



Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund

2023 Impact Report

A year of highs and lows



I have spent my career studying wildlife and the last 20+ years dedicated to gorilla conservation. Few years have both challenged and inspired me and our organization like 2023 did.

Resource scarcity has resulted in increased snares and human encroachment within the forests, surpassing levels not witnessed in the past two decades. In 2023, and for the very first time since I started working with the Fossey Fund, one of our trackers was attacked by a poacher. And tragically, we lost the first gorilla to a snare in more than a decade.

For those of us who have devoted our lives to the protection of gorillas and their habitats, words fail to capture the immense sorrow we felt with this loss. But I could not be more proud of our team who continued their important work with a renewed sense of purpose. They have challenged themselves to do more, think creatively, and expand our impact on people, gorillas and their habitats, ensuring that our decades of tireless work in conservation will not be in vain.

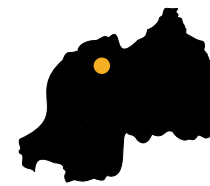
Because of your invaluable support, we expanded operations and increased the number of staff and patrols. Our Ellen Campus continues to thrive, our community outreach programs are making a more significant impact, our scientific studies are yielding profound insights into gorillas, biodiversity and conservation, and more students of all ages are being introduced to the importance of conservation.

In a year that has reinvigorated our determination toward our mission of *Helping People, Saving Gorillas*, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing support. We invite you to take a closer look at how your generosity is making an impact. We could only have achieved this with your dedication and for that we are grateful, thank you!



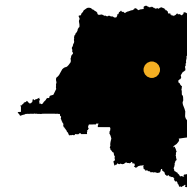
Watch Dr. Tara Stoinski's **TEDx Talk** on resiliency and the similarities between humans and gorillas.

Dr. Tara Stoinski
President & CEO/Chief Scientific Officer



Rwanda

The Fossey Fund has studied and protected mountain gorillas in Rwanda since 1967, when Dian Fossey began observing them in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park. Today, we are the world's longest-running and largest gorilla research and conservation program and lead a state-of-the-art educational facility for training the next generation of conservationists.



Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The Fossey Fund began working in the eastern DRC in 2002 to expand protections for critically endangered Grauer's gorillas.

In 2012, in collaboration with local communities we established the Nkuba Conservation Area. Initially an area of 700 square kilometers, this community-protected forest has grown to 2,400 square kilometers and is a model for community-managed forests. It is home to thousands of gorillas and chimpanzees as well as other endangered and important species. It also sequesters an estimated quarter billion tons of carbon, playing a key role in the health of the planet.

“When you realize the value of all life you dwell less on what is past and concentrate on the preservation of the future.”

— Dian Fossey



We have learned a lot in our more than 55 years of gorilla conservation work, but one piece stands out above the rest.

Enduring conservation success can only be achieved when everything—and everyone—works together.

That is why our motto is *Helping People, Saving Gorillas* because for gorillas to thrive, people must thrive as well.

We protect gorillas in vastly different landscapes in Rwanda and the DRC but our approach in both countries is the same and centered around four key pillars:



Protecting Gorillas



Conducting Scientific Research



Training Future Conservation Leaders



Building Resilient Communities

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

18,675

individual days of protection provided by 20 teams of trackers

500,000

hours of acoustic recordings to document the forest's biodiversity



2,000+

life-threatening snares removed



Nkuba Conservation Area



The Ellen Campus

Volcanoes National Park

RWANDA

37

Girls in Conservation Program

girls were provided with conservation mentors and 16 received scholarships to continue their secondary education



16

scientific papers published



20

tons of vegetables grown through our school nature clubs

252

individual gorillas monitored and researched

12

mountain gorillas born into groups we protect

444

golden monkeys studied



Protecting Gorillas



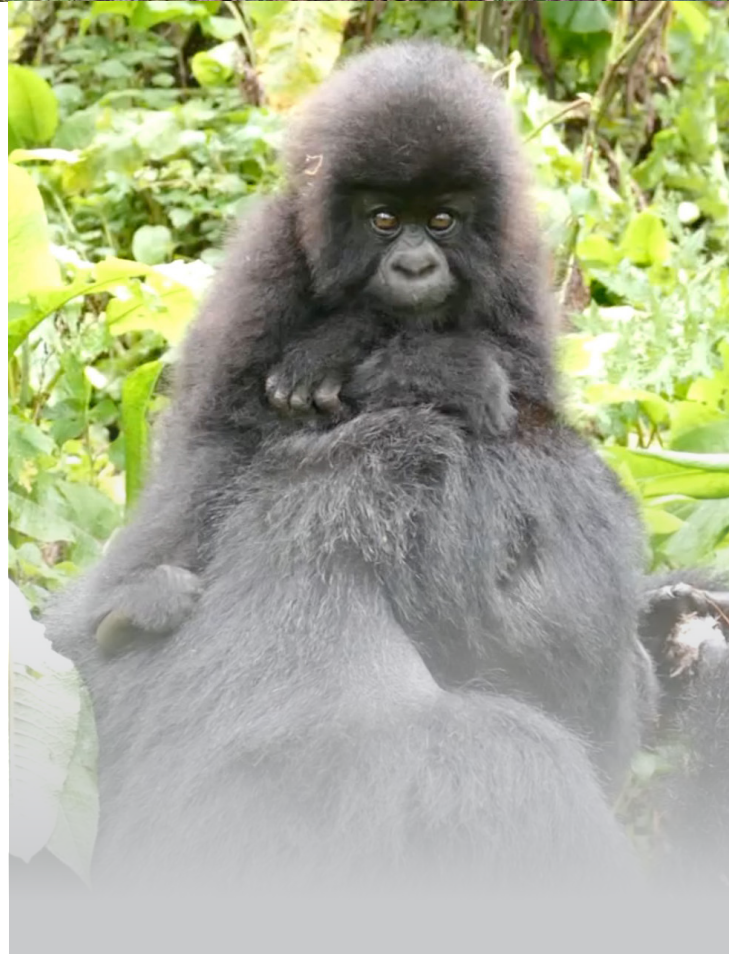
Our teams are in the field 365 days a year, and in 2023, that commitment was especially crucial. In Rwanda, we removed the highest number of snares in 20 years. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we suffered the tragic loss of a mountain gorilla from a snare for the first time in more than a decade. In response to this alarming situation, we took decisive action by **hiring 24 new trackers** and intensifying our patrol efforts in both Rwanda and the DRC. As a result, we **successfully dismantled more than 3,000 snares**, contributing to the preservation of wildlife in the region.



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Our integrated approach combines anti-poaching strategies and engaging communities around the park in an effort to diminish the human presence in the forest – thereby protecting gorillas

— **Samed Mucyo**
Gorilla Program Manager



Meet Uburinganire

Meaning “Gender Equality,” Uburinganire was born into Musilikale’s group to mom Isaro on Jan. 16, Dian Fossey’s birthday!

Conducting Scientific Research

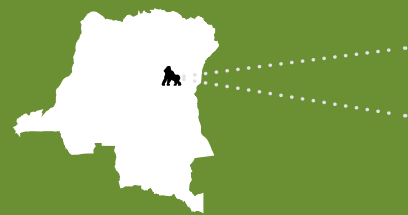


Dian Fossey came to Rwanda to study the then critically endangered mountain gorillas. Today, our scientists not only carry on her work, but are gathering essential data on the mountain gorillas’ close cousin, the Grauer’s gorilla, and the many types of biodiversity that share the gorillas’ forest home.

In 2023, we expanded our gorilla research in Rwanda from **15 to 20 groups**, which is teaching us about the incredible variability in the behavior of gorillas living in different areas of the park. Our golden monkey studies continue to

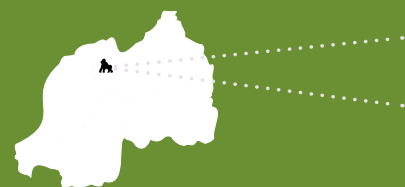
flourish, with an amazing **444 individuals identified** and the publication of the first-ever conservation action plan for the subspecies.

In both the DRC and Rwanda, our biodiversity research, which enables us to understand the overall health of the forest ecosystem, was enhanced through the addition of new technologies, like acoustic monitoring and the expansion to include new study areas. Biodiversity monitoring on our Ellen Campus has **documented 54 bird species** onsite, including the critically endangered hooded vulture!



Democratic Republic of the Congo

An analysis of 10 years of survey data in Congo revealed that our Nkuba Conservation Area holds significantly more Grauer’s gorillas and chimpanzees than we initially thought.



Rwanda

After more than two decades of studying gorilla stress, our hormone lab in Rwanda is up and running. We completed our first analyses on site, instead of having to export to laboratories abroad.

Training Future Conservation Leaders



The long-term success of conservation relies on future generations. That is why we invest heavily in training and education programs – so that our critical work can continue into the future.

In 2023, more than **375 undergraduate** and **early-career scientists** participated in our training and internship programs.

We **hosted 63 workshops**, which included attendees from **more than 25 countries**. These workshops focused on critical topics such as community conservation and management and data analysis to help guide park conservation strategies.



We are proud to invest in increasing African leadership of scientific studies.

In both 2022 and 2023, half of our publications were led by African colleagues, up from zero just five years ago.

9

Fossey Fund team members are currently pursuing master's and Ph.D.s: seven have received support through our scholarship funds

“

I've wanted to work in environmental protection since I was a child. In 2016 I visited Volcanoes National Park for the first time and working with gorillas became my dream job. I was inspired by the amazing job the Fossey Fund was doing to protect this critically endangered species, and I wanted to be part of it. Today, thanks to a scholarship from the Fossey Fund, my dream is becoming a reality as I am completing my master's degree at Queen Mary University of London and I look forward to returning to Rwanda to continue my work with gorillas.”

— **Honorine Ihimbazwe**
Gorilla Program Research Assistant

Building Resilient Communities



For gorillas to thrive, people must thrive too. Our work with communities focuses on addressing three of their most critical needs: food security, livelihood development and educational opportunities, especially for children.

In 2023, our programs in local primary and secondary schools planted vegetable gardens that provided **food to 10,756 children** and our nature clubs maintained tree nurseries that distributed over **40,000 trees**. Literacy programs for women have enhanced their employment opportunities, while livelihood initiatives, including sewing and bread-making, provide income alternatives to hunting and selling bushmeat.



5

 tons of mushrooms produced through our agriculture initiatives

7,500

 students impacted in our school programs around Volcanoes National Park

30,000 people impacted

lessening their dependence on the gorillas' forest home and enhancing their awareness of the importance of conservation.



Girls in Conservation



Launched in 2023, our Girls in Conservation program focuses on tackling educational inequalities and promoting careers in conservation for female students in secondary schools, through workshops, mentoring and scholarships.

In the communities adjacent to Volcanoes National Park, **only 9% of girls complete their secondary education**. This can lead to early marriage and childbirth and lessen their financial security and job opportunities. It also has a significant impact on conservation: studies have shown when women are involved in decision-making, the environment is better protected. In fact, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai described girls' education as "one of the most powerful yet underused strategies" in the fight against climate change.

We are excited to see the first cohort of our Girls in Conservation program further their education and connection to conservation. To read more about this program click [here](#).

“

If it wasn't for the Fossey Fund, my child would have dropped out of school because of financial problems... I would like to tell other parents to continue supporting their children, especially girls, and avoid leaving them out.”

— **Clause Kazanenda**
Parent of Cecile

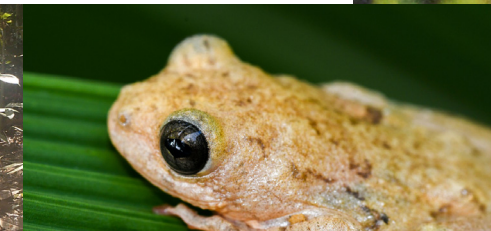
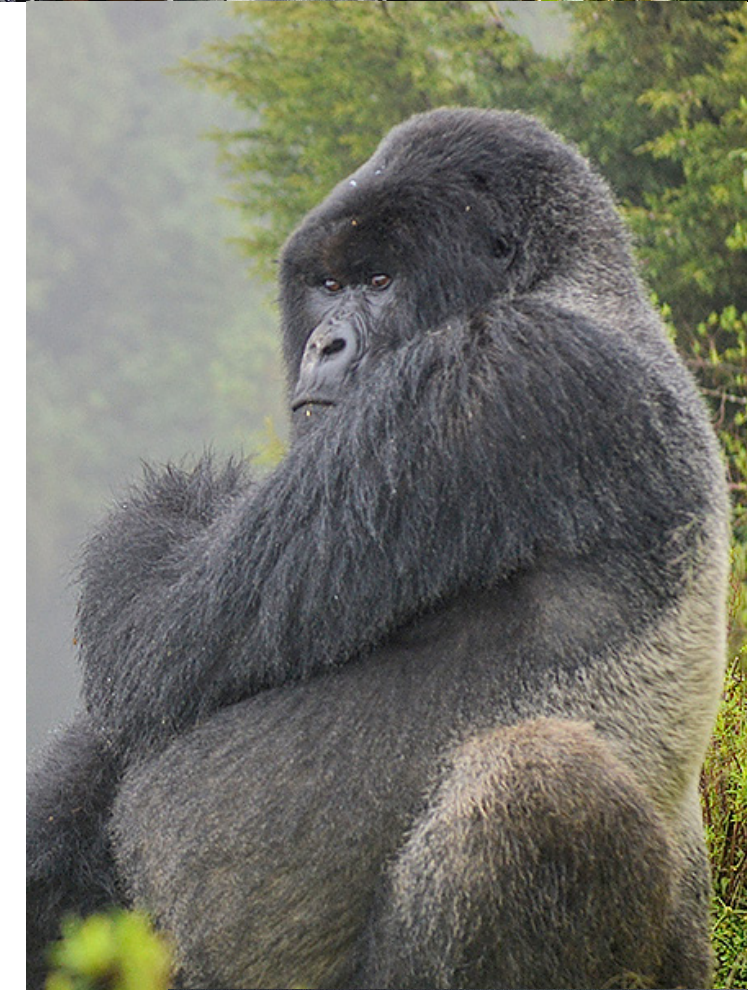


Research Expansion



This year, we were excited to make big strides in our research efforts! We have been studying the descendants of the original groups that Dian Fossey began observing over 55 years ago, but very little data has been collected on the habituated gorilla groups living in the eastern part of Volcanoes National Park. In partnership with the Rwandan government, our teams are now **collecting information on 20 habituated mountain gorilla families** in Rwanda. And, our research is already providing critical information that will allow us and the government to better understand and protect the gorilla populations.

In addition to our gorilla research expansion, we have also grown our biodiversity research studying plants, birds and amphibians, which provides us with important information about the **health of the gorillas' forest ecosystem and the impacts of climate change**.



The Ellen Campus



In 2023, our Ellen Campus continued to be a beacon for conservation. With more than **50,000 visitors** coming through our doors since we opened in early 2022, we have been able to educate thousands on the important role gorilla conservation plays in Africa and for the planet. We are especially proud that almost half of these visitors have been from Rwanda, including more than **10,000 students** from neighboring schools who we have hosted for field trips.

State-of-the-art scientific research and education center

63 trainings and workshops hosted for visiting students and researchers

Our Vision

We envision a world where gorillas and people thrive together.

Our Mission

The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund is dedicated to the conservation, protection and study of gorillas and their habitats in Africa. Our successful, integrated approach includes close collaboration with local governments and communities as well as partners from around the world.

Our Core Values

We embrace a common set of core values that guide how we work together and make decisions to achieve our mission:

Integrity

We are honest, transparent, credible, and trustworthy in all situations.

Courage

We boldly, bravely, creatively, and constructively face challenges.

Equity

We are fair, respectful, and equitable in all interactions.

Passion

We are caring, inspiring, and create positive momentum.

Collaboration

We listen, learn, share, and cultivate relationships.



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth — all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. **We are excited to share that our work aligns with nine of the SDGs as we strive to help people, protect gorillas and save our planet.**



We have earned our seventh consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator – the highest-possible rating. Attaining a 4-star rating verifies that we not only exceed industry standards but outperform most charities in our area of work.



To learn more about our work and view our audited financial information, please visit our website gorillafund.org.

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