



**Institut Congolais pour
la Conservation de la
Nature (ICCN)**
Kinshasa, DRC



**Rwanda Development
Board (RDB)**
Kigali, Rwanda



**Uganda Wildlife
Authority (UWA)**
Kampala, Uganda



Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration Executive Secretariat
Kigali, Rwanda

Joint News Release

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Anna Behm Masozera
On behalf of the
Greater Virunga Transboundary Executive
Secretariat
+250 782332280
abehm@awf africa.org

Census confirms increase in population of the critically endangered Virunga mountain gorillas

KINSHASA, DRC; KIGALI, Rwanda; KAMPALA, Uganda.— The analysis of a census conducted in March and April 2010 in the Virunga Massif confirms a 26.3 % increase in the population of mountain gorillas, *Gorilla beringei beringei*, in this area over the last seven years, with a 3.7 % annual growth rate.

When the census was conducted, there were a total of 480 mountain gorillas, in 36 groups along with 14 solitary silverback males in the Virunga Massif. Of the 480 mountain gorillas, 352 (73%) are habituated (349 in groups and three solitary males) and 128 are unhabituated (117 in groups and 11 solitary males). The last census conducted in the Virunga Massif was in 2003, when the population was estimated at 380 individuals.

The Virunga Massif includes three contiguous national parks spanning the Virunga Volcanoes on the border of three countries: Parc National des Virunga in DRC, Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in Uganda. The only other location where mountain gorillas exist is Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda.

Along with the 302 mountain gorillas censused in 2006 in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and four orphaned mountain gorillas in a sanctuary in DRC, the total known world population is 786 individuals.

“The fruits of collaboration that have been nurtured through the transboundary coordination of Uganda Wildlife Authority efforts and resources with those of the Rwanda Development

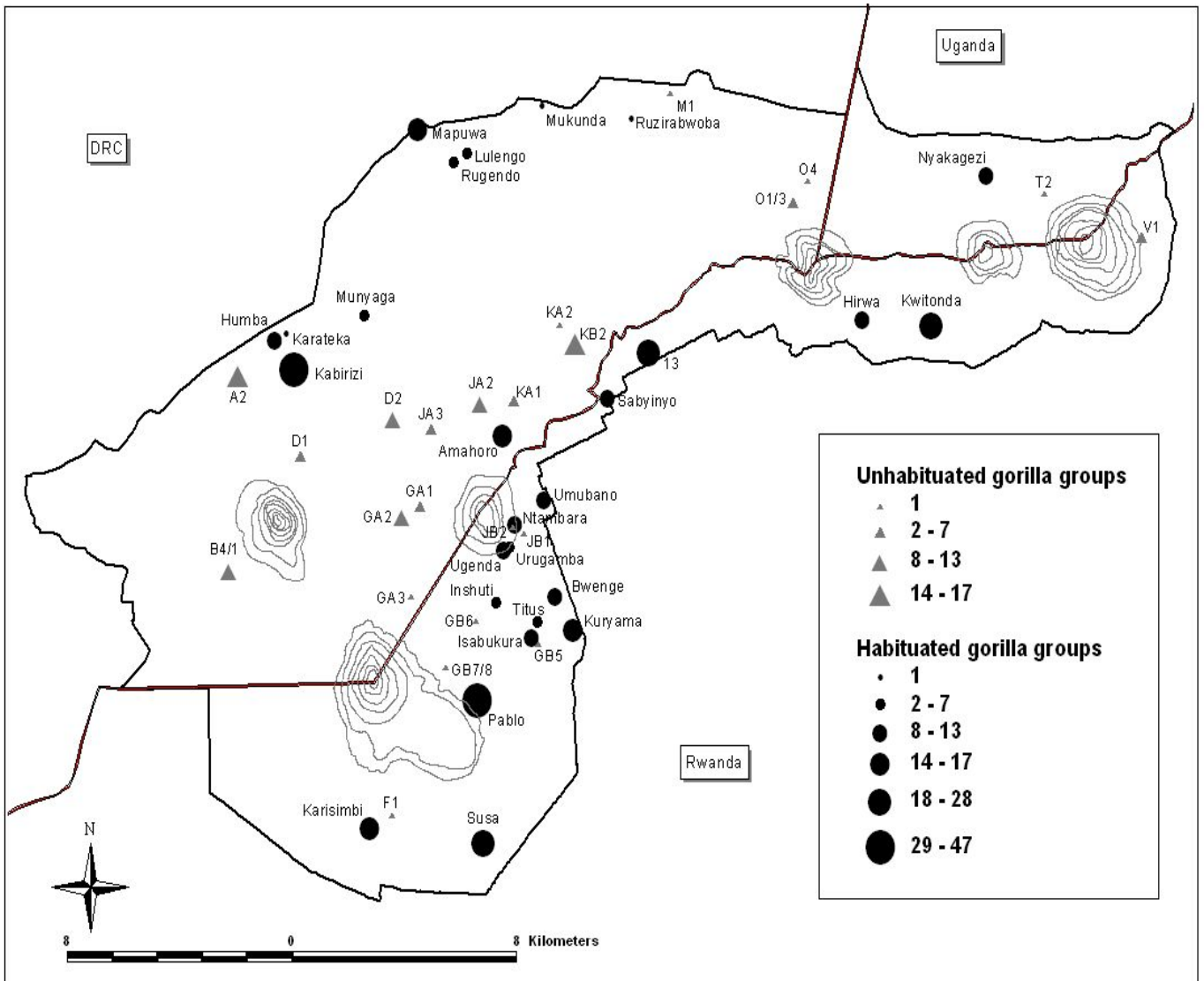
Board and L'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature cannot be overemphasized," stated Mr. John Makombo, Director for Conservation at the Uganda Wildlife Authority. "Uganda continues to pledge her support towards any efforts that will see the sustainable existence of a healthy mountain gorilla population for the benefit of the local communities, Ugandans and the global community as we conserve for generations."

Six teams comprised of 72 people from DRC, Rwanda and Uganda systematically walked over 1,000 kilometres throughout the entire range during the census and meticulously documented fresh signs of mountain gorilla groups. Genetic analysis of faecal samples collected during the census have identified and corrected for any double-counting of individuals or groups, ensuring the most accurate estimate for the population.

Faecal samples were also collected for a comprehensive health screen of the population. Further details and results of the health screen, population structure, genetic composition, mountain gorilla distribution, population dynamics, and human disturbance will be available when the full report is complete in 2011.

The 2010 Virunga Massif mountain gorilla census was conducted by the protected area authorities in the three countries: l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature, the Rwanda Development Board and the Uganda Wildlife Authority. The census was supported by the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (a coalition of the African Wildlife Foundation, World Wide Fund for Nature, and Fauna & Flora International), the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund – International and the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project. The census was funded by WWF-Sweden, Fair Play Foundation, and the Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) through the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration.

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For more information:

Georges Muamba-Tshbusu
Charge de la Coopération
Internationale
Institut Congolais pour la
Conservation de la
Nature (ICCN)
Kinshasa, DRC
Mob : +243 815 048 757
gmuamba@yahoo.fr

Brigitte Kanyange
Media and Events Officer
Rwanda Development
Board (RDB)
Kigali, Rwanda
Mob: +250 788 535 672
brigitte.kanyange@rdb.rw

Lillian Nsubuga
Public Relations Manager
Uganda Wildlife Authority
(UWA)
Kampala, Uganda
Mob: +256 712 202 111
lillian.nsubuga@ugandawildlife.org