

# Great Ape Conservation Fund



Apes, by their nature, are extremely vulnerable. They have very low densities, grow relatively slowly, are long-lived, have low reproductive rates, and complex social relationships. Today, the entire world's great ape species are threatened with extinction.

In Asia, both orangutans and gibbons are facing a multitude of serious threats. Asia's only great ape species, the Sumatran orangutan and the Bornean orangutan, are found respectively on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. They will both be extinct if illegal logging, forest fires, poorly planned road construction, conversion of indigenous forest to plantations, draining of peat lands, and poaching continue unchecked. Stopping habitat loss and protecting remaining forests are essential to save these unique species.

Asia's lesser apes, the gibbons, are threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, and hunting for food, medicine, and sport. This situation is made worse by the lack of effective sanctuaries for gibbons. Existing protected areas suffer from inadequate management, and poor enforcement of wildlife laws.

Africa's apes - gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos - are also facing a variety of threats including hunting, habitat loss, illegal pet trade, and disease outbreaks. These threats have combined to rapidly decimate populations. In 1960, there were more than 1,000,000 chimpanzees in the dense forests of Africa. Today, fewer than 200,000 survive in the wild and their numbers continue to fall.

Throughout West and Central Africa, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos are being hunted for food. The situation

has become exacerbated as roads built for logging and mining operations allow poachers access to previously remote forests, which once served as refuges for apes. In villages where meat from domesticated animals is scarce and expensive, wild animals are hunted as a cheap and locally available source of protein. In cities, eating bushmeat has become a status symbol for the wealthy and the demand for wild meat has steadily increased.



Additionally, recent outbreaks of hemorrhagic fevers, like Ebola, have reduced some ape populations to a fraction of their previous numbers, killing up to 90% of individuals in affected populations.

Apes are susceptible to many of the same diseases as humans. As growing human populations penetrate further into ape habitat, the potential for disease transmission between apes and people, and vice versa, increases. As a result, the bushmeat trade poses a serious health risk for humans.

In response to these many pressing threats, the United States Congress enacted the Great Ape Conservation Act in 2000 which created the Great Ape Conservation Fund for the conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans, and gibbons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) awards grants from the fund for activities and research that strengthen law enforcement and conservation education, safeguard habitat, monitor and prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and much more. With the help of this Act and many committed conservationists, there is hope that these animals will beat the odds of extinction.



**Top right: Adult Bonobos** (*Pan paniscus*)  
**forage in the grass**

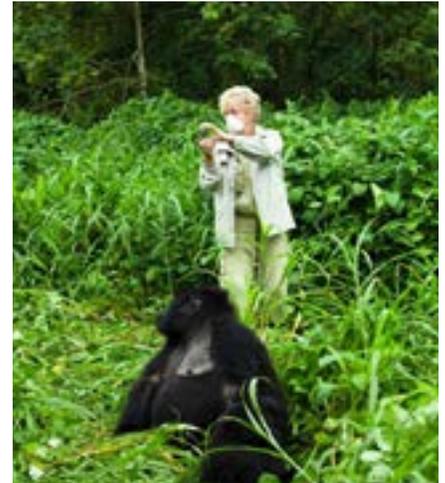
Credit: Vanessa Woods/Friends of Bonobos

**Bottom: Mountain Gorilla**

Credit: Richard Ruggiero/USFWS

*In 2013 a Congressional appropriation of nearly \$2 million to the Great Apes Fund was leveraged with more than \$3.1 million million in matching and in-kind funds to support 32 projects in Asia and Africa including vital conservation efforts:*

- In partnership with the Diane Fossey Gorilla Fund, protect a significant portion of the remaining mountain gorilla population in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Virunga National Park through daily patrol and monitoring activities.
- With support to the Wildlife Conservation Society, ensure the survival of the critically endangered Cross River gorilla by supporting the development of a network of core protected areas and corridors in Nigeria and Cameroon managed in collaboration with local communities and government partners.
- In collaboration with International Conservation and Education Fund (INCEF), conserve great ape populations in northern Republic of Congo by raising awareness in rural communities through screenings and dissemination of films to reduce illegal great ape and bushmeat hunting, ritual wildlife killings, habitat destruction, and disease transmission.
- In partnership with the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, increase management capacity and community involvement to conserve chimpanzees and associated biodiversity in Liberia's newly established Grebo National Park.
- Together with Bucknell University, establish and sustain an effective conservation management and anti-poaching presence by the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism in the Game Reserves of Western Equatoria State, South Sudan, to protect eastern chimpanzees.
- In partnership with Health In Harmony, initiate the reforestation of a corridor important to orangutans, conduct a trial of a low cost reforestation method, maintain a seedling nursery, provide reforestation training to communities who want to restore their forests on the edge of Gunung Palung National Park in Indonesia, and contribute to support the park's aerial monitoring of illegal logging.
- Support Yayasan Penyelamatan Orangutan Borneo to reintroduce orangutans into Kehje Sewen Forest, Kutai Kartanegara and East Kutai districts in East Kalimantan with the support and involvement of the local community and other stakeholders. This will be done by reintroducing the rehabilitated orangutans into the forest, carrying out post monitoring on the released orangutans, conducting education and community development activities, and providing regular updates to the communities, government partners and the scientific community.



**Eco-tourist views Mountain Gorillas (Gorilla gorilla) in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo**

Credit: Emmanuel de Merode

- In partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society, provide adaptive enforcement response in Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area landscape in Lao PDR through a quick response patrolling unit near key northern white-cheeked gibbon habitat, translate the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) into the local language; and provide training on data input and analysis.

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 CFDA# 15.629  
 August 2014



**Adult female Gibbon (Nomascus gabriellae) in China.** Credit: Zhao Chao

Great Ape Conservation Funding from 2007 through 2013	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	790
Total Number of Grants Awarded	423
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$30,446,682*
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$38,422,252

**\*Amount includes funds from USAID/CARPE and from Save Vanishing Species Stamp**

