

and international organizations in their efforts to save the mountain gorilla. Obviously, the Delhi Sands Fly (see Case 10: The Delhi Sands Fly), though perhaps closer to extinction, is not receiving such assistance. Some would say this is an example of a systematic prejudice in favor of "charismatic megafauna." Is it? If so, is it ecologically irresponsible or morally unjust?

2. Except for orangutans, which live in the forests of Borneo and Sumatra, nearly all the world's great apes (see Case 2: The Great Ape Declaration) live in sub-Saharan Africa and typically in developing countries ravaged by HIV/AIDS and wracked by poverty, civil war, ethnic and religious violence, and chronic food shortages. It is precisely these human conditions that engender the most serious threats to the great apes: poaching, habitat destruction, bush-meat taking, and so on. To desperately poor Rwandan refugees struggling to recover from genocidal chaos, the enormous efforts being made to save the mountain gorilla might seem peculiarly Western, perhaps even neocolonial. Is it? If so, is there anything wrong with that?
3. Clearly, the principal threats to the mountain gorilla are rooted in the social and political problems of poverty, political instability, and so forth. To what extent, if any, should conservation groups involve themselves in national social and political issues in order to preserve a particular species or habitat?

NOTES

1. Based on Jeremy Schmidt, "Soldiers in the Gorilla War," *International Wildlife*, January/February 1999. The full text of the original article is available at www.uwf.org/internationalwildlife/1998/gorilla.html.

2. Information about DFGFI can be found at www.gorillafund.org.

3. Information about MGVP can be found at www.morrisanimalfoundation.org.

4. Information about IGCP can be found at www.fauna-flora.org/around_the_world/africa/gorilla.htm.

5. DFGFI, "Fossey Fund Sets Up Crisis Action Plan to Fight Major Loss of Mountain Gorillas," October 30, 2002, available at www.gorillafund.org/000_core_frmset.html.

6. DFGFI, "First Attempt Made at Mountain Gorilla Reintroduction," December 13, 2002, available at www.gorillafund.org/cont_frm/pressreleases/pr_20021213.html. In October 2002, Rwandan authorities rescued a two-year-old female from

GORILLA RANGERS

He had driven from the provincial capital of Goma as soon as military conditions permitted it. It was late November 1996, and now Norbert Mushenzi, director of national parks in the Congo's North Kivu province, surveyed the buildings of the Virunga National Park headquarters compound at Djomba. It had been home to several hundred park employees and their families. Now it was shattered and abandoned, its walls pockmarked by bullets.

Civil war had again swept through the region, and the eastern part of the Congo (then called Zaire) was awash with refugees and armed members of different factions. Thousands had been killed, most of them civilians. But even as his nation disintegrated, Mushenzi was determined to save Africa's oldest national park. He had come to look for his rangers. To the east, he could see the beginning of the park: a lush forest rising in misty waves to the summits of the Virunga volcanoes, home to some of the world's last mountain gorillas.

"Is anyone here?" he shouted. "It's Mushenzi! Answer me!"

Amazingly, his shout was answered. Several of his park rangers, looking like refugees, emerged from the trees. Knowing that their connection to the government made them targets for the rebels, they had buried their weapons and uniforms and fled into the forest with their families. They were hungry but alive.

"And the gorillas?" Mushenzi asked.

Incredibly, as far as the men knew, the gorillas were safe. Unfortunately, many of the rangers were not. One ranger's entire family, including his brothers and all their wives and children, had been slaughtered in an ambush. Three had lost

their fathers. In all, since the start of the civil war, forty-four Virunga rangers had lost their lives, along with an uncounted number of their children and wives.

And somehow, through it all, despite the fact that they had not been paid in more than two years, despite the fact that their houses were in ruins and their lives in constant jeopardy, the rangers kept patrolling, kept trying to protect their gorillas. "I am living on hope," one explained, "This is my life."¹

DISCUSSION

This case, unlike all the others in this volume, begins with a human drama. There is a reason. Many international organizations have done magnificent work to help save the mountain gorilla, including the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI),² the Morris Animal Foundation's Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (MGVP),³ and the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP).⁴ But even with the critical support and assistance provided by these groups, the fate of the mountain gorilla, at least for some foreseeable decades, will likely depend on the brave Congolese, Rwandan, and Ugandan park rangers who daily battle poachers and other human threats. Simply put, if the rangers fail in their job, it seems unlikely that any other effort will save the mountain gorilla.

Mountain gorillas are a subspecies of eastern gorilla. They are rare—far rarer than the species of gorillas still seen in captivity. There are about 100,000 western gorillas (of which there are two subspecies) living in many parts of central and western Africa. There are only about 12,000 eastern gorillas (of which there are three subspecies), and they are found only in Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Of these, more than 11,000 belong to the eastern lowland subspecies. The majority of the remainder belong to the Bwindi subspecies. Only about 355 are mountain gorillas, and nearly all these are found in the three national parks that straddle the Congo-Rwanda-Uganda border: Virunga Park on the Congolese side, Parc des Volcans on the Rwandan side, and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park in Uganda. None live in captivity. Yet despite its rarity, thanks to the work of Dian Fossey and the scientists who have followed her, this rarest of the gorillas is probably also the best known of all the great apes.

The biggest threats to the survival of the mountain gorilla are all human: deliberate poaching, accidental killing in the snares and traps left (illegally) for other kinds of bush meat, death at the hands of frightened troops or armed

rebels, and even infection (such as with measles) resulting from contact with humans. Few of these threats show any sign of disappearing. Six mountain gorillas (four females and two infants) are known to have been killed in two poaching incidents in the summer of 2002. In the words of Netzin Steklis, director of DFGFI's Scientific Information Resources Center, "For a small population like this, the death of these four females is a catastrophe."⁵ Against all these threats, the gorilla's principal defense is the constant vigilant patrolling of the rangers.

The tribal and political violence in and around the gorillas' last sanctuaries goes back decades, but the 1990s were particularly bloody. In Rwanda, Hutu extremists murdered hundreds of thousands of their countrymen and drove millions more into refugee camps in the Congo and other neighboring countries. A million refugees settled on the edges of Virunga National Park, and to survive, they cut firewood and hunted bush meat. The refugee camps also housed insurgents bent on restoring Hutu rule in Rwanda. In 1996, the Rwandan army invaded the Congo to eliminate the threat. In May 1997, an entire band of ten gorillas was slaughtered by a Congolese army patrol. By 1998, the Congo was again fractured by civil war. Sadly, for both the gorillas and the rangers, it had all happened before: In the civil war of the 1960s, more than twenty park rangers lost their lives, and as many as a quarter of its gorillas may have been killed.

The mountain gorilla is threatened in other ways as well. With a total population of only 355 animals—up from a low of about 250 in 1981—genetic diversity is a serious issue. Indeed, according to Dr. Steklis, the loss or saving "of even one female could have a significant impact on the survival of the species."⁶ But if they can be protected from human dangers, the gorillas may recover and even flourish. They have no natural predators. Females begin breeding at about age ten and thereafter breed every three or four years on average. More than two-thirds of the infants, if not killed by humans, will live to adulthood. A typical female will see three of her daughters survive and reproduce; within the dynamics of gorilla family groups, this means that just four young females can have a total of 427 descendants in fifty years—provided that the gorillas are protected.

QUESTIONS

1. Local authorities and park employees in Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congo have received a great deal of assistance from Western governments

entitled to legal and moral rights from those not so entitled? Whether or not the line is based on species membership, should it be based on genetic, psychological, or cognitive criteria? If so, on what criteria? Should it, as many animal rights theorists argue, be based simply on an ability to feel pain?

2. Even if the Great Ape Project's focus on four species is not theoretically justified—as, indeed, the project comes close to conceding in its FAQs (frequently asked questions)—is it morally justified by tactical and political considerations?
3. Is it morally correct, as the Great Ape Project asserts, that it is better to demand full moral rights for members of a few species than to seek more modest gains for members of many species?
4. Is being morally considerable (or “having moral standing” or “being intrinsically valuable”) an all-or-nothing kind of property? Much of the philosophical literature on the question assumes that it is.⁴ But at least in the West, much of the theological literature assumes that it is not. Muslims, Jews, and Christians would all argue that everything God has created is good and deserves respect and moral consideration but not that it is *equally* good and deserving of *equal* respect and consideration (see Case 39: Peace with All of Creation). Assuming that humans have “full” moral standing, can a snail or a dog or a gorilla have only *no* standing or *full* standing? Or could each have its own unique degree of standing? To oversimplify the question, who is right: the philosophers or the theologians?
5. Reread question 2 from Case 1: Gorilla Rangers. If you were one of the impoverished human refugees struggling to survive along the Congo–Uganda–Rwanda border, would the Great Ape Project's focus on legal and moral rights for animals seem important to you?

NOTES

1. The Great Ape Declaration and other information on the Great Ape Project are available at www.greatapeproject.org/gapintroduction.html.
2. The Great Ape Project, “Frequently Asked Questions,” section 4.1, available at www.greatapeproject.org/gapfaq.html.
3. *Animal Welfare Act*, 1999 (N.Z.).
4. Mary Anne Warren is one of many notable exceptions and has offered a sharp critique of the view that whatever possess inherent value must possess it equally. See

THE GREAT APE DECLARATION

The Great Ape Project is dedicated to securing legal and moral rights for certain species of primates. The core principles of the Great Apes Declaration Group are set out in its declaration:

DECLARATION ON GREAT APES¹

We demand the extension of the community of equals to include all great apes: human beings, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans. The “community of equals” is the moral community within which we accept certain basic moral principles or rights as governing our relations with each other and enforceable at law. Among these principles or rights are the following:

1. The Right to Life

The lives of members of the community of equals are to be protected. Members of the community of equals may not be killed except in very strictly defined circumstances, for example, self-defence.

2. The Protection of Individual Liberty

Members of the community of equals are not to be arbitrarily deprived of their liberty; if they should be imprisoned without due legal process, they have the right to immediate release. The detention of those who have not been convicted of