

GRASP and people

The endangered great apes share their habitat with many millions of people in west, central and east Africa and in south-east Asia. The majority of these people live below the poverty line. Of the 21 African great ape range States, 15 are classified as least developed countries with a combined GNP that amounts to only 0.16 per cent of the world's total. The average income in these countries is less than three dollars a day.

Poverty and lack of knowledge drive people to use wildlife and other natural resources unsustainably. The demand for bushmeat is growing: gorillas, bonobos and chimpanzees, whose populations cannot sustain any harvest, are among the species most sought after, particularly as a culinary delicacy for growing urban populations in central and west Africa. Hunters can often earn a higher income from selling bushmeat than from other legal economic activities. GRASP supports community-based projects that not only stabilize great ape populations, but also protect the entire forest resource. Several indigenous communities have long-standing traditions that provide protection to primates, including great apes. GRASP will build on these wherever possible.



CHRISTIAN LAMBRECHTS

An International Alliance

GRASP is a strategic alliance of UN agencies, Governments, NGOs, foundations and private sector interests. As such, it is uniquely placed to mobilize and pool resources, ensure maximum efficiency and provide a communication platform in order to bring the decline of great ape populations to a halt. Thanks to our close links with Governments throughout the world, we are able to successfully promote the GRASP message at the highest political levels. Only if all Governments of the 23 range States, their wildlife departments, national and international NGOs, academics, UN agencies, charities, the general public and the private sector pull together, will the great apes have a chance of long-term viability in the wild.

GRASP's NGO and Supporting partners include: Africa Conservation Fund, African Wildlife Foundation, Ape Alliance, Australian Orangutan Project, Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe, Bonobo Conservation Initiative, Born Free Foundation, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Budongo Forest Project, Bushmeat Crisis Task Force, Cardiff School of Biological Sciences (Cardiff University), Care for the Wild, Conservation International, Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International, Discovery Initiatives, Earthwatch, Fauna and Flora International, Filmmakers for Conservation, GRASP Australia Committee, GRASP Japan Committee, Great Ape World Heritage Species Project, Hutan, Institut de Recherche et de Developpement (IRD)/PRESICA, Institute for Tropical Forest Conservation, International Fund for Animal Welfare, International Gorilla Conservation Programme, International Rangers Federation, Jane Goodall Institute, Last Great Ape Organization, Living Earth Foundation, Lukuru Wildlife Research Project, North of England Zoological Society (Chester Zoo), Orangutan Foundation, Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, PanEco Foundation for Sustainable Development and Intercultural Exchange (Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme), Pole Pole Foundation, Rural Environment and Development Organization, Tayna Centre for Conservation Biology, The Gorilla Organization, The Orangutan Conservancy®, TUSK Trust, Volcanoes Safaris, Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlifelife, World Primate Safaris, World Society for the Protection of Animals, World Wide Fund for Nature, Zoological Society of London.



GRASP secretariat

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Will you join us and help participate in this effort to ensure that our closest living relatives continue to share this planet with us?

Dr Russ Mittermeier,
GRASP Patron

With our partners, GRASP aims:

- ◆ to encourage strategic approaches to great ape conservation
- ◆ to educate local people and encourage sustainable community activities
- ◆ to provide alternative income opportunities to poaching, logging and mining, e.g., sustainable agriculture, ecotourism etc.
- ◆ to improve the infrastructure of protected areas
- ◆ to improve the capacity of government wildlife agencies
- ◆ to promote cultural attitudes and traditions which are conducive to the conservation of great apes

To achieve this, however, we need your help, so that we can work together, coordinate and build expertise and public awareness to save the great apes.

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THE Great Apes SURVIVAL PROJECT



IAN REDMOND

All the great ape species—the bonobo, chimpanzee and gorilla of Africa, and the orangutan of south-east Asia—are in steep decline, and the rate of loss is increasing virtually everywhere. The conservation of viable wild populations of each species, necessary to prevent their extinction, represents an ultimate challenge to humanity, for these species represent humankind's closest emotional and biological relatives.

Current conservation efforts are not enough, with current trends suggesting that all species will be extinct in this century, and some within a few decades. New mechanisms must be created to reverse this trajectory.

The clock is standing at one minute to midnight for great apes.

Executive Director of UNEP

The GRASP Partnership

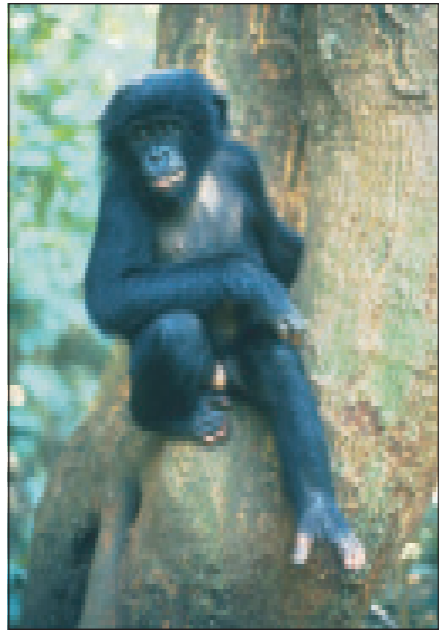


GRASP is a joint initiative of more than 90 partners

The strategy

In recognition of this crisis, and the need for greater international coordination of efforts, the UNEP Executive Director established the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) in 2001. It is a unique partnership between UNEP, UNESCO, the global biodiversity-related conventions, local and international non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

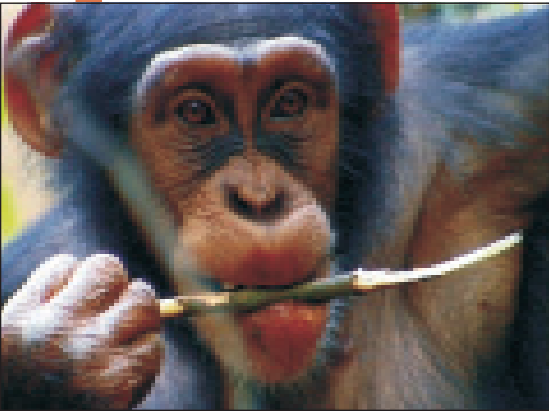
Since its inception, GRASP activities and workshops have helped define what strategy GRASP might adopt to address this crisis, given its unique position as a truly international alliance among relevant stakeholders. National survival plans have helped great ape range countries develop conservation strategies, scientific reports have raised the profile of the crisis, and the umbrella function of GRASP has improved communication and coordination among NGOs and provided valuable insights into the challenges of addressing the problem at the global level.



MARK ATWATER

Our understanding of great apes has significantly increased over the last four decades. Scientists have entered their world and revealed both their social complexity and their keystone role in the ecology of their habitats.

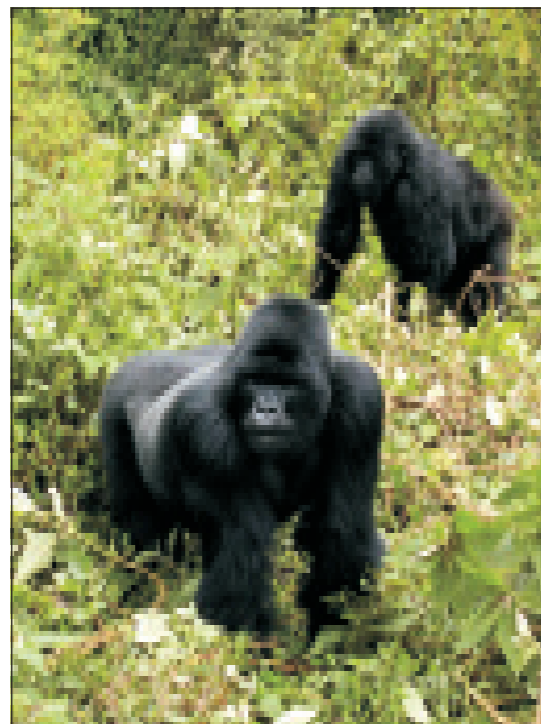
Great apes have been shown to possess self-awareness, remarkable intelligence and an ability to communicate with signs and symbols. Furthermore, it is now known that chimpanzees make and use a wide variety of tools.



CHRISTOPHE BOESCH

Geneticists startled the world by announcing that chimpanzees and bonobos share 99.4 per cent of human DNA, gorillas 97.7 per cent and orangutans 96.4 per cent. Over these same four decades, however, most populations of great apes have declined dramatically.

Today, there remain only 23 countries with naturally occurring populations of great apes. Orangutans are found in two countries, gorillas in 10, bonobos in one and chimpanzees in 21. It is difficult to be precise, because chimpanzees are thought to have become extinct recently in a number of west African countries – a fact that illustrates the urgency of the situation.



CHRISTIAN LAMBRECHTS

The threats

The decline of great ape populations has been driven by direct and indirect human intervention. The following factors pose the main threats to the long-term survival of great apes in their natural habitat:



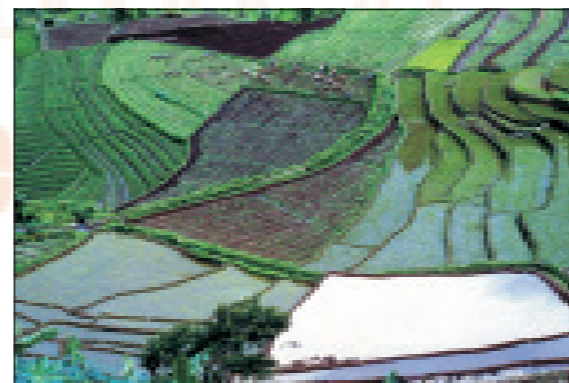
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UNEP/VIRGINIA FOINS



UNEP/JOSE GIRIBAS



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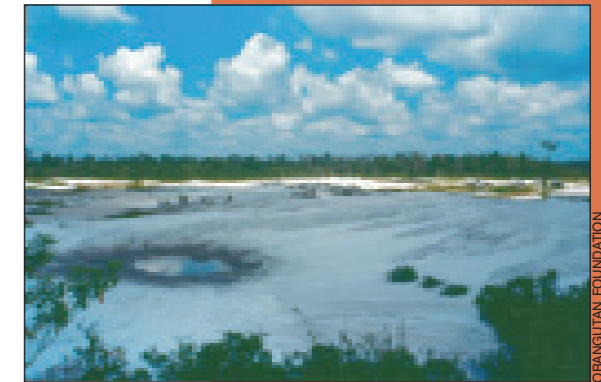
- 1 Habitat loss and fragmentation
- 2 Hunting for bushmeat
- 3 Excessive and illegal logging
- 4 Illegal burning of forest
- 5 Mining (e.g. coltan and gold)
- 6 War and local conflicts
- 7 Capture and sale of live specimens
- 8 Expansion of agriculture
- 9 Cross-species transmission of disease



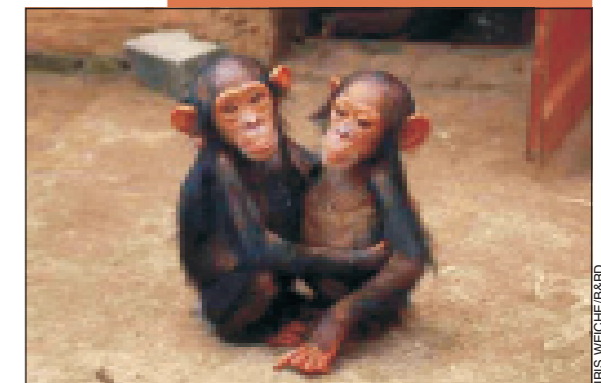
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ORANGUTAN FOUNDATION



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