

THE
DIAN
FOSSEY

Gorilla Journal

Spring 2017

Daily protection | Scientific research | Educating conservationists | Helping communities

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We had a record year protecting gorillas and working with communities in Africa.

2016 — the year in review

Our expanding efforts protect more gorillas, help more people

Tara Stoinski, Ph.D.
Fossey Fund President and
CEO/Chief Scientist

As we move toward our 50th anniversary, I'm thrilled to say that the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund is better positioned than ever to continue our core mission of ensuring a future for gorillas.

We work toward this mission through four key areas: daily protection, cutting-edge science, training future leaders, and helping local communities.

The year 2016 was a record one for us in each of these areas, as you'll see from the

highlights on the following pages. In particular, I'm very proud of our expanding efforts to engage young African scientists and local communities, and of our activities in Congo where we doubled our staff to protect more of the rapidly disappearing Grauer's gorillas.

Strategy for the future

Over the last 18 months, we have worked closely with our board to establish our strategic priorities for the next three years.

The focus is on improving and increasing direct gorilla protection activities, expanding our scientific expertise, and intensifying our

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Highlights, challenges, successes in 2016

As we began the celebration of our 50th anniversary year in 2016, we are proud to note the following highlights in each of the four main areas of our work, as well as a few awards and accolades we received during the year:

Gorilla protection

- Among the gorillas we protect in Rwanda, none were caught in snares in 2016, for the first time in a decade.

- The Fossey Fund's Karisoke trackers received the prestigious Conservation Hero award from the Disney Conservation Fund, recognizing their 50 years of success protecting gorillas.

- Our staff at Karisoke played a major role in carrying out the latest census of mountain gorillas, with results due out in 2017.

- We added a fourth team to our Grauer's gorilla tracking efforts in Congo, with a fifth team in development and new areas scheduled for study. And we located at least one big Grauer's gorilla group in a neighboring forest.

Scientific research

- Fossey Fund scientists published 26 papers in major journals, continuing the 50-year history of studying gorillas, and disseminating our findings around the world.

- We developed a unique and free iPad app for studying gorilla behavior and health, that is also useable for those studying other animals in the field anywhere.



No gorillas we monitor were caught in snares in 2016, but snares are still a threat. *Above*, our trackers freed an antelope caught in a snare near the gorillas.



Karisoke staff participated in carrying out the 2016 mountain gorilla census.



Left, we reached 80 community leaders in Rwanda this year with gorilla treks and conservation workshops.

Below left, we also opened a public gorilla conservation exhibit at our Karisoke Research Center building in Musanze, Rwanda, for tourists and the local communities.



exhibit complements the experience of gorilla-trekking for visitors and also helps expand our conservation education programs for local students and the community.

- We reached 4,000 community members with conservation movies and meetings, plus 80 community leaders with conservation workshops and park treks.

Awards and accolades

- Sigourney Weaver, who has served as the honorary chair of our board for 26 years, received the Jane Alexander Global Wildlife Ambassador Award, at the Indianapolis Prize gala.

- Dr. Tara Stoinski, Fossey Fund president and CEO/chief scientist, was named one of Atlanta's "Women Making a Mark," by *Atlanta* magazine.

- We began our 50th anniversary celebration year, since Dian Fossey founded the Karisoke Research Center on Sept. 24, 1967.

Educating conservationists

- Fossey Fund education staff reached 5,676 students in 15 primary schools in Rwanda with conservation courses, school materials and park visits, and additional 1,604 with school supplies.

- Our citizen science program reached 1,718 students in nine secondary schools in Rwanda.

- Karisoke hosted more than 400

local university students for field courses, research training, internships and more.

Helping communities

- Fossey Fund staff built and opened an important new public exhibit at Karisoke, with displays, photos, videos, historic objects and interactive activities about gorilla conservation and our work. The

Karisoke gorilla groups thrive and change

In 2016, Fossey Fund staff monitored 9-11 gorilla groups on a daily basis, containing about half of Rwanda's mountain gorilla population.

In recent years, there have been a lot of changes among the groups, so sometimes the same gorillas are split into subgroups and sometimes they re-group. Each time this happens, our tracking teams have to be adjusted to make sure we can follow them all!

Here are the updates on the nine main groups we monitored in 2016. Some groups are named for the current silverback leader, while others are named for former, original leaders.

Pablo's group: 33 gorillas

This group had an interesting year, with the disappearance in October of the long-reigning leader, the elderly silverback Cantsbee. Second-ranking male Gicurasi (Cantsbee's son) took over and after several weeks of turmoil and splitting, the group then remained cohesive. Silverback Kureba holds the second-ranking position and there are four more silverbacks in the group, giving it great protection! With seven adult females and a lot of youngsters, this group could also see a number of changes coming up, such as births and transfers. It is still the largest and longest-existing one we monitor.

Note: Amazingly, Cantsbee re-appeared in the group in January 2017



Silverback Vuba returned with his group from almost a year in Congo.

and seems to be in good shape and acting normally!

Isabukuru's group: 19 gorillas

Isabukuru's group faced some interesting events in 2016, especially the birth of rare twins in February. Unfortunately, one of the twins died after an interaction with another group. Two adult females emigrated to other groups in 2016, and silverbacks Isabukuru and Kubaha do a good job protecting the group. Since all four adult females have infants right now, perhaps some new females will join the group in the coming year!

Staff were saddened when elderly silverback Cantsbee disappeared in October 2016, and shocked when he returned four months later!

Note: Sadly, the second twin died in January 2017, after another group interaction.

Musilikale's group: 13 gorillas

Silverback Musilikale is the largest of the silverbacks and also has a strong temperament. He is successfully leading a growing group, with five adult females and three infants. Two other silverbacks also help protect the group. Elderly female Mahane, born in 1984, is also a member. She was the last gorilla born before Dian Fossey's death, comes from an important matriarchal line, and has four offspring living in this group.

Mafunzo's group: 12 gorillas

This group has only one silverback – Mafunzo – who formed the group in 2014. The group grew rapidly in 2016. Three of the females gave birth in the past two years and more infants are expected in 2017. Mafunzo originally came from Pablo's group and is a sibling of both Isabukuru and Cantsbee. He was



Elderly Poppy reached 40 years of age!

the winner so far, leading group directions and activities, and their roles may be clarified in 2017.

Kuryama group: 8 gorillas

After ranging on the Congolese side of the forest for almost a year, this group reappeared in the Rwandan forest in September 2016. The group composition had changed, though, with four gorillas no longer included, probably having moved to other groups in Congo. But the group is doing well and a new infant was born during their absence. The group composition is unusual now, with only one adult female, two blackbacks, and a juvenile male. Hopefully a new female or two will join them in 2017!



Silverback Twibuke is only 18 years old, but led his group well in 2016.

a lone silverback, though, before forming this group.

Ntambara's group: 9 gorillas

Current leader, young silverback Twibuke, kept this group safe in 2016, despite some hard times in 2015, when two leading silverbacks died and some females then transferred out. In 2016, a new female transferred in. At only 18 years old, Twibuke is very young to be a dominant silverback, having reached the top status due to the deaths of the previous leaders. But he has two blackbacks (younger males) to help him protect the group and it's

possible all three adult females may give birth in 2017!

Titus group: 8 gorillas

This group lost three dominant silverbacks in the past several years, so that the two remaining young silverbacks – Pato and Urwibutso – have not yet established a clear hierarchy between them. Since the death of the previous leader in March 2016, these two seemed to choose cohesiveness and alliance, rather than a dominance struggle, though some fights broke out at the end of the year as they fought over access to females. Pato seems to be

Giraneza group: 6 gorillas

Giraneza formed this group in 2015, after many previous attempts made during his years as a solitary male. Three adult females are with him now, and two infants were born in 2016, with a third expected in 2017. At the end of the year, the group faced a number of interactions with lone silverbacks and other groups, so hopefully Giraneza can keep the group together and protect the infants and females.

Iyambere group: 6 gorillas

Young silverback Iyambere also came from Pablo's group, before becoming a solitary male. He formed this group in January 2015, with two of the oldest females! One of them is 40-year-old Poppy, who was well known to Dian Fossey. She has had nine offspring in the past, and may be too old now to give birth. But elderly Izuru, who is 38, did give birth in 2016, so that helped enlarge the group, along with an infant born to 19-year-old Tamu. Iyambere may be on the lookout for some new females in 2017.



We doubled our staff in Congo to help protect Grauer's gorillas in the core of their range, working with traditional landowners in forests that need protection.

Grauer's gorillas labeled 'critically endangered'

After decades of extreme survival pressure, the conservation status of Grauer's gorillas, found only in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was officially raised in 2016 to the highest threat level – critically endangered – by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Our chief Congo scientist, Dr. Damien Caillaud, was on the team that carried out the re-assessment.

This change in status confirms what we already know from our work on the ground in the core of Grauer's gorilla range – their situation is dire and they are headed toward extinction in as few as five years, if the current rate of decline continues. And most of them live outside of protected areas.



Our trackers hike for weeks at a time in Congo forests, to monitor and protect Grauer's gorillas.

What we are doing to save them

The Fossey Fund is in a unique position to help save this close relative of the nearby mountain gorilla, by applying some of the techniques we have used successfully at our Karisoke Research Center.

However, Grauer's gorillas are in such grave danger that we cannot habituate them to the presence of humans, as we do with the mountain gorillas, so we have adapted our tracking to follow them at a day's distance, without them observing us.

Tracking gorillas here also requires that our teams hike for several days into the forest, and then camp there for several weeks as they follow the trails of the gorillas.

We have built a permanent field station in the core range of the Grauer's gorilla, where they live in unprotected forests, with four teams of trackers and a fifth team in development. Other than separate populations protected by the Congolese wildlife authorities (ICCN) in two national parks, this is now one of the only locations where Grauer's gorillas are receiving daily, direct protection. We are now surveying additional areas to confirm the presence of gorillas, so that we can establish where additional protection is needed.

Collaborating with communities is key

Our Congolese tracker teams all come from local villages and we are working closely with these communities and traditional landowners in all of our work here.

Our programs also include helping to set up family farms and other livelihood projects, as well as

We have a permanent field station in the core range of the Grauer's gorilla, where they live in unprotected forests, with four teams of trackers and a fifth team in development.



Our trackers in Congo are more determined than ever, after a very challenging year in 2016, and the loss of one of their colleagues, who drowned crossing a river.



One of our community programs in Congo involves setting up small family farms to help provide food alternatives for local people.

educational efforts. These communities face many severe challenges, including scarcity of food and few work opportunities, as well as limited educational access.

In 2016, we had four families create and test the raising of selected crops, paid school fees

for the children of local landowners, and launched partnerships with local universities in Bukavu and Walikale. Plus, we continued training for our field staff and local researchers, to help build their conservation skills.

Recently, the director of our

'... the future of Grauer's gorillas living in our forest is in our hands!'

Congo programs, Urbain Ngobobo, held a meeting with local leaders in Nkuba village, where we are based. The elder of the group noted that their forest used to be the land of elephants, but that now they and other animals have been hunted to near extinction.

However, with the Fossey Fund's conservation programs, "most of our children have become trackers, porters or farmers instead of hunting," says the elder leader.

"We inherited these forests from our ancestors and must manage and protect them for the future. Now we invest in protecting Grauer's gorillas: We are the future of Grauer's gorilla and Grauer's gorilla is our future...."

Special challenges in 2016

In 2016, our Congolese trackers faced extra challenges, in addition to the days of strenuous hiking and weeks of camping in the forest that are needed to monitor Grauer's gorillas.

In September and October, one of our field teams was briefly held by rebels in the forest, and a porter helping them drowned while crossing a rushing river.

Yet, when Ngobobo met with them to assess their morale afterward, he found them to be more determined than ever.

"We are aware that there is a price to protect Grauer's gorillas. But to stop their extinction, we are ready to afford that price," the trackers said.

"These challenges are a reason for us to double our efforts and increase our commitment — the future of Grauer's gorillas living in our forest is in our hands!"

2016 — the year in review

Continued from page 1

community work, all with the goal of ensuring stable gorilla populations in Rwanda and Congo.

We also look at the overall financial and organizational health of the Fossey Fund, to ensure that we can continue our work as long as the gorillas need it. I look forward to updating you on our progress on these priorities throughout the year.

Dian Fossey would be proud

Dian Fossey’s life and work guides our daily efforts here at the Fossey Fund, and she is in our thoughts more than ever during this anniversary year. I think she would be both surprised and thrilled to see the progress made in mountain gorilla conservation, because the situation was so challenging and dire when she arrived in Rwanda.

I believe she’d also be excited about our work educating young African scientists – work that she started while at Karisoke.

And, I am confident, she would cheer our increasing efforts in Congo to save Grauer’s gorillas, whose future is as uncertain as the mountain gorillas’ was 50 years ago.

You make our work possible

Fifty years on the ground is an achievement we are very proud of, and it would not be possible without the dedication of our supporters.

Many of you have been with us for decades, and we are so grateful to you for enabling us to continue our work. As we celebrate our 50th and Dian’s legacy, we hope to ignite even more awareness of our work and grow the community of people like you who are passionate about gorilla conservation.

Thank you for being our ambassadors and always being with us!

Meet a donor

‘Murakoze’ Why we give



Donor Cindy Broder, middle, with CEO Dr. Stoinski, right, and Veronica Vecellio, gorilla program manager.

Long-time major donor Cindy Broder is also a “master” gorilla Adopter with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, an avid gorilla trekker, and a special fundraiser for us as well. She provides annual operating support and even a field vehicle when we needed it most!

Broder says she fell in love with gorillas on one of her early trips to Africa, when she saw a silverback up close in Rwanda’s Volcanoes National Park, and then a mother gorilla with infant. “You just think – they’re us, we have to protect them!”

Broder has used the Fossey Fund’s “Gorilla Adoption” program to draw in friends, family, clients and colleagues, often giving adoptions as gifts, sometimes by the dozens! “They touch people’s hearts in such a different way, no matter how many incredible experiences they have had,” she says.

“Cindy Broder is one of our most unique and creative donors,” says Fossey Fund President and CEO/Chief Scientist, Dr. Tara Stoinski. “I am always impressed, and grateful, for the many ways she has found not only to support our programs but to get others involved.”

Broder continued her wonderful support by holding events for the Fossey Fund in 2015 and 2016, and by participating actively in our first “Giving Tuesday” campaign in 2016. Thank you Cindy!

See our online **2016 Annual Report** for 2016 financial information gorillafund.org

Thank you to our Collaborating Funders for their extraordinary support in 2016

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