

Great Ape Conservation Fund

Apes, by their nature, are extremely vulnerable. They occur at very low densities, grow relatively slowly, are long-lived, have low reproductive rates and complex social relationships. Today, all the 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 orangutan — found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra — will be pushed to extinction if illegal logging, forest fires, poorly planned road construction, conversion of indigenous forests to plantations, draining of peat lands, and poaching continue unchecked. Stopping habitat loss and protecting remaining forests are essential to save this 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 an arsenal of assaults ranging from hunting to natural habitat loss, and illegal pet trade to disease outbreaks. These threats have combined to rapidly decimate populations. In 1960, more than one million chimpanzees populated 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 been heightened as roads built for logging and mining operations have

allowed poachers access to previously remote forests, which once served as protective 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, in the past few years, scientists documented a new and devastating threat to great apes — disease. 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, is increasing. As a result, the bushmeat trade poses a serious health risk for humans.

In response to these many pressing threats, the U.S. Congress passed the Great Ape Conservation Act in 2000 which created the Great Ape Conservation Fund for conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awards grants from the fund for activities and research related to infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, safeguarding habitat 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.



Mountain gorilla youngster
USFWS/Richard Ruggiero

The 2005 appropriation of \$1.4 million dollars to the Great Apes Conservation Fund allowed the Service to fund 30 projects, including the following vital efforts:

- Initiating restoration of the Sebangau Ecosystem of Indonesia by damming illegal logging canals that are draining the swamp thus threatening wildlife including a large orangutan population.
- Providing additional personnel for patrol units and training of local enforcement officials to ensure conservation of yellow-cheeked crested gibbons in the Southern Mondulkiri, Cambodia.
- Building local capacity among Congolese journalists and conservationists to identify relevant wildlife conservation subjects, such as apes and illegal wildlife trade, and to produce and distribute educational ape conservation videos to appropriate audiences in the Republic of Congo.
- Assisting in implementation of a comprehensive ape conservation program in southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon, based on research, protection, and education for the most endangered apes, the Cross River gorilla.
- Training forestry officials in Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, Burma, in gibbon census techniques, including conducting surveys to determine distribution and abundance of Hoolock gibbons in the sanctuary, and evaluating the impact of hunting on gibbons.
- Working with communities in the Djolu-Wamba region of the Democratic Republic of Congo to protect bonobos, including training and building capacity among local partners, and developing alternatives to bonobo hunting.
- Training and equipping a community-based ecotourism ventures developed to allow local people in Sabah, Malaysia, to benefit from tourism based on orangutan presence in neighboring forests.
- Increasing community participation in the conservation of the orangutan, their peat swamp habitat, and the local environment through environmental education in communities adjacent to globally significant orangutan habitat in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.
- Assisting the government of Cameroon's Ministry of Waters and Forests in increasing law enforcement capacity, producing effective deterrents to illegal killing of wildlife and monitoring illegal wildlife trade and other activities detrimental to ape survival.

| Great Ape Conservation Funding History from 2001 through 2005 | |
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| Total Number of Grant Proposals Received | 255 |
| Total Number of Grants Awarded | 155 |
| Percentage of Countries with Great Apes that Receive Grants | 80% |
| Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress | \$5,704,000 |
| Total Funds Distributed through Grants | \$5,304,000 |
| Total Funds to Administration of Grants | \$400,000 |
| Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants | \$7,782,083 |



Orangutan

Georgeanne Irvine/Orangutan Foundation International



Hainan gibbon

XiZhinong/Fauna & Flora International

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