



GREATER VIRUNGA TRANSBOUNDARY COLLABORATION

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Public Notice

Four Mountain Gorillas die in suspected lightning strike in Virunga Massif

The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) is deeply saddened by the unfortunate deaths of four mountain gorillas from the Hirwa family in Mgahinga National Park in Uganda. The mountain gorillas are suspected to have been killed by a lightning strike on 3 February 2020. The deceased gorillas include three adult females and a male infant.

The GVTC led a team accompanied by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Rwanda Development Board (RDB) and Gorilla Doctors to assess the cause of death and identify the state and health of the other family members. A post-mortem was performed and samples collected for detailed laboratory analysis. Based on the gross lesions from the post-mortem, field assessment observation and history, the tentative cause of death for all four individuals is likely to be electrocution by lightning. Confirmation of the cause of death will be issued after a histopathology laboratory exam of the collected samples, which is expected to take 2-3 weeks. The GVTC and her partners will continue to closely monitor the health of the group.

The Hirwa family of 17 members crossed to Uganda's Mgahinga National Park on 28 August 2019 from Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda. The group is among many other mountain gorilla families that range within the Virunga Massif ecosystem, which is comprised of three regional parks: Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in Uganda.

About GVTC

The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) was formed in 2015 to foster regional management of natural resources in the shared Virunga landscape.

The GVTC has established a transboundary collaborative framework for harmonious wildlife conservation and tourism development among the signatory parties - DRC, Rwanda and Uganda.

As per the trilateral memorandum of understanding signed in 2006, in cases of cross border movement of mountain gorilla groups, the GVTC coordinates, shares information, and ensures the adherence to the agreements that govern the monitoring and sharing of revenues from transfrontier tourism gorilla groups.

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