



Gorilla Journal

September 2022

Conservation for the long term

By Tara Stoinski, Ph.D.
*President and CEO/
Chief Scientific Officer*

Although we just opened our brand-new campus in Rwanda in February and had a wonderful dedication ceremony in June (*see story, page 6*), this is also a time for us to look back and celebrate the Fossey Fund's incredible longevity in the conservation arena.

On Sept. 24, we mark 55 years since Dian Fossey first set up her tents in the forest of Rwanda and made her initial forays in the study and protection of the mountain gorillas.

In the field every day

During those 55 years, we have never wavered in our mission of protecting the mountain gorillas, which have now been pulled back from the brink of extinction. And in 2000 we expanded our efforts into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where critically endangered Grauer's gorillas previously had almost no protection.

Our work has also expanded to do so much more beyond direct gorilla protection and science — studying the larger biodiversity of the region, supporting local communities to improve their lives and decrease their reliance on the forests for resources, educating thousands of students of all ages, and expanding the ground-breaking research that Dian Fossey started.

Our people, our family

One of the ways we've been able to flourish for so many years is because we have such dedicated, long-term staff, from trackers to scientists to program leaders (*see story, page 2*).



We have followed the mountain gorillas now for six generations and counting! Female Effie, *top*, was an important matriarch studied by Dian Fossey. Today, her descendants are spread throughout many groups. One of the youngest is Kura, *above*, born in 2020.

This year marks my 20th anniversary with the Fossey Fund and Felix Ndagijimana's 10th year as director of our programs in Rwanda. I started with the Fossey Fund in 2002 as a scientist, just before Felix started with us as a research assistant. Our community engagement manager, Ildephonse Munyarugero, also started in 2002 and many of our field staff joined the organization in the 1990s.

It has been a joy to watch all of our staff grow and learn over the years, so much so that I consider them all to be a wonderful kind of family. And then there are the gorillas, many of whom we've also known for decades. Watching them and *their* families thrive is also a wonderful outcome of our longevity.

Saving gorillas and helping people has become a lifelong mission for so many of us, including our amazing donors, some of whom have been with us since before Dian's death, and who have never hesitated in providing the support to make this work possible.

We are proud of our 55 years but even more excited to contemplate how much we can accomplish in our next five decades. Please join all of us in celebrating our anniversary on Sept. 24, which is now also World Gorilla Day!

Visit us at gorillafund.org/worldgorilladay for ways to celebrate! ■

Inside

- Celebrating 55 years **2**
- Historic gorilla groups interact **5**
- Dedication day at the Ellen Campus **6**
- Sponsor spotlight: Corning Gorilla Glass **8**



gorillafund.org

55 years of conservation

Dian Fossey's legacy endures: Through people, gorillas, programs

The year was 1967. In the arena of science and research, this was the time of the first human heart transplant, preparations for the moon landing, and the discovery of the first pulsars in space. It was also the year when Dian Fossey was about to start making history in her own unique way, by studying and befriending wild gorillas.

On Sept. 24, we mark 55 years since Dian set up her two tents in the Rwandan forest, ready to start her groundbreaking work with the little-known mountain gorillas. At the time, there were only an estimated 480 mountain gorillas left in the Virunga mountains. By the 1980s, their numbers had been cut in half, to approximately 240. Dian feared they would go extinct before the year 2000.

Instead, the work she started in 1967 initiated an international effort to help save the mountain gorillas. Now, 55 years later, thanks to ongoing and intensive conservation, their numbers have risen to more than 600 in the same area. Fossey Fund trackers protect them every day, our scientists study all aspects of their lives, and we also monitor many other important animals and plants in their forests.

For the past 22 years, we've also expanded our work to help the critically endangered Grauer's gorillas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And we have a robust set of programs focused on education, training the next generation of conservationists, and helping local communities.

This type of long-term, holistic conservation commitment is what it takes to save and understand a spe-



We've come such a long way since Dian Fossey set up her tents in the forests of Rwanda, working with just a few helpers and limited equipment. Her legacy has helped save the gorillas and inspired generations of conservationists.



cies and its ecosystem, as well as to build the kind of sustainable engagement and support that is necessary for all to thrive.

Many Fossey Fund staff have been with us for a significant portion of these 55 years, and current generations of the gorilla families first observed by Dian are still being monitored today.

Here is a look at some of our longevity highlights, from supporters to staff members to the gorillas:

Our people

Sandy Price, donor/board member: As our longest-term ongoing donor and longest-serving board member, Sandy Price began corresponding with, and supporting, Dian Fossey in the early 1980s. In fact, she and her husband Harold were on their way to meet Dian in Rwanda in 1985, and arrived there to learn that she had been killed the night before. Most recently, Sandy and Harold became significant supporters of building our new campus, and the facility with all our labs and offices is named the Sandy and Harold Price Research Center.

Dian often wrote to the Prices, including this from March 1985:

"I believe that when God made you both, he threw away the pattern. It is primarily due to your generosity, which is absolutely unmatched, that Karisoke is functioning.... Without your kind assistance, we would have been able to accomplish relatively little."

Trackers and field staff work nearly a lifetime

Some of our trackers have served their entire adult lives with us. Still serving right now are:

- **Jean Damascene Hategekimana**, since 1993;
- **Fidele Mugiraneza**, since 1995; and
- **Felicien Kanyarugano**, since 1997.

Our trackers not only dedicate their lives to daily protection of the gorillas — they also look ahead to the future. “I want to encourage the younger generations to study conservation, so that they will take over the responsibilities to conserve wild animals, including mountain gorillas, in the years to come,” says Felicien.



Tracker Jonas Nubaha, left, upon his retirement in 2019, with Felix Ndagijimana, Fossey Fund director of Rwanda programs. Nubaha protected gorillas for 40 years.

Jonas Nubaha: We recently celebrated the retirement of tracker Jonas Nubaha, who beat all our longevity records, having begun working with us in 1979. He was originally on an anti-poaching team, working closely with Dian Fossey and then became a tracker in 1994.

“When you say Dian, I feel like she was my parent — giving me a job, money, clothes, supplies.... She changed my life,” Nubaha said.

“Dian’s love for mountain gorillas was very unique. She wanted to see mountain gorillas live in a safe environment and I thank the Fossey Fund for continuing to protect and conserve gorillas. Otherwise, we would have had nothing left to save.” ■

Leadership: Longest-serving

These staff leaders alone have devoted almost 125 years of their lives to our gorilla conservation mission!

Tara Stoinski, Ph.D.: Tara joined the Fossey Fund in 2002 as a scientist and became CEO and president/ chief scientific officer in 2014.

“Fifty-five years focused on gorilla conservation is a significant and meaningful accomplishment in terms of research, history, helping people and building the next generations of conservation leaders. Not only are the gorillas we protect doing well, but we have created a successful, sustainable model for conservation that can be carried on well into the future, and that can help protect the critical forests that sustain not only the gorillas but the whole planet.”

Felix Ndagijimana: Felix joined as a research assistant in 2004 and became the first Rwandan director of our research center in January 2012.

“I think Dian Fossey would be amazed but proud to see that her tiny research ‘center’ has grown to this incredible campus; that we still protect offspring of many of the gorillas she knew and studied herself; that she inspired generations of Rwandans who went on to dedicate their lives to saving gorillas; and that all of Rwanda now celebrates the successes of gorilla conservation.”

Winnie Eckardt, Ph.D.: Winnie started out as a research assistant with us in 2004, continued studying the mountain gorillas for her Ph.D. and postdoctoral work, and returned to us in Rwanda in 2015. She now serves as the senior manager for primate research.

“The mountain gorilla population we monitor has experienced a lot of change since I started studying them. This impresses upon us the full value and importance of long-term monitoring and research for gorilla conservation.”

Ildephonse Munyarugero: Ildephonse joined the Fossey Fund in 2002 and now serves as our community engagement manager.

“Working for 20 years with conservationists trying to protect the forests — and with communities who need natural resources to survive — has been a very challenging experience. But I have seen what most people thought was not possible: poachers turning into conservationists. This became possible thanks to the visionary belief of the Fossey Fund that conservation works only when it cares about communities’ needs, and that changing people’s mindsets and understanding take time.”

Deogratias Tuyisingize: Now our newest Ph.D. on staff, Deo started in 2004 as a college student from the University of Rwanda. He has since become an expert in the conservation of the endangered golden monkey and serves as our biodiversity manager in Rwanda.

Urbain Ngobobo: After doing field work in several protected areas in Congo, Urbain joined the Fossey Fund as director of our Congo programs in 2011. Under his leadership, we are now providing protection to

See **55 years**, page 4

55 years

Continued from page 3

2,379 square kilometers of community forest that is home to many endangered species, including Grauer's gorillas and chimpanzees.

Veronica Vecellio: Veronica started with the Fossey Fund in 2005 as a research assistant and led our gorilla program for many years. She now works in several areas, including communications and donor relations.

Other longevity milestones

Our longest-running gorilla program status: At 55 years and counting, we are the world's oldest, continuously operating project focused entirely on gorillas.

Our huge database: We've been collecting and compiling information about the gorillas, their habitat and other important details since Dian Fossey opened up her first notebook in 1967, drawing pictures of the gorillas and their locations, taking copious notes about them, and typing them up each night in her cabin.

Our data have been used in hundreds of scientific publications and by thousands of students worldwide. Indeed, much of what is known about gorillas comes from studies related to the information we have gathered.

Never leaving our mission: There have been many challenges over the years, but we are there every day, making sure the gorillas are always protected.

Losing the gorillas was Dian's greatest worry. Saving them has been a 55-year, hard-won success story. ■



Poppy was the longest-lived gorilla studied by Dian Fossey.

Gorillas: Then and now

Pablo group: Formed in 1993, upon the splitting of historic Group 5, this group is named after a silverback that Dian Fossey studied starting in 1974.

Pablo was the group's leader for two years, before yielding dominance to another famous silverback — Cantsbee.

Cantsbee was a legendary leader, growing his group to an incredible 65 members, siring more offspring than any other silverback, and leading his group for the longest time recorded

Effie family: Effie was the matriarch of a family whose members are now spread across many gorilla groups in Volcanoes National Park, with more than 100 descendants. Indeed, five of the groups we currently monitor

are led by an Effie family member.

Our 55 years allow us to see the influence of a single family through several generations, to study similarities among its members, and to understand the importance of genetic lineage.

Poppy: The longest-lived gorilla studied by Dian Fossey, Poppy — who was an Effie offspring — was born in 1976 and lived until 2019. She was unique in being the oldest recorded mountain gorilla to give birth at age 41, and was studied both in infancy and in old age. Forty-three of our 55 years of gorilla monitoring included Poppy!

“Poppy taught us so much about the lives of female gorillas,” says Dr. Stoinski. “This shows how important our longevity is. We are just now seeing the span of entire generations of gorillas, and observing all the stages of their lives.” ■

Sign up!

Free monthly Gorilla eNews
gorillafund.org/enews

The Gorilla Journal is a publication of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.®
800 Cherokee Ave., SE
Atlanta, GA 30315-1440
1-800-851-0203
info@gorillafund.org
gorillafund.org

©2022 Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund®
No information from this publication may be used without permission.

Editor Erika Archibald, Ph.D.
Design Robin Sherman



Follow us
@savinggorillas



Scan to donate

Large, historic gorilla groups interact peacefully

Being in the forest with the gorillas for 55 years means we have the opportunity to witness some really incredible moments. But these don't happen very often, so it's another example where being there every day, and for a really long time, truly matters.

That's a lot of gorillas!

In July, our trackers witnessed the interaction of the largest two gorilla groups currently monitored in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park: Musilikale's group, which has 24 gorillas, and Susa's group, which has 21.

Amazingly, this interaction was quite peaceful. While some of the males made displays, juveniles played together and there was no physical aggression and no transfers of group members.

In the past, we have seen Susa group interact with the large Pablo group, but those were often more intense and tended to result in group changes, with females transferring or even groups splitting apart.

There is a historical connection here too, because Musilikale comes from Pablo group, and formed his own group in 2013 by splitting off with six other gorillas. By 2014, his group was solidly established and newborns began arriving. The group has continued to grow since.

And a really big silverback

Dominant silverback Musilikale — whose name means “soldier” — has become an impressive leader of his large and growing group. He is a son of the legendary silverback Cantsbee, who held the record for leading the



Since we monitor the gorillas every day, we sometimes get to see impressive and rare events, like interactions among large groups of gorillas, such as this recent one between Musilikale's group and Susa's group.

largest group and holding dominance for the longest time.

Another one of Cantsbee's sons — Gicurasi — managed to keep leadership of the main Pablo group, when the elderly Cantsbee began to weaken before his death. Musilikale was relegated to being a peripheral group member, and smartly made the move to start his own group when the opportunity arose during one of these historic moments.

Musilikale is also the largest of all the male gorillas that we currently monitor. We know this because for

Amazingly, this interaction was quite peaceful. While some of the males made displays, juveniles played together and there was no physical aggression and no transfers of group members.

many years we have been measuring the gorillas — from a distance, using a high-tech process called photogrammetry, which combines lasers and photographs for accurate measurements. ■

Dedication day at our Ellen Campus

A time of inspiration



Photo by Iwan Baan

We held the official dedication ceremony on June 7 for our new Ellen DeGeneres Campus, joined by leaders from The Ellen Fund, our architects from MASS Design Group, Rwandan government officials, local leaders, our board members, and many other partners and supporters, as well as staff.

The day was filled with joy and everyone felt it was an inspiring and historic moment.

Emotions ranged from amazement to awe, to increased motivation. It was truly a 20-year dream come true.

Here are some comments from those who were there on that notable day:



At the campus, from left: Fossey CEO Tara Stoinski, Rwanda Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente, Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi.

It's more than just gorillas. 'This campus is so important for gorillas, but it's also more than that. It's teaching school children about conservation. It's educating a future generation of scientists. It's a model for others to follow, from the sustainable architecture to the community's involvement.'

— Ellen DeGeneres

It brings the past and future together. 'When I first glimpsed the new campus I felt overwhelmed and so excited, just thinking of where Dian started in 1967 and how far the Fossey Fund has advanced in research, conservation and protection of the mountain gorillas over the past 55 years. I am so proud to have been a part of this great organization for so many years. It is a dream come true.'

— Sandy Price, longest-serving current Fossey board member, supporter of the Sandy and Harold Price Research Center at the Ellen Campus.

It's a place for inspiration. 'The mission of the campus we set from the beginning is to inspire people to a lifetime of conservation activism. When I'm at the campus I can feel that mission embodied in everything around me, from the buildings that blend with nature to the fields of native plants. Here we will treasure our shared commitment to conservation for decades to come.'

— Tara Stoinski, president and CEO/chief scientist, Fossey Fund



Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi with Fossey staff on dedication day.

What we aspire to. ‘This campus that blends seamlessly with the nature around us will be a global hub for scientific advancement. It will support Rwanda’s ecotourism policy and will contribute to a bright future for the mountain gorillas that we all aspire to.’

— Clare Akamanzi,
CEO, Rwanda
Development Board



Ellen and Portia tour the campus exhibits.

It will change conservation. ‘This campus is not just an investment in architecture but is a testament to the need for new infrastructures and institutions that change the way we operate in the world. This is one of those places. Conservation will change because of this campus.’

— Michael Murphy,
founding principal/CEO,
MASS Design Group

It’s a game changer for staff. After working out of cramped offices and makeshift labs for many years, having this beautiful, purpose-built facility for research and conservation, education programs and the community is just incredible.”

— Felix Ndagijimana
Fossey Fund director,
Rwanda programs

Celebrate World Gorilla Day

Sept. 24 is World Gorilla Day, and the 55th anniversary of our work saving gorillas.

On this day in 1967, Dian Fossey set up her tents in the forest to begin her groundbreaking work to study and help the endangered mountain gorillas, which we have carried on and expanded ever since.



In honor of this amazing legacy and mission, World Gorilla Day offers a special opportunity to help support gorilla conservation.

Visit us at gorillafund.org/worldgorilladay to start a fundraiser and earn limited-edition gorilla gear, to buy a World Gorilla Day T-shirt, or to make a direct donation and you can ensure Dian’s legacy continues.



Corning Gorilla Glass helps save gorillas

Corporate sponsorships play a key role in helping the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund continue its daily protection of gorillas and their critical habitats, and we are proud to include Corning® Gorilla® Glass among them. This special relationship dates all the way back to 2011.

But to Corning Gorilla Glass, it's not just a sponsorship. When the business' brand was created with respect to the gorillas, their connection with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund was essential.

Since then, our relationship has grown as the Fossey Fund continues to strive for gorillas to be healthy and thriving.

Support really matters

"Supporters like Corning Gorilla Glass make it possible for us to continue our 55 years of protecting endangered gorillas and their important forests, which are critical to the health of the planet," says Tara Stoinski, Ph.D., Fossey Fund president and CEO/chief scientific officer.

"What the Fossey Fund is doing really matters," says Akshay Gupta, director of brand communications and

product marketing, Gorilla Glass. "We are at an important point in the survival of the planet, and it is incumbent upon us to participate to help save the gorillas and their habitat. As Gorilla Glass continues to evolve, grow and expand, we hope that the gorillas, their habitats and support for them continue to grow as well."

Looking toward the future

In addition to direct financial support, the Gorilla Glass mascot – Victor – resembles legendary gorilla silverback Cantsbee, who was first seen by Dian Fossey upon his birth in 1978 and monitored throughout his life until his death in 2017. Cantsbee was the most-successful silverback ever monitored, holding records in years of leadership, group size and number of offspring.

"It is an honor that we can help to keep Cantsbee's amazing legacy alive by telling great stories together through Victor and our partnership," says Gupta.

"The future of our brand is now forever tied to the work the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund does and the future of the gorillas." ■

How to build your own conservation legacy

There are many ways to make a lasting and meaningful contribution toward gorilla conservation, in addition to direct cash donations.

Such planned giving has an extraordinary impact on our work, enabling us to ensure that our successful model of conservation continues to thrive long term.

These gifts may also provide tax benefits for you. And it's never too early to think ahead — year-end gifts provide nearly 40% of our annual revenue!

Giving options include:

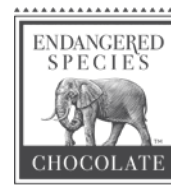
- Gifts of stocks/securities
- Distribution from a Donor Advised Fund (DAF). This can be done right from our website, using DAFDIRECT (gorillafund.org/DAF)

■ **Doubling your gift** if your company is one of thousands that match employees' contributions. You can now use 360MATCHPRO directly on our website to see if your company is included. (gorillafund.org/matchinggifts)

■ **Naming the Fossey Fund as a beneficiary** in your will. This will make you a member of our Legacy Society, showcasing your conservation legacy for generations to come.

To learn more about planned giving options, please visit our website at gorillafund.org/plannedgiving

Thank you to our Platinum Corporate Sponsors for their extraordinary support in 2022



DFNL 202209