

THE
DIAN
FOSSEY

Gorilla Journal

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Daily protection | Scientific research | Educating conservationists | Helping communities

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Great News for Gorilla Conservation

Ellen helps further Dian's legacy

By Tara Stoinski, Ph.D.
Fossey Fund
President & CEO /
Chief Scientific Officer

We had just finished enjoying our 50th year in 2017, with all of its milestones and memories, when we received the most incredible news of an extraordinary gift to the organization. We're sure you've heard by now, but we are still cheering here as a flurry of activity begins for the new Ellen DeGeneres Campus of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund in Rwanda! The amazing gift, organized by DeGeneres' wife, actress Portia de Rossi, was made in honor of DeGeneres' 60th birthday in January.

New campus for gorilla conservation

The gift is part of the new Ellen DeGeneres Wildlife Fund and will help launch a greatly needed permanent home for our Karisoke Research Center, solidifying the legacy of Dian Fossey and our five decades of successful gorilla conservation and research.

DeGeneres is a lifelong admirer of Fossey



A gift organized by Portia de Rossi for her wife Ellen DeGeneres starts a new era in gorilla conservation.
Photo by Michael Rozman / Warner Bros.

and said that this was one of the most amazing things that has ever happened to her, helping to make one of her biggest dreams come true.

The plans call for a multi-acre project, with a purpose-built design that will allow us to expand our science, research, education and conservation programs, engaging people from Rwanda and around the world to join in on our gorilla conservation efforts.

We will soon be engaging our entire donor community and the public to support the rest of this new project, which we believe will become a major centerpiece for science, conservation and collaboration in Africa. It will also support the Rwandan government's strategic priorities, serving as an important hub for their newly established Center for Excellence in Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management. ■

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The gorillas in 2017: Challenges and changes

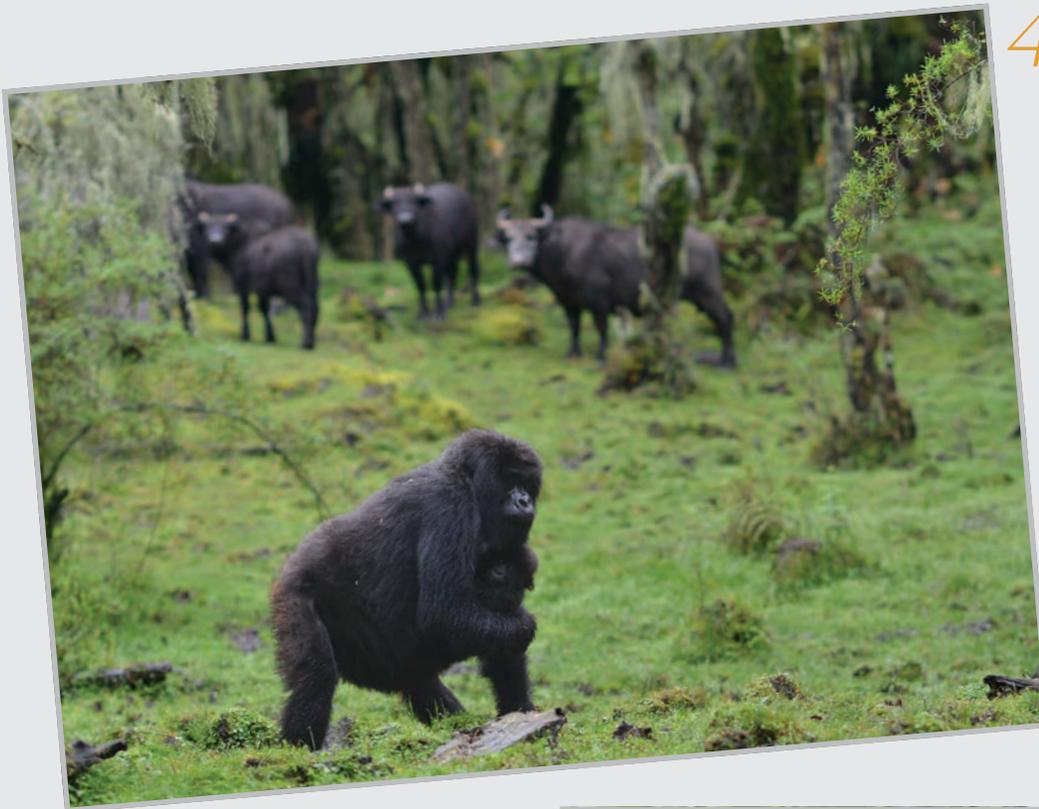


1 **Elderly silverback Cantsbee returned on Jan. 4,** after being missing and presumed dead for several months. But age finally caught up with him and he was last seen alive in March. Two months later trackers found his remains in the forest.

2 **Several young gorilla “orphans” survived many challenges, after their mothers transferred to other groups** when they were very young. Four-year-old Fasha even got caught in a snare in April, but our trackers quickly noticed and she was successfully freed. Later the youngsters got separated from their group and traveled alone for some weeks before finding their group again.



3 **An unhabituated adult female gorilla joined one of our monitored groups in May and adjusted to the presence of our trackers and scientists fairly quickly.** She was named at Rwanda’s annual “Kwita Izina” gorilla-naming ceremony, and is now known as “Nsanganira,” meaning well-accepted.



4 Heroic gorilla mother Pasika traveled alone in the forest for seven months trying to protect her infant, after her group dispersed. She traveled carefully and avoided other groups and trackers for longer than had ever been observed. This is because young infants often don't survive when the mother joins a new group. But at the end of the year she was surprised by a lone silverback and sadly her infant is presumed dead.



5 In honor of the 50th anniversary of our Karisoke Research Center, the Fossey Fund was asked to name an infant gorilla during Rwanda's Kwita Izina gorilla-naming ceremony. The name we chose is "Macibiri," after Dian Fossey's Rwandan nickname "Nyiramacibiri." This infant is a granddaughter of the late legendary silverback Titus, who was studied by Dian Fossey after his birth in 1974.



6 We increased by 57 percent the area of our protection for critically endangered Grauer's gorillas in Congo living in community forests, now at 1,100 square kilometers. Also, our first survey in Congo's Maiko National Park showed more Grauer's gorillas there than previously reported.



7 In addition to Cantsbee, we said goodbye to leading silverbacks Vuba (left), Isabukuru, and Giraneza. Their group members adjusted to the challenges of new leadership in many different ways.

Fossey's legacy dominated our 50th year



1 Throughout the year we celebrated the **50th anniversary of the Karisoke Research Center**, founded by Dian Fossey on Sept. 24, 1967. This included our board of trustees traveling to Rwanda in February, a ceremony at Fossey's grave in September, a "Protect their Future" fundraising campaign, and many other special events throughout the year.



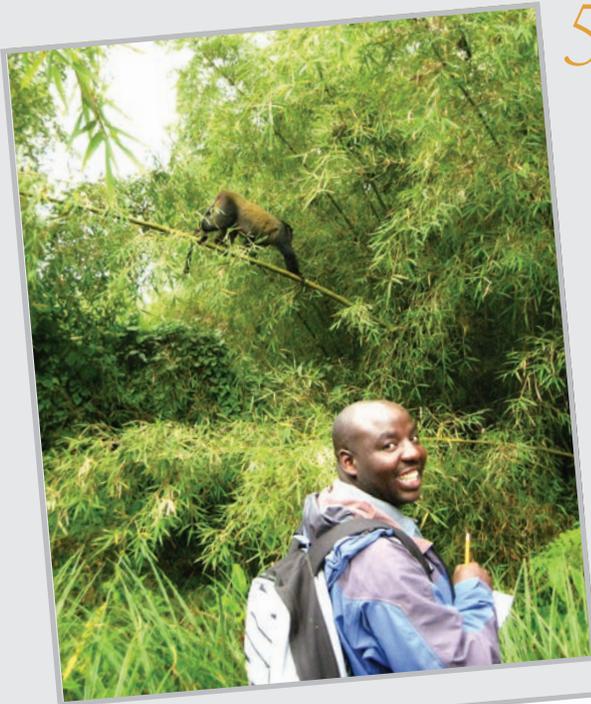
2 Numerous media channels around the world featured Dian Fossey's work and legacy, and the efforts of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund in continuing her pioneering gorilla studies and protection. Among the media channels were National Geographic, CNN, and Scientific American.



3 The Fossey Fund won the **International Conservation Award** from the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) at their annual conference in September, for global leadership in conservation.



4 The first "World Gorilla Day" was created and celebrated on Sept. 24, in honor of Fossey's 50-year legacy and to support ongoing gorilla conservation. It was organized by a consortium of zoos and conservation organizations from around the world.



5 Our study of other animals and plants that share the gorillas' habitat increased, with two doctoral students engaged in the first comprehensive analyses of golden monkeys, the hiring of a biodiversity research manager, and increased biodiversity research projects.



6 Our educational programs continued to grow, with more than 400 Rwandan university students involved at Karisoke, increased programs in primary and secondary schools, and new efforts to provide educational opportunities in Congo.



7 President & CEO/Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Tara Stoinski gave the keynote address at Rwanda's "Conversation on Conservation" and named an infant gorilla during the gorilla-naming ceremony.



8 Jean Paul Hirwa became gorilla program manager at Karisoke, after finishing his master's degree abroad. He now oversees all of our gorilla and protection activities in Rwanda, under the leadership of Director Felix Ndagijimana. Hirwa first joined the Fossey Fund in 2009 as a research assistant.

Fossey Fund women follow in Dian's footsteps

Our founder, Dr. Dian Fossey, remains one of the most well-known female scientists of our time. Fossey was one of three women who were first appointed by famed archeologist Dr. Louis Leakey, to study great apes in the wild. The others were Jane Goodall, who continues her pioneering work with chimpanzees to this day, and Birute Galdikas, who worked with wild orangutans and is now a leading authority on them.

Today, our organization is still led by many impressive women, including our President and CEO/Chief Scientist Dr. Tara Stoinski, our board chair Judith Harris, and our honorary chair, Sigourney Weaver.

In honor of women's history month, we are proud to highlight some of the extraordinary women who lead the Fossey Fund's conservation work today, following in the footsteps of Dian Fossey:

1 Dr. Tara Stoinski
Fossey Fund President & CEO/Chief Scientific Officer

Dr. Stoinski has led the organization since 2014, but has worked with us as a scientist and leader since 2002. She holds degrees from Tufts University, University of Oxford, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Tara has

studied gorillas for 24 years and is the author of more than 100 scientific publications and books.

"I feel incredibly lucky and honored to be able to continue the important legacy that Dian Fossey



created, as well as a lot of responsibility for the gorillas, and for our teams and staff who follow in Fossey's footsteps every day.

"When I look at images of Dian from her years with the gorillas, I see so many things: inspiration, courage, conviction, and even her tiredness. But mostly I see her fierce determination, her unwillingness to give up in the face of many big challenges."

2 Gudula Nyirandayambaje
Research assistant at Karisoke

Gudula has been with the Fossey Fund since 2014, starting as a data entry assistant. She first



came to Karisoke as a local college student, and did a scientific internship at Karisoke for her degree.

As a research assistant, she is in the field every day with the Fossey Fund trackers, which includes long hours with strenuous hikes to wherever the gorillas may be each day.

Once the gorillas are located, Gudula is responsible for observing them closely, collecting data, photos and other information for our long-term database, and working with scientific projects.

"I am glad to be doing work that is important," Gudula says. "If we stop this work, mountain

gorillas – which are found only in this area – may become extinct. I am very thankful to Dian Fossey for starting the work of gorilla conservation and scientific research on them. Her work is of great value!"

3 Nadia Niyonizeye
Research assistant at Karisoke

Nadia came to Karisoke as a professional intern in June 2017 and was promoted to research assistant in January. Prior to that, she did her undergraduate thesis work at Karisoke.

She now works with the ongoing photogrammetry project at Karisoke, a collaboration between the George Washington University and the Fossey Fund.

Nadia says she really enjoys witnessing unique moments with the gorillas in the field, especially the personalities of the younger gorillas!

"Most of the field staff are men, so I appreciate fellow women working in the field like Dian Fossey did. Regardless of how difficult, the work brings joy and satisfaction. Dian Fossey was brave and resilient and is an icon in gorilla conservation. She is the person I look up to when it comes to dedication and resilience."

4 Rose Umuhoza

Lab coordinator

Rose plays a crucial role in the scientific program at Karisoke, doing tasks ranging from extracting hormones from gorilla fecal samples and entering behavioral data into our long-term gorilla database. She has been working with the Fossey Fund since 2011.

“What I enjoy the most is contributing my skills in doing DNA extraction, so that we can know the paternity lines of the gorillas in the groups we monitor. I also like that we can learn about the health of the gorillas through hormone extraction from these samples. I am proud of my job and being able to contribute to mountain gorilla conservation, which is an important part of sustainable development.”



community-run conservation areas in the eastern DR Congo, where a large proportion of Grauer’s gorillas are found outside of protected areas. Working with local communities there to better protect their community forests is crucial. Not many other organizations are undertaking this type of work, and I feel lucky to be a part of it.”

5 Veronica Vecellio

Gorilla Program Senior Advisor and Regional PR Director

Veronica has worked with African apes in the wild since 1999 and started working with the Fossey Fund in 2005. Since then she has been based in Rwanda and has supervised our operations to protect and study the gorilla groups monitored at Karisoke. In 2017, her work was expanded to include regional public relations and field communications.

“What I like most in my



7 Dr. Winnie Eckardt

Research Manager, Rwanda

Winnie started with the Fossey Fund in 2004 as a research assistant, conducted her doctoral and post-doctoral research at Karisoke, and has worked as research manager since 2015. Her research focuses on gorilla behavior and the health and physiology of stress among the mountain gorillas.

She now supervises the collection and management of the long-term Karisoke data and current research projects, and leads the scientific capacity-building of our staff and young Rwandan students.

“Over the past 15 years, our annual program for third-year college science students has included an average of 40 percent women, which is a testimony to Rwanda’s success in promoting gender equality,” Winnie says.

“Many of these young, talented and passionate women are today actively involved in the conservation of Rwanda’s nature.” ■

job is studying gorilla life histories, connecting individuals with their associated families and with the multiple changes they went through in their lives,” says Veronica. “Our database includes hundreds of gorillas from past and current generations, and in one way or another they are all connected. It’s like the stories of human families but also a real insight into a non-human society!”

6 Sarah Tolbert

Community Engagement Manager

Sarah oversees the Fossey Fund’s community projects in both Rwanda

and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She develops and manages projects that link education and livelihood initiatives to improved gorilla conservation in Rwanda, and works to increase the capacity of local communities to manage community-run conservation areas in Congo.

“I am thrilled that in addition to the community work we do in Rwanda, we are expanding projects in DR Congo where Dian Fossey began her work. I’m looking forward to seeing our community work expand in both countries and in particular one of the first

Oracle's long-term support

Oracle, led by founder Larry Ellison, was the first major U.S. company to take a leadership role in the protection of mountain gorillas, dating back to 1988, not long after Dian Fossey was killed.

Oracle's support at that time was crucial in enabling the trackers Dian Fossey had trained to continue their work and in helping the organization to find its new footing for going forward and continuing her legacy.

The support that Oracle has made each year ever since then has been crucial to the continued expansion of the Fossey Fund's Karisoke Research Center and to our expanded gorilla protection in nearby Congo as well.

"Our success in saving the gorillas is based on sustained presence in the forests, monitoring and protecting gorillas every day," says Fossey Fund President & CEO/Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Tara Stoinski. "Oracle understands that, and their ongoing support for our work, as well as the example they set for others, has made a critical difference in the long-term stability and growth of our work."

Colleen Cassity, executive director of Oracle Corporate Citizenship, says that working with the Fossey Fund has also provided an opportunity for **three branches of Oracle philanthropy to work together:**



Oracle's Colleen Cassity with the Fossey Fund's Veronica Vecellio in Rwanda.

1 Oracle Giving supports the Fossey Fund's programs with cash and technology grants;

2 The Oracle Education Foundation uses data sets from the Fossey Fund to show students how to extract knowledge from data and visualize it; and

3 Oracle Volunteers coach those classes.

Oracle has recently taken even more steps to support the Fossey Fund's work. For example, from 2013 to the present, Oracle technologists have been helping to make the Fossey Fund's long-term databases on gorilla behavior and demography available to the larger scientific and educational communities. These databases are among the lon-

gest-running for any animal and date back to Fossey's first years in the field in 1967.

This work also led to the creation of a special app for data collection on the gorillas, which is now used by Fossey Fund trackers every day and is available for free to all scientists, educators and others through the iTunes app store.

"Throughout our long partnership, we have observed, first-hand, how the Fossey Fund works tirelessly to address the needs of the Rwandan and Congolese people, the local environment, and gorillas," says Cassity. "We are proud to play a continuing role in

these efforts and encourage others to lend their support. Together, we can truly make a difference for future generations."

Oracle's sustained support makes a huge impact on the Fossey Fund's daily gorilla protection activities, as well as our scientific work, capacity-building, and education programs in Rwanda.

"Oracle is committed to using its resources to advance education, protect the environment, and strengthen communities," says Cassity, who has twice visited with Fossey Fund staff in Rwanda and trekked to see the mountain gorillas. "We have an enormous responsibility to be good stewards of that incredible ecosystem," she says. ■

Thank you to our Collaborating Funders for their extraordinary support in 2018

The Milton and Tamar Maltz Family Foundation

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