



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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CMS/StC36/9

Agenda item 5

STATUS REPORT ON THE YEAR OF THE GORILLA 2009

1. This document provides a status report on the Year of the Gorilla (YoG) campaign, its rationale, implementing partners and main activities. It is not a complete list of all YoG activities and focuses only on the larger events. The list reflects the state of information in early October 2009, while campaign activities will continue until the end of 2009.

Aims of the YoG campaign

2. The Year of the Gorilla focuses on conserving gorillas in the wild. Besides featuring scientific information, educating the wider public and raising awareness on threats to gorillas and ways to counteract them, the campaign provides opportunities to raise funds for conservation projects, as well as to attract significant public and political support for gorilla conservation. A central goal of the campaign is to support the implementation of the new CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats.

YoG Core Objectives

- Support implementation of the CMS Agreement on Gorillas
- Encourage strategic approaches to gorilla conservation that are practical, easily manageable and accessible to many people.
- Raise funds for conservation action.
- Create awareness of the intrinsic value of flora and fauna, including ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and storage.
- Provide income opportunities alternative to poaching, logging and mining through capacity building.
- Educate the wider public, especially through website www.yog2009.org.
- Educate on the potential of ecotourism and carbon finance.
- Encourage cooperation between zoo-based and field-based conservation bodies.
- Improve the monitoring of protected areas and boost anti-poaching capacities by bolstering technical capacities and providing information. Support rangers in their activities.
- Promote cultural attitudes and traditions that benefit conservation of gorillas and other great apes. Promote sustainable development compatible with gorilla survival across the species range.

Who is involved?

3. The YoG is a cooperative initiative of the UNEP Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) with its partners, the Great Ape Survival Partnership (GRASP) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

4. The campaign is part of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and supports several of the UN's Millennium Development Goals: environmental sustainability,

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universal education, global partnerships, and ending poverty and hunger. YoG also associated with the CBD-led Green Wave initiative.

5. CMS's main objective as the lead agency of the campaign is to promote the implementation of the CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats, which came into force in June 2008.

6. GRASP, led by UNEP and UNESCO, is a strategic alliance of UN agencies, governments, NGOs, foundations and corporate sponsors, mobilising and pooling resources while providing a communication platform and improving coordination. National action plans have helped great ape range countries develop tailored conservation strategies. As well as persuading governments and NGOs to sign the Kinshasa Declaration on Great Apes, GRASP has been undertaking fundraising, field projects and awareness raising in the 10 gorilla range states. GRASP has over 80 partners, many of whom are also undertaking YoG activities.

7. WAZA is the umbrella organisation for the world zoo and aquarium community. Its members include selected zoos and aquariums, and regional and national Associations of Zoos and Aquariums, as well as some affiliated organisations. WAZA is a key partner for outreach and education. More than 100 zoos actively support the YoG through WAZA.

8. Partners are free to choose their own activities, as long as they are compatible with the broader goals of raising awareness, educating and raising funds for projects beneficial to gorilla conservation. Individuals can join the campaign as 'YoG activists'.

9. World renowned primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall is the YoG Patron. Ian Redmond OBE, GRASP Chief Consultant, is the global YoG Ambassador, while Guy Williams represents Australia.

Information Tools

(i) Publications

11. YoG leaflets are available in English, French, German and Spanish, along with English and French language posters. A desk calendar was produced and distributed (mostly to participants at CMS CoP9), as were stickers. The German Ministry of the Environment printed a poster in English, German and French and distributed it widely. The Year of the Gorilla was also featured on the CMS Season's Greetings e-card.

12. Another publication "Chances and Risks of Gorilla Ecotourism" is planned with financial support from TUI AG.

(ii) The Year of the Gorilla Website

13. The Year of the Gorilla website www.yog2009.org features a wide variety of scientific and project information, educational kits, video clips, films, news and events, updates from the field and other related items. In a special section, it invites visitors to donate funds directly to a specific project of their choice or by purchasing publications produced by corporate partners with a certain amount earmarked for YoG. The website has been very successful, achieving nearly four times as many visits as the UNEP/GRASP website and more visits than most UNEP websites – including the UNEP Billion Tree Campaign.

14. Website visitors came from 165 countries, with developed countries accounting for ~80% of total visits. It is heartening to see that range states were also among the top 50 visiting countries, with Uganda and Rwanda leading (23rd and 28th) and being followed by Cameroon and Nigeria (35th and 42nd). These are good results in light of comparatively low PC ownership and internet speed in these countries and may indicate the interest generated by the State of the Gorilla Journey (see below) through these countries.

(iii) Awareness raising Blog hosted by WildlifeDirect

15. CMS entered into an agreement with WildlifeDirect, an NGO established by Richard Leakey, which brings supporters and conservationists together through online diaries or blogs to enable individual supporters around the world to communicate directly with the projects whose activities they are following.

16. The YoG blog (www.gorilla.wildlifedirect.org) features updates from selected field projects, numerous blog posts from Ian Redmond's State of the Gorilla Journey through the range states as well as other relevant information. The blog has shown a steady increase in visitors over recent months, as Ian's journey has progressed. It has received even more visits than the YoG website, making it a further cornerstone of the campaign. Some funds for YoG projects were also raised through this blog (~ \$ 5,000 on October 20, 2009).

Events

17. HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco launched the YoG on 1st December 2008 at the opening of the 9th Meeting of the Parties to CMS (COP9) in Rome, Italy.

18. A 'Gorillas on Ice' event marked launch of YoG in the UK at the British Natural History Museum on 15th January 2009. The Gorilla Run, in which Ian Redmond participated in London, 26 September, helped to raise funds for field projects of the Gorilla Organisation. Further launches were held in Kenya and Uganda. Further events to mark YoG were held in Germany, Rwanda, Uganda and Portugal.

19. Uganda launched a major new initiative on 24 September called "Friend a Gorilla", which will allow Facebook users to become "friends" with individual mountain gorillas from Bwindi Forest on the Facebook site, for a USD1 fee. People will be able to follow the lives of the gorilla they have befriended, while contributing to their conservation at the same time.

20. A large outreach event in Paris is being organised by the French Ministry for Ecology, Energy and Sustainable Development at the National Museum of Natural History on 5th December. It will include a press conference with the launch of the French language version of the GRASP "World Atlas of Great Apes and their Conservation", screenings of gorilla films and documentaries, panel discussion and theatre performances.

(i) Gorilla Symposium

21. The largest single event in the YoG was the two day Gorilla Symposium at Frankfurt Zoo in June, focusing on threats facing gorillas and ways to counteract them. It was attended by scientists, researchers and government officials from many countries including gorilla range states, It was organized by the German Ministry for the Environment (BMU) in cooperation with Frankfurt Zoological Society, Frankfurt Zoo and CMS. All symposium participants endorsed a Frankfurt

Declaration and follow-up is ongoing. An informal high-level meeting on the CMS Gorilla Agreement took place back-to back with this event.

(ii) State of the Gorilla Journey

22. During August and September, Ambassador Ian Redmond undertook a unique *State of the Gorilla Journey*. In 5 weeks, he travelled through eight of the 10 gorilla range states in Central Africa, by local bus wherever possible. Ian Redmond maintained daily blogs of his encounters along the way with local villagers, traders, hunters, conservationists, government officials and even former child soldiers. Video interviews with a wide range of people, all with a story to tell that helps to illustrate the complexities of trying to conserve gorillas and their habitats in a region beset by poverty and frequent unrest were also completed, and together with the blogs, can be found at www.gorilla.wildlifedirect.org/ and in a dedicated section on www.yog2009.org.

(iii) Ambassador Ian Redmond

23. Ambassador Redmond has proved to be a very active, highly energetic and credible ambassador throughout the entire campaign. As well as the Gorilla Journey above, other activities include:

- Participation in all YoG press conferences (Rome during CMS COP9, Frankfurt Gorilla Symposium, State of the Gorilla Journey, zoos, museums and London events, some involving the donning of either a gorilla suit or ice-skates.
- Lecture tours comprising 30 presentations in Europe, Africa and the United States, on topics from the vital role of gorillas in maintaining forest integrity to human energy needs and their effects on gorilla conservation.
- Participation in fundraising events organized by WAZA in Los Angeles
- Special guest at the “Kwita Izina” annual gorilla naming ceremony in Rwanda
- First Meeting of the Liaison Group on Bushmeat, 15-17 October 2009, in run-up to FAO World Forestry Congress, Buenos Aires

(iv) Fundraising activities

- Donations by the Parties: France € 37,000, Germany € 20,000 for YoG website and € 15,000 Monaco. The Parties’ total contribution to YoG/gorilla conservation in 2009 amounted to € 72,000.
- Art for Gorillas: Cooperation with artists Daniel Taylor, Andy Rouse, Dave Derrick and Chris Wright, where proceeds of the sale of gorilla-focussed art go to YoG projects.
- Czech Radio initiative sells gorilla merchandise via e-shop. 50% of profits go to a YoG project.
- Cooperation with Evans Mitchell Books on ‘Gorillas – the gentle giants’. € 0.50 per sold copy to go to YoG projects.
- Conservation project in Uganda: 10% of sales volume of publishing house (TIPP4) go to a GRASP partner project.
- Ian Redmond’s USA lectures: USD 20,000 min.
- Los Angeles Zoo’ special YoG fundraising page. Laurel Colton of LA Zoo (an individual supporter) privately raised more than \$1,300 through various events.
- Sale of soft toy gorillas by German corporate partner Wild Republic; €5 per sold toy gorilla for conservation action.
- Links from YoG site to GRASP partner-NGOs raising funds for gorilla conservation.
- Projects by various NGOs featured on website with links to further information and opportunities for donations.

- Donation of €6,000 from Zoo Prague to YoG project “Eastern Lowland Gorilla - Rebuilding Surveillance and Monitoring in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo” (June 2009).
- Donation of €13,000 from WAZA fundraising for YoG project “Cross River Gorilla - Promoting Community Participation in Conservation” (September 2009).

24. Total funds raised will only be known after the end of the year.

(v) Media

25. Official YoG films:

- Year of the Gorilla – Message from George Schaller
- Year of the Gorilla - Message from Jane Goodall.
- Video interviews recorded by Ian Redmond as part of the State of the Gorilla Journey
- Return to Virunga: The Battle to Save the Mountain Gorillas
- Support for Steve Taylor and his documentary “The Green Heart of Africa”, focusing on the effects of deforestation.
- Podcast by UNEP Executive Secretary Achim Steiner

26. Online and print media:

- Newspaper and online news articles, TV and radio interviews around the world
- Cooperation with National Geographic Kids on the production of a rainforest poster and a magazine feature on YoG.
- Brazilian journalist supports YoG with website and kids-TV appearance
- Kenya Airways Inflight Magazine article

(vi) Year of the Gorilla Partners

(a) GRASP

27. As one of the main partners in the Year of the Gorilla, GRASP provides support for the outreach and fundraising activities by YoG Ambassador, Ian Redmond, as well as providing technical support to the YoG website. Two substantive GRASP activities, initiated as YoG activities will come to fruition in 2010:

- Publication of DR Congo Gorilla Rapid Assessment Report in collaboration with GRID Arendal.
- The Friendly International Bushmeat Awareness Football Match, postponed for 2010 in the lead up to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa and to fall within the 2010 UN Year of Biodiversity.

(b) WAZA

28. Zoos worldwide are important partners in spreading the YoG message and educating the general public.

- Numerous small events, mostly outreach and fundraising, at zoos worldwide (e.g. LA Zoo, Cologne, Bronx Zoo, many others). Altogether, 100+ WAZA zoos actively supporting YoG with a variety of outreach activities.
- YoG leaflets distributed by zoos, with several zoos reprinting the leaflets at their own cost.
- Special WAZA magazine focuses on gorilla conservation, mention of YoG in WAZA quarterlies.

- WAZA gorilla educational kit in four languages (English, German, Spanish, Czech), aimed specifically at children and young adults and explaining basics of gorilla biology and behaviour.

Evaluation of Year of the Gorilla

29. Following the suggestion by the Parties at COP9, CMS will commission a comprehensive evaluation of the Year of the Gorilla campaign, funds permitting.

Future campaigns

30. 2010 will be the CBD-led International Year of Biodiversity. 2011 is designated to be the Year of the Bat, while the theme of the campaign for 2012 has not yet been determined.