



May 2009 update from the GRASP Secretariat

Highlights

1. 2009 Year of the Gorilla & the CMS Gorilla Agreement

- The UNEP Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the UNEP/UNESCO Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) joined hands to declare 2009 the International Year of the Gorilla (YoG).
- **Skating on Thin Ice:** To mark the beginning of the 2009 Year of the Gorilla, a troupe of skaters dressed as gorillas took to the rink at the Natural History Museum in London. (Visit www.un.int/wcm/content/lang/en/pid/8308 for the report and for the video, visit [http://latestnews.virginmedia.com/news/video/2009/01/15/gorillas skate on thin ice](http://latestnews.virginmedia.com/news/video/2009/01/15/gorillas_skate_on_thin_ice)). Gorillas on 'thin' ice marked the first awareness-building and fundraising event of the 12 month-long campaign and launched an appeal to other organizations to get involved. Numerous events have been scheduled throughout the year. Visit <http://www.yog2009.org> for all event listings.
- **Football for the Forests:** A Bushmeat Awareness Match which was earlier scheduled for 2009 has been postponed for early 2010 to tie in with preparations for the World Cup in South Africa. Bushmeat trade is a highly complex issue and its commercialization, coupled with unsustainable harvesting, pose a significant threat to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. We hope that the good example of national sporting heroes will encourage illegal poachers, traders and consumers of gorillas and other endangered species to limit their business to legal and sustainably harvested species. Given the strong support and signs of goodwill received from our GRASP partners, UNEP/UNESCO and the football federations of Cameroon and Nigeria, we are excited to see this event through! GRASP and its various partners will continue to move forward with the necessary planning for the event and will keep you posted on future progress.
- **The Gorilla Agreement:** The GRASP secretariat has been working closely with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) on the implementation of the Gorilla Agreement since the Paris meeting in October 2007. The first meeting of the Parties took place from 29 April to 3 May 2009 in Rome. Participants representing five parties, four non-party range states, 17 non-range states, 10 non-governmental organizations, UNEP, UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and UNEP-Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) discussed, among others, a draft action plan and the establishment of a Technical Committee.
- **The 2009 Year of the Gorilla Blog** is now online at <http://gorilla.wildlifedirect.org>. The blog is a joint initiative between WildlifeDirect, GRASP, CMS, WAZA, PASA, Born Free Foundation,

WCS, the Gorilla Organization, GTZ, and other organizations involved in gorilla conservation. The goal uniting these various organizations is to raise funds for a selection of priority gorilla field-conservation projects.

- **Year of the Gorilla Symposium:** GRASP is assisting the German Ministry for Environment and CMS in the organization of the Year of the Gorilla Symposium in Frankfurt from 9 – 10 June 2009. The international symposium will see representatives from government, NGOs, scientific bodies, and interested parties convene to discuss key threats to gorillas and their habitat and to issue guidelines on best practices to mitigate them. It will be followed by a gala dinner on 10 June.
- **Kwita Izina:** In June, President Paul Kagame will host the fifth annual naming ceremony for all mountain gorillas born in Rwanda in the previous 12 months. The theme this year is 'Celebrating the UN Year of the Gorilla', and the event is preceded by a scientific conference on "Challenges and opportunities for Gorilla Conservation in the Greater Virunga Massif"

2. GRASP and Ramsar film nominated for ROSCAR award

- The documentary film on oil exploration in Petit Loango National Park in Gabon, commissioned by GRASP and the Ramsar Convention, was nominated for a ROSCAR Award at the 2009 Wild Talk Africa Film Festival in Durban. The film was screened on 22 April 2009 at the festival followed by a discussion with GRASP Chief Consultant and Year of the Gorilla Ambassador, Ian Redmond. Although the film did not bring home the award, the nomination was certainly a great achievement in itself given the number of entries. A preview of the movie is available on the GRASP website at <http://www.unep.org/grasp>.
- The Gabonese premiere of the film took place on 24 April, in Libreville, at a ceremony to designate three new Ramsar Sites, presided over by Gabon's Vice Prime Minister, with several ministers and high level dignitaries present. GRASP and Ramsar personnel were on hand to answer questions about the film and discuss its implications for Gabon.

3. Environmental Peace-building and DR Congo Programme

- **Spanish funded projects in DRC and Congo:** With new funding from the Spanish Government, we are continuing to support African Parks Network (APN), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) & Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in strengthening monitoring and surveillance activities and to develop and implement a conflict resolution strategy in Eastern and Northern DR Congo. In addition, as part of a Spanish funded Lifeweb initiative, 2009 will see GRASP expanding its capacity-building, surveying, and wildlife health activities in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, Republic of Congo.
- **DR Congo Programme:** GRASP continues an extensive exchange of expertise between the UNEP Expert Group on Environment, Conflict, and Peacebuilding and the UNEP Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB). At the request of the government of DR Congo, GRASP is assisting in the following areas:
 - legal support to the Ministry for Environment for the development of an Environmental Framework Law;
 - post-conflict environmental assessments;
 - support to Protected Area Authorities;

- technical support for emerging issues such as the firewood/charcoal problem in many regions, especially where there was a high influx of Internally Displaced People.
- **Virunga energy project:** GRASP is facilitating and formalizing a dialogue among different stakeholder groups around the Virunga National Park (humanitarian, development and conservation partners). In February, GRASP attended a joint scoping mission with UNEP's Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB) & UNHCR to develop proposals and fundraising plans for the 10 year strategic plan for the Conservation of the Virunga landscape and for energy and charcoal/firewood alternatives in North and South Kivu.

4. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD)

- On 30 October 2008, UNEP's senior management approved a four-year, four-country REDD++ GRASP initiative to be implemented in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and a fourth, yet-to-be-decided country in Central Africa. This followed consultations with the GRASP Scientific Commission and a number of internal and external partners, in particular regarding site selection criteria for great ape priority populations. The total budget for the project is USD 2.9m. The start of project activities is currently pending following contractual issues.

Latest Funding Successes

In the past 12 months, the GRASP secretariat has secured project funding from different donors as follows:

Donor	Amount in USD	To be used for...
Norway	1,000,000	Mayombe Forest- DRC, Congo Brazaville and Angola
Spain	286,188	Kahuzi-Biega & Garamba National Park - DRC
Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation	281,402	REDD- Indonesia and Cameroon
Norway	200,000	REDD (as above)
France	134,771	For gorilla related activities, possibly Nigeria- Cameroon soccer match
UNEP	80,000	DR Congo Programme, Virunga activities
United Nations Association, Sweden	18,598	General activities
UK Defra	18,416	General activities
Monaco	28,000	Year of the Gorilla activities
GRAND TOTAL	2,047,375	

Furthermore, GRASP is currently in talks with Spain on the extension of the DRC project activities, and additional funding for new projects in the wider Congo basin.

Other Field Activities

- A **chimpanzee survey training workshop** was recently conducted by the Scientific Commission at the Taï National Park in Ivory Coast. The intensive training was taken by participants from Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ghana Range States. The main focus was on both theoretical and practical methods of sampling, collecting and analyzing data collected from the field. They also gained knowledge on the use of distance and mapping programs as well as on methods to monitor chimpanzee populations.

For additional information, visit:

http://en.swoopshare.com/file/df052cdeea3646f045689941eb0cf94e/Survey+Training+Workshop+Cote+d%27Ivoire+Febr_Mar+2009.wmv.html

- **Transboundary dialogue between Liberia and Cote D'Ivoire:** GRASP is continuing discussions with Liberia and Ivory Coast on a possible long-term transboundary conservation and peace-building initiative. This will utilize lessons from the Virunga transboundary experience. Consultations with all partners on the ground are already underway.
- **The Mayombe transboundary initiative** between Angola, DR Congo and Congo Brazzaville, which was developed by GRASP and is being implemented by UNEP recently held its first stakeholders' meeting, 16 -17 April, 2009 in Kinshasa, DR Congo. GRASP took part in this meeting that saw the development of a draft Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the creation of a transboundary protected area; the formation of a Project Steering Committee; and the review and endorsement of the Mayombe project document.
- We hope to eventually expand this into a small number of **transboundary great ape cooperation programmes** that showcase the benefits that great ape conservation can bring to peace and stability. One small but interesting component of this work will be an attempt to link up elephant and chimpanzee surveys and monitoring to cut costs and share data – GRASP and the CITES programme on monitoring the illegal killing of elephants (MIKE), submitted a joint proposal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in this regard.
- **The GRASP European Commission project** 'Preservation of forest resources and improved livelihoods of forest peoples through conservation of great apes as flagship species' is now nearing the end of its third year of implementation. Discussions are ongoing with EC for a no-cost extension.
Progress reports are available on-line at:
http://www.unep.org/grasp/Activities_and_Projects/pf_EC.asp
- **'Indigenous People's Participation** in Mapping of Traditional Forest Resources for Sustainable livelihoods and Great Ape Conservation'. This project, conceived by GRASP and another UNEP division, and implemented jointly by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Forest Peoples' Programme (FPP) in Cameroon has just been completed. It worked with Baka hunter-gatherers located near Boumba Bek NP, assisting them to map their traditional territories, which overlap with high concentrations of western gorillas and chimpanzees, to help secure their rights as well as protecting both ape species.

Meetings & Lectures

- **African Elephants Range States Meeting:** This was organized by CITES secretariat and took place in February, 2009. GRASP was invited to inform the group about the challenges of running a Type II Partnership and how it could be applied to a Global Partnership for Elephants. The elephants' role as keystone-species and their potential role in attracting carbon finance and future payment for other ecosystem services such as water for the enhancement and sustainable management of their habitat were discussed.
- **4th GRASP Executive Committee meeting:** The meeting took place in November, 2008 in Rome, Italy prior to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Conference of the Parties (COP9). The Great Ape Trust of Iowa, Traffic (both category E) and ProWildlife (category H) were approved and admitted as new partners. The minutes of the executive Committee meeting are available online at:
http://www.unep.org/grasp/Meetings/executive_committee_meetings.asp
- **GRASP Chief Consultant, Ian Redmond, gave the following GRASP-related lectures:**
 - "Great Apes and Climate Change" at the IUCN Congress in Barcelona
 - "Great Apes and Ecosystem Services" at CBD/CMS/GRASP/COMIFAC Capacity-Building Workshop in Cameroon
- **International Chimpanzee Workshop,** convened in honour of the Ngamba Island Sanctuary 10th anniversary from 3–4 July 2008 in Kampala, Uganda. The two GRASP patrons in attendance, Jane Goodall and Richard Wrangham were very interested in GRASP's recent work on biofuels and REDD.

Support to Range State authorities

- Since May 2007, three new GRASP Range State focal points have been appointed as follows;
 - Abdul-Abib F. Conteh, Sierra Leone,
 - Philip Tabi TaKo-Eta, Cameroon and
 - Daniel Idiata Mambounga, Gabon.

Focal points have each received IT equipment as part of the on-going GRASP European Commission project, implemented by the Technical Support Team in the Born Free Foundation.

Announcements

- **2009 Future for Nature Award:** GRASP is pleased to announce that Dr. Inza Koné, a member of GRASP's Scientific Commission, won the 2009 Future for Nature Award. GRASP congratulates Dr. Koné for this well deserved prestigious award. The chair of the Future for Nature Foundation and guest of honor Sir David Attenborough handed over the prize during an awards ceremony on March 20th in Amsterdam. The prize rewards individuals for their internationally outstanding species protection efforts and comes with a grant of €50,000. Dr. Koné holds a PhD in Animal Ecology from the University of Cocody in Abidjan, Côte-d'Ivoire.
- **The GRASP website** has been redesigned to improve its look, feel and functionality. Interactive Great Ape Range State Maps are now available online at <http://www.unep.org/grasp>.

The new photo galleries of the four great ape species can be viewed online at http://www.unep.org/grasp/images/photo_gallery/Great%20Apes%20Survival%20Partnership%20-%20Photo%20Gallery/album/

5. The French translation of the **World Atlas of Great Apes and Their Conservation** is nearly complete. UNESCO will identify a suitable launch date shortly, and notify partners of availability.

This update covers the period of June 2008 – May 2009