



## GRASP Cheer Mountain Gorilla Census, Cautions Conservation Vigilance

The Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) welcomed census results that indicate significantly more Mountain gorillas exist in Uganda than previously thought, but warned that the worldwide population remains at risk and requires greater conservation effort if the rare apes are to survive.

A census conducted in 2011 found a minimum of 400 Mountain gorillas living in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, which boosts the population found in eastern Africa to an estimated 880.

Approximately 780 Mountain gorillas were thought to exist previously. The 13% rise was attributed to more accurate census techniques and actual population growth among the gorillas.

"The new census offers incredibly good news for Mountain gorillas," said GRASP coordinator Doug Cress. "But that is still a very fragile and endangered population that faces immense pressure from deforestation, human encroachment, civil wars, and disease. Now, oil exploration is threatening their habit. All the world's Mountain gorillas live in a relatively small area of east Africa and require constant vigilance if the populations are to continue to grow."

Mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*), a subspecies of eastern gorilla, already receive significant protection due to the important role they play in the region's tourist industry. But their numbers had dwindled to so few in the 1980s that some experts felt they could become extinct in the 20th century.

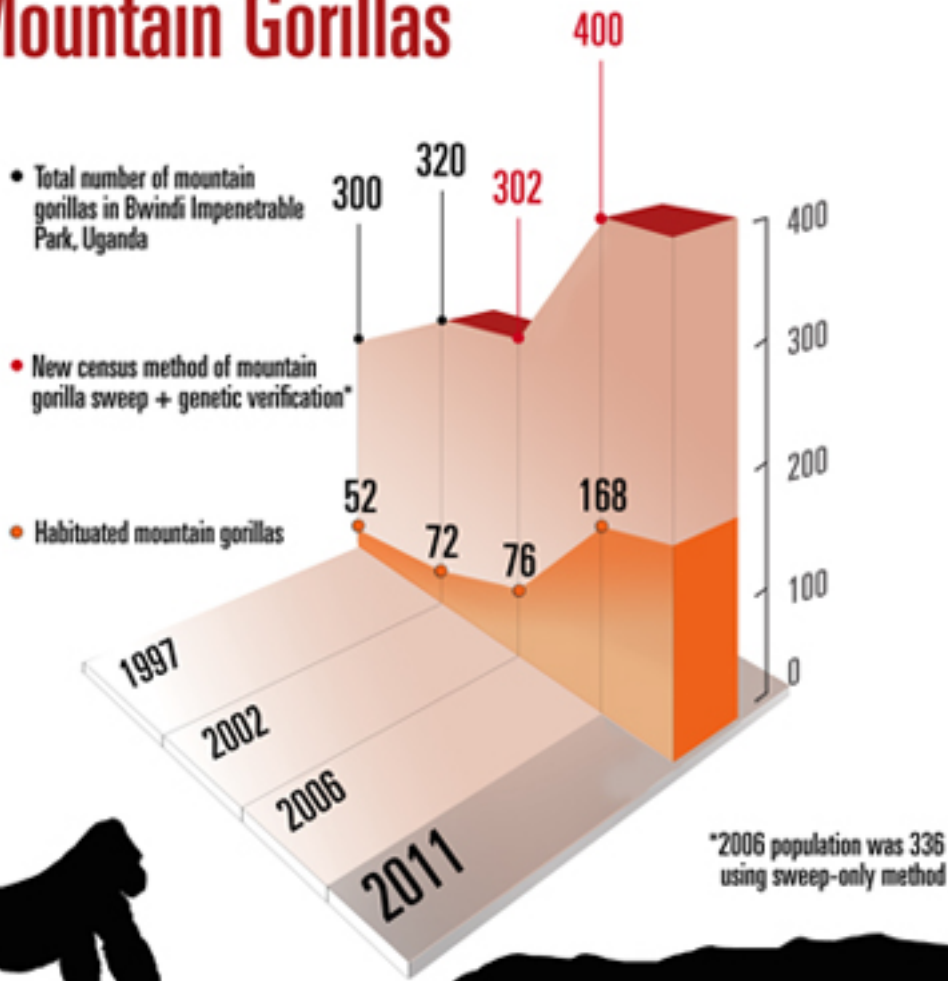
The new census results were released by the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA), which worked in collaboration with the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP). The data indicates there are more than 400 mountain gorillas in Bwindi, living in 36 distinct social groups, with 16 solitary males. Ten of the social groups are accustomed to human presence for either tourism or research.

Mountain gorillas live in mountain forests in only two locations in the world – Bwindi in south-west Uganda and the Virunga Massif, a range of extinct volcanoes that border the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda.

Drew McVey, species programme manager at the WorldWide Fund for Nature – U.K. (WWF-UK), told the Guardian he believes the latest increase was due to conservation efforts that had successfully engaged the local community.

"Mountain gorillas have only survived because of conservation," McVey said. "Protected areas are better managed and resourced than they have ever been, and our work is a lot more cross-cutting to address threats - we don't just work with the animals in the national parks, but also with the people."

# 2011 BWINDI CENSUS of Mountain Gorillas



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