

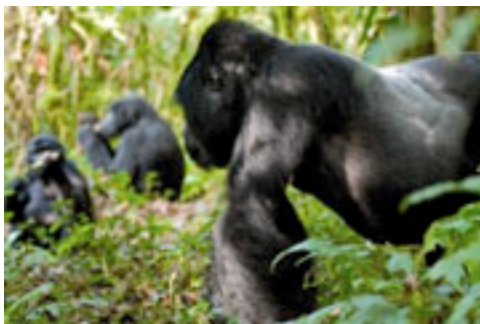


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Gorilla fortunes boosted by International Year in their honour, UN reports



11 March 2010 – The world’s endangered great apes received a boost from the 2009 United Nations Year of the Gorillas, the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) said today, citing the funds raised for conservation projects and the increase in publicity on the plight of the animals.

More than \$130,000 was raised as a result of the Year for field projects aimed at preventing endangered gorilla species from becoming extinct, UNEP said in a press release issued in Bonn. The Year also generated greater publicity – through articles, interviews, lectures, conferences and films – than similar global species campaigns.

“With the support of innovative gorilla projects the UN Year of the Gorilla has created a permanent legacy. Conserving gorillas not only helps safeguarding their habitat, which is shared by us, but it also addresses the major challenges of climate change and poverty,” said Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary of UNEP Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals ([UNEP-CMS](#)).

In November 2009, there were only 720 mountain gorillas left in the world, according to UNEP. Their habitat is threatened by agricultural expansion, mining activities and the exploitation of natural resources, armed conflicts and hunting.

The main focus of the Year of the Gorilla had been on encouraging locals who share gorilla habitat involved to improve protection within their communities. That included supporting the enforcement of wildlife law, preventing illegal logging and reducing the use of firewood and charcoal which are often used for inefficient home stoves at the detriment to the environment.

"We depend on gorillas, elephants and other fruit-eating animals to sustain the African rainforests by planting the next generation of trees. Sustainable management of wildlife and other natural resources not only preserves gorilla habitat, but it provides long-term livelihoods for people and helps secure the future of the planet," said tropical field biologist and conservationist Ian Redmond, who is also the UN Ambassador of the Year of the Gorilla.

The projects started in the last year include tree nurseries in the buffer zones around the Virunga National Park, Africa's oldest national park in the border triangle of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Planting and management of the trees will continue this year courtesy of the British-run Gorilla Organization.

The mountain gorillas are a national source of pride and income for Rwanda, which will host this year's World Environment Day, which is observed annually on 5 June. The theme of this year's Day will be "Many Species. One Planet. One Future."

On a global scale, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), zoos, wildlife agencies and individuals last year staged various events in the Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australia to educate the wider public on gorillas and the threats they face.

A gorilla rapid assessment report, currently prepared by UNEP, will look more closely into the threats to gorilla populations and will be launched at the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) conference in Doha, Qatar, on 24 March.

The Year of the Gorilla was a joint initiative of UNEP-CMS, the UNEP/UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's ([UNESCO](#)) Great Ape Survival Partnership (GRASP) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

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