award 2.4 million Euros to GRASP for the "preservation of forest resources and improved livelihoods of forest peoples through conservation of great apes as flagship species". Execution of project activities will commence soon. In UNESCO, approximately \$400,000 from an on-going Central African World Heritage Forest Initiative was re-directed to monitoring the impact of the Ebola virus on populations of endangered great apes in the Odzala National Park of the Republic of the Congo.

Committed great apes specialists and advocates in countries like Australia and Japan have established national GRASP structures that are working to raise awareness and financial and technical resources for worldwide great apes conservation. From 22 to 30 May 2005, UNESCO staff were in Japan to dialogue with the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and other organizations to explore cooperation under the GRASP partnership.

At the end of 2004, an Interim Scientific Commission (ISC) was set up to advise the GRASP secretariat, interim Executive Committee (IEC) and the GRASP technical support teams. ISC scientists are preparing a preliminary map of strategically important populations and habitats for great apes conservation worldwide, and are also identifying significant gaps in knowledge that prevent effective conservation action in selected range States. Efforts are being made to have this information presented to the forthcoming Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) on Great Apes and First GRASP Council Meeting, to be hosted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kinshasa from 5 to 9 September 2005.

The GRASP Partnership now includes 23 range States, several donor countries and more than 30 non-governmental organizations.

¹ UNEP initiated the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) in 2001, while UNESCO joined when the Partnership was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.



The GRASP Secretariat: UNEP & UNESCO

As evidenced by the significant contribution from the European Commission referred to above, and support that donor countries like the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Denmark and Belgium have already provided, multilateral and bilateral development agencies are beginning to appreciate the fact that great apes conservation can be a vehicle for improving livelihood options for impoverished people in rural and marginal areas. The GRASP secretariat has had exploratory discussions with private sector representatives, and their interest in contributing to GRASP is growing. The next two to three years will be critical for GRASP as it strives to catalyze significant focus and concentration in effective conservation action in all 23 range States.

Natarajan Ishwaran, UNESCO

GRASP Receives Major European Commission Grant

The United Nations Environment Programme is pleased to announce that the GRASP Partnership has been awarded a significant European Commission funding grant for the preservation of forest resources and improved livelihoods of forest peoples through conservation of great apes as flagship species. The maximum grant is 2.4 million Euros. As well as UNEP, five GRASP European Union-based Partner non-governmental organizations, who co-submitted the original proposal to the European Commission, will be responsible for the majority of activities to be undertaken at the field level in Indonesia, Cameroon, Democratique Republique of the Congo and Ivory Coast. A substantial portion of the funds have also been allocated for support to great ape range state wildlife agencies, technical development and national and regional planning processes.

Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and first GRASP Council Meeting

Under the patronage of His Excellency, President Joseph Kabila, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), will host the Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) on Great Apes and First GRASP Council Meeting from 5-9 September 2005.

The meeting will bring together the great ape range states in Africa and Asia, donor governments, biodiversity-related environmental conventions, UN agencies, local and international non-governmental organizations, scientists, the private sector and local communities to make commitments towards ensuring the long-term survival of wild great ape populations and habitat. All GRASP Partners as well as other parties with a stake in great ape conservation are invited to attend. UNEP and UNESCO will fund the participation of two government representatives from each of the range states. A formal invitation with key documents for discussion will be distributed. These documents and other important information will be posted shortly on the GRASP website (www.unep.org/grasp) or you can email grasp@unep.org or telephone +254 20 62 41 63 if you have specific questions.

GRASP: Past, Present & Future

At the practical and scientific level there are many activities being undertaken the world over to help protect the great apes. Each one, in its own way, tries to address the problems, seeking out and implementing effective – albeit frequently localized— solutions to each threat. But the world's wild ape populations are still in decline.

Four years ago GRASP did not exist. A global framework to coordinate the many efforts to save our closest animal relatives was just an idea. **But it was an idea whose time had come.** Today UNEP's vision is a reality. With 18 of the 23 range States having joined and nominated focal points, we have achieved a new level of commitment and participation from the countries with wild apes in their care. Uniquely, GRASP has also opened doors to new and additional funds for great ape conservation from several donor countries and agencies. Together with over 30 non-governmental organizations, at least four international conventions and two United Nations agencies, the Partnership really has taken shape.

The production of National Great Ape Survival Plans (NGASPs), initiated by Rob Hepworth at UNEP, has proved an important planning tool for some range States, and we must not only commend but continue to offer our support for the valuable work these States have undertaken. Further, the emerging role of the Scientific Commission, evaluating where the most important great ape populations are and what practical, site-based measures are proving most effective, is an exciting and encouraging development. The Born Free Foundation has had the honour to be a GRASP Partner

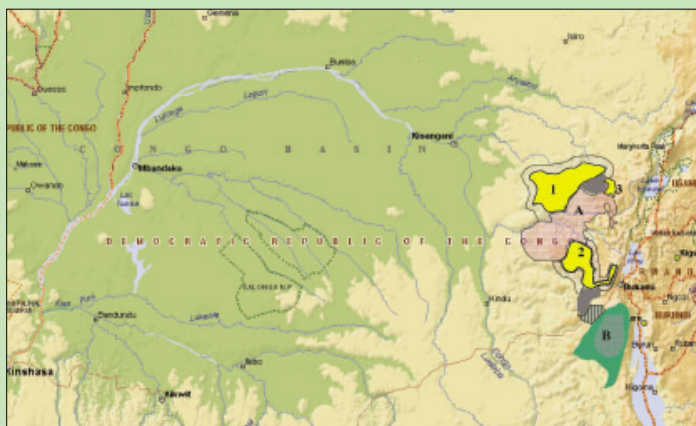
from the start. We have served the process since 2001 through our support of the first GRASP technical support team. We have provided a base from which the technical support team has operated, we have invested time and more than \$200,000 in the process, and we remain committed to the next phase, whatever GRASP determines that to be.

Ian Redmond and the Technical Support Team have worked tirelessly to assist, encourage and advise the Partnership. In fact, Ian's boundless enthusiasm has been one of the driving forces of GRASP to date. But we recognize that the role of the Technical Support Team is bound to change, and that a shift in emphasis is part of the growth of the Partnership. The introduction of the Executive Committee has given us a democratic mechanism for determining the direction of GRASP, helping to ensure that the achievements so far lead to the delivery of conservation benefits. There is no question in my mind that GRASP represents the best – and probably the only – chance for wild great apes.

The participants at the forthcoming Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and First GRASP Council Meeting, who are charged with taking the energy, the investment, the sheer perseverance of the last 4 years, forward into the future, carry a great responsibility, more than a responsibility to the process or even to GRASP as an ideal. On behalf of all humanity, they must help deliver a viable future for wild great apes and the wild places they rely upon for survival.

Will Travers, Born Free Foundation

Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International and Jane Goodall Institute's Historic Partnership



Forty years after Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall began their pioneering work with great apes in Africa, the two organizations they founded have formed a historic partnership to work together in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In their separate spheres working on behalf of great apes, both the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI) and the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI), both GRASP Partners, have developed the same conservation philosophy: Effective conservation must begin with the needs and priorities of local communities. With that shared approach, the two organizations will join forces in an area that has significant gorilla and chimpanzee populations.

This new joint project will help improve health care, provide family planning training and methods and help local people develop sustainable and more efficient agricultural and livestock practices. It will build on a three-year-old DFGFI programme working with community based reserves and national parks to protect the eastern lowland gorilla and other endemic species in an 8.6 million acre area. The new project will use a community-centered conservation model developed by JGI in Tanzania.

In early 2001, DFGFI launched a new "Community Conservation" programme to protect eastern lowland gorillas, endemic to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This programme resulted in the now well known Tayna Gorilla Reserve, a government-sanctioned 700km² nature reserve, managed by traditional leaders, landowners and local stakeholders. The success of this project led to the formation of seven more community-based reserve projects, who with Tayna created an umbrella association they call UGADEC (Union of Associations

for Gorilla Conservation and Community Development in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Recently, to expand and enhance this programme, DFGFI created a strategic partnership with Conservation International (CI), and received a three-year funding package of more than 3 million dollars from CI, via their Global Conservation Fund and the USAID-funded Central African Regional Programme for the Environment. The overarching philosophy of this programme is that conservation can successfully become the responsibility of local people and that community development initiatives must go hand –in hand with the protection of biodiversity.

Through partnerships with Citizens International and Advance Africa, JGI recently was awarded one million dollars from USAID to adapt its community-centered conservation and development Lake Tanganyika Catchment Reforestation and Education (TACARE) project, operating since 1994 around Gombe National Park, to a site of its choosing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After evaluating several possibilities, and then conducting an extended site visit with DFGFI and UGADEC, JGI announced that it would partner with DFGFI to support the latter's community-based conservation programmes by providing linked community development initiatives modeled after TACARE.

JGI chose to partner with UGADEC for several reasons. First, UGADEC's geographical footprint encompasses a large chimpanzee population, in line with the JGI mission to preserve chimpanzee habitat. A JGI representative interviewed explained another significant reason: "Just as importantly, we recognized a great opportunity to support an already existing network of truly grassroots organizations that tie community development to conservation objectives. All the parties understand that sustainable conservation must involve local people as true partners."

To provide development initiatives that will enhance and strengthen the DFGFI Community Conservation programme, JGI will launch a series of projects focusing on improving livelihoods through enhanced agricultural and livestock practices. Aided by Advance Africa and Citizens International, JGI also will develop projects to improve health care and family planning. These programmes will enhance and complement many of DFGFI's ongoing interventions, such as the Ecosystem Health Programme, which studies cross-transmission of intestinal parasites between great apes and local human communities and provides free treatment to participants.

Erika Archibald, DFGFI (earchibald@gorillafund.org)
Nona Gandelman, JGI (ngandelman@janegoodall.org)

The Tayna Centre for Conservation Biology: One year later

The Tayna Centre for Conservation Biology (TCCB) joined the GRASP Partnership in 2005 and is the first GRASP Partner solely based in a range state. TCCB is a university centre dedicated to conservation biology. This education project for community development aims at training and strengthening the scientific and operating capacity of the Union of Gorilla Conservation Associations for the Development of the Eastern Region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (L'Union des associations de conservation des gorilles pour le développement à l'est de la République démocratique du Congo) (UGADEC).

Launched in 2002 by chief conservator Pierre Kakule, the concept was put into practice on 5 January 2004 when the university term opened. TCCB conducts its activities in conjunction with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through its Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, its Ministry of Environment and its Ministry of Justice. Upon its creation, TCCB comprised three departments:

- Research and conservation biology;
- Conservation and management of protected areas;
- Education, communication and information.

For the first year of the course, the academic year 2004–2005, these departments initially operated in Goma. One hundred scholarship students were recruited through various UGADEC member associations, namely:

- Tayna Gorilla Reserve
- Bakumbule Primate Community Action
- Community Conservation for the Bakano Forest Reserve
- Usala Gorilla Reserve
- Punia Gorilla Reserve
- Utudna and Wassa Gorilla Reserve
- Bakumbule Community Primate Reserve
- Local Nature Protection Initiative

The students are for the most part the sons and daughters of landowners that have handed over their land for the creation of UGADEC community reserves. They also include, however, the students of Wamba Laporé, who also benefit from training with a view to the establishment of reserves for the preservation of bonobos. At the end of the academic year, the students were



The Tayna Center for Conservation Biology under construction

distributed among the UGADEC community reserves, where they underwent a two-month further training course in awareness raising and gorilla and chimpanzee monitoring. Beginning with the current academic year (2004-2005), the centre will function autonomously, and will have its headquarters in Kasugho, in Lubero district, North Kivu Province, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With respect to permanent scientific staff, the centre recruits visiting professors from other universities both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and abroad. The centre's work is carried out by an administrative and technical service department equipped with 11 computers and a photocopier. Construction of the centre's buildings, as well as various related activities including electrification, provision of drinking water, agriculture, the rearing of dairy cows in stalls, fish farming in tanks and poultry breeding in henhouses, are under way.

A medical-surgical centre and a community radio are already up and running and provide practice for the students. The local chief, who provided the land on which TCCB is sited, has donated an additional plot where a sanctuary, to be known as the Katoyo Sanctuary, will be established to house animals confiscated from traffickers or other illegal owners. This will mark the successful conclusion of a long campaign of environmental education in the Tayna region. We are grateful to the managers of the following organizations, without whom we could not have achieved our goals: Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International, Conservation International, Jane Goodall Institute and Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe.

Pierre Kakule Vwirasihikya, TCCB

GRASP Japan

In early 2004, Japanese primatologists established GRASP Japan in order to support the activities of the GRASP Partnership and to take additional initiatives for the conservation of great apes. GRASP Japan consists of members from all of the seven sites in Asia and Africa where Japanese primatologists are carrying out great ape-related field research and conservation activities. Building on their extensive knowledge and experience in the field, GRASP Japan members planned to undertake great ape conservation activities aimed at addressing conservation priorities at the following sites in Africa and Indonesia:



With the support from the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations, the National Federation of UNESCO associations in Japan, the GRASP Secretariat and many other

Japanese friends of great apes, GRASP Japan launched in April 2005 a campaign to raise funds for great ape conservation. Funds secured will be used solely for those conservation activities listed above and to support other projects and activities sponsored by the UNEP-UNESCO GRASP secretariat.

Representatives of GRASP Japan, Professor Toshisada Nishida (GRASP Patron), Professor Tetsuro Matsuzawa (GRASP Interim Scientific Committee member) and Dr Akira Suzuki (Director of Japan Wildlife Research Center), are working closely with the GRASP Secretariat on the following:

- Workshops with the International Timber Trade Organization and UNESCO in Japan
- A GRASP exhibition and related events at the World EXPO 2005 from 14 August to 3 September in Aichi, Japan
- The Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and First GRASP Council Meeting, to be held from 5 to 9 September 2005 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

These GRASP Japan members are also busy raising funds in Japan and are promoting the GRASP Partnership to the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japanese governmental bodies.

Naoto Shibui, UNESCO (sc.eco5@unesco.org)

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GRASP Exhibition and Events at the WORLD EXPO 2005, Aichi, Japan



Entrance to the UN pavilion housing the GRASP exhibition

The World EXPO 2005 in Aichi, Japan, will have the theme "Nature's Wisdom." GRASP is organizing a great ape exhibition and related events to be held at the EXPO's United Nations Pavilion from 14 August to 3 September 2005, over the Japanese

summer holidays. The exhibition will consist of publicity and information panels, GRASP promotional and awareness raising material and other great ape paraphernalia. Organizers of other pavilions, including those of Uganda, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau and various Japanese prefectures, are interested in displaying GRASP publicity material at their events, which will run for periods between March and September 2005.

Volunteers will guide visitors through the GRASP exhibition and present a traditional Japanese picture story in cooperation with GRASP Japan at the entrance of the United Nations Pavilion. There will be other activities, including a press conference by senior staff of UNEP and UNESCO and prominent Japanese individuals. Great ape costumes will also be worn by United Nations Pavilion volunteers and GRASP Japan members will be present to respond to questions from the public about great apes. The possibility of organizing charity concerts and public relations campaigns following the GRASP exhibition at the World EXPO is being explored.

About 150,000 to 200,000 visitors are expected to visit the GRASP exhibition over its three-week run. The vast majority of these will be Japanese citizens. Donation boxes will be present to benefit from visitors' generosity, with the proceeds going to GRASP Japan's great ape conservation work. GRASP Partners interested in contributing to the GRASP exhibition and related activities at the World EXPO 2005 are invited to contact *Naoto Shibui, UNESCO* (sc.eco5@unesco.org).

Apes in the News

A case of illegal ape trade is exciting the media in Southeast Asia. Safariworld is a zoo near Bangkok, Thailand, notorious for its orangutan kickboxing show. Conservationists raised the alarm in November 2003 when it was revealed that more than 100 orangutans were claimed to have been "captive bred" from only 14 adults! The Thai authorities took DNA samples and concluded that only 29 could be offspring from the legally held adults and that the rest had been illegally imported. During the thirteenth meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties last October, however, a sign at Safariworld simply said the orangutan show was "under renovation". Indonesia has formally requested the return of the illegally imported animals and GRASP partner the Balikpapan Orangutan Survival Foundation has prepared quarantine facilities and an area of forest suitable for reintroducing them to their natural habitat. Unfortunately, at least 15 have died or disappeared from the zoo while diplomatic and legal wheels slowly grind. There are also disturbing reports that a similar safari park in Cambodia is now staging orangutan kick-boxing shows, and questions are being asked about the provenance of these animals too. It is fortunate indeed that Thailand's prime minister said in a speech to the CITES Conference of the Parties that his country was "prepared to take the lead in the formation of a new Southeast Asia regional law enforcement network to combat nature crimes". Source: BOS Foundation news release, Jan 17 2005 and local press coverage.

Evidence of a flourishing trade in young apes for the exotic pet trade continues to emerge. Kenyan customs authorities confiscated 3 female and two male chimpanzee infants on 31 January 2005. A sixth infant died soon after the chimpanzees were discovered, emaciated and frightened, crammed into a travelling crate marked "dogs", along with four guenon monkeys. The five surviving chimpanzees are now being cared for at Kenya's Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary, but the people responsible for their plight evaded capture. The destination for such animals also usually evades law enforcement officers, but one such crime is currently being investigated. The International Primate Protection League (IPPL) learned in January 2005 of a baby orangutan openly for sale in a pet shop in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The sales assistant in "Exotique Pets" said the young male was priced at 55,000 riyals (about \$13,000) and that a second infant, a female, had recently been sold for \$10,000. IPPL has sent details to the Saudi authorities and the CITES secretariat, and are awaiting news of a prosecution. Source: IPPL News, April 2005.

GRASP Interim Scientific Commission Launched

An eleven member Interim Scientific Commission (ISC) was elected in November 2004 and will serve until new elections are held late in 2005. The co-Chairs of the ISC, Dr. Mark Leighton and Dr. Christophe Boesch, participated in both the December 2004 and the April 2005 Interim Executive Committee (IEC) meetings, which provided opportunities to define the most pressing activities the ISC could undertake during 2005. These adhere closely to the functions defined for the Scientific Commission in the draft Rules for the Organization and Management of the GRASP Partnership. So far, the ISC has reviewed funding proposals submitted to GRASP, helped review the work plan for technical support teams in consultation with the secretariat, and advised GRASP on how it might best achieve its objectives from a scientific perspective.

The April IEC meeting participants determined that the ISC should develop a georeferenced database of great ape population distribution, indicating the key habitats and populations that would conserve the genetic and ecological diversity of great apes across their ranges. The list of these indicative populations and supporting maps would be presented at the forthcoming Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) on Great Apes and First GRASP Council Meeting, and would serve to highlight that GRASP's key objective is to protect these 100 or so priority populations. Of course, the quality of field data varies by taxa, and this effort will be a work in progress. At its inaugural meeting in April, the executive committee of the Section on Great Apes (SGA) of the IUCN/SSC/Primate Specialist Group agreed that the 90+ SGA members should assist the ISC in this endeavor. To conclude this work before the IGM to as high a standard as possible, this month the ISC is forming a working group of experts in remote sensing and great ape conservation scientists. The database will be designed to allow a wide range of studies and outputs, and to serve as a monitoring tool for habitat and population status.

Mark Leighton, GRASP Interim Scientific Commission

Contact GRASP

Melanie Virtue, GRASP Team Leader
United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: +254 20 62-4163
Fax: +254 20 62-4300
grasp@unep.org
www.unep.org/grasp