

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Species specific matters

GREAT APES (HOMINIDAE SPP.):
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) and the Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Apes (SGA) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Background

2. Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18) on *Conservation of and trade in great apes* directs the Secretariat to report to the Standing Committee on the implementation of the Resolution at each of its regular meetings, and directs the Standing Committee to review the implementation of the Resolution at each of its regular meetings on the basis of the Secretariat's reports and report at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties with any recommendations for further action.

Great Apes Survival Partnership

3. In paragraph 4 of the Resolution, the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Animals Committee are urged to work closely with GRASP (Great Apes Survival Partnership), which is an alliance of over 100 national governments, conservation organizations, research institutions, United Nations agencies and private companies, committed to ensuring the long-term survival of great apes and their habitats in Africa and Asia. An update on GRASP activities relevant to the implementation of Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18) will be provided as an information document to this meeting.
4. The last physical meeting of GRASP members was held at UNESCO in Paris in 2019 and COVID-related restrictions did not allow for a physical meeting in 2020 and 2021. It has not been possible to hold any GRASP decision-making meetings online since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Geneva, 2019) due to technical difficulties faced by African range States in participating in online meetings. Until the next meeting of the Executive Committee is held, the Secretariat will remain an active member of the Committee and continue to maintain regular contact with the GRASP Secretariat.

Illegal trade in great apes as reported by CITES Parties

5. The levels of illegal trade in great ape species as reported in the CITES illegal trade reports is summarized in the table presented in the Annex to this report. The number of seizures reported in 2016 was 12; 11 in 2017; 12 in 2018; 13 in 2019 and 7 in 2020. Several Parties have not reported seizures to the species level, though this may not always be possible. The volume of seizures remains low, with the exception of two seizures. One seizure of 30 individuals of *Pan troglodytes* was reported in 2017 by Guinea and another seizure of 17 live specimens indicated as *Pan spp.* was reported by Turkey in 2020. It is not known if the specimens refer to *P. paniscus* (bonobo) or *P. troglodytes* (chimpanzee).

Emerging issues concerning great apes and COVID-19

6. Following consultations with the GRASP Secretariat and the IUCN Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Apes, the Secretariat would like to draw the attention of the Standing Committee to a number of important issues concerning great apes linked to the emergence of the COVID-19 virus.
7. When SARS-COV-2 emerged, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Wildlife Health Specialist Group and the Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Apes warned of the possible effects of the virus on great apes, who are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Non-human great apes and humans share over 98% DNA genetic material and zoonotic diseases have been transmitted between them causing morbidity and mortality.¹ Furthermore, studies indicate that gorillas, chimpanzees, and other old world primates are just as susceptible as humans to COVID-19 because they have the same Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE2) protein receptors that the SARS-COV2 virus attaches to,² making them highly susceptible to SARS-COV2.
8. UNESCO held a series of [webinars](#) in June 2020 on COVID-19 and the loss of biodiversity and the threats to the survival of the great apes. The webinars discussed the health of biodiversity, zoonoses and in particular how to prevent them, the particular risks for great apes and humans and how to reduce them.
9. It was confirmed that the fears around the potential risk to great apes from COVID-19 were justified when the first natural transmission of COVID-19 to primates was recorded within one year of the pandemic in January 2021 when eight gorillas at San Diego Zoo Safari Park contracted the disease from an asymptomatic zoo keeper with three of them testing positive through fecal sample testing.³ A 48-year-old adult male gorilla developed severe signs and the rest of the younger members of the troop developed mild signs of COVID-19.
10. The ARRC⁴ Task Force of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group issued an advisory note on [COVID-19 and Great apes](#) for extractive industry personnel, applicable to energy, extractives, transport infrastructure, agro-industry and other projects operating in great ape habitats. A joint statement of the IUCN Wildlife Health Specialist Group and the Primate Specialist Group, Section on Great Apes entitled "[Great apes, COVID-19 and the SARS CoV-2](#)" was published in March 2020 and an [updated version](#) was published in April 2021. The IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group would like to bring attention to the [Non Human Primate COVID-19 Information Hub](#), which is a tool for managing situations with active COVID-19, from answering Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to providing technical guidance and important links to further information aimed at helping define and mitigate risk from COVID-19.
11. Concerning great ape tourism and the revenue it generates for conservation, IUCN experts recommended [the suspension of great ape tourism and the reduction of field research](#). In response to this call, [the majority of Gorilla tourism sites were closed as of 23 March 2020](#). According to GRASP, while these closures are crucial to reduce the risk of infection, the loss of tourism revenue has a significant impact on great ape conservation as well as on the national economies of great ape range States. For a species as endangered as the mountain gorillas, the balance between health and economics has become even more critical for their survival during this pandemic ([Frontiers report](#) - a UNEP-International Livestock Research Institute report to which GRASP and experts from the IUCN SGA contributed). Most great ape tourism sites re-opened in late 2020 with rigid health measures to maintain the tourism economy.
12. The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration Secretariat in an oral communication with the GRASP Secretariat indicated that loss of tourism income for local communities bordering protected areas in Africa, due to a reduction in the number of tourists whose presence also provides some protection for the wildlife, has contributed to an increase in poaching. This could reverse the trend and conservation gains brought about by tourism for endangered mountain gorillas whose IUCN status was downgraded from critically endangered in 2018 as the only gorilla sub species showing a positive growth trend in their population.

¹ Negrey J, Reddy R, Scully E, Phillips-Garcia S, Owens L, Langergraber K, et al. Simultaneous outbreaks of respiratory disease in wild chimpanzees caused by distinct viruses of human origin. *Emerg Microb Infect.* (2019) 8:139–49. doi: 10.1080/22221751.2018.1563456

² Melin AD, Mareike C, Janiak FM, Paramjit SA, Higham JP. Comparative ACE2 variation and primate COVID-19 risk. *Commun Biol.* (2020) 3:641. doi: 10.1038/s42003-020-01370-w

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/11/gorillas-san-diego-zoo-coronavirus>

⁴ **Avoid, Reduce, Restore** negative impacts from energy, extractive and associated infrastructure projects on apes and contribute positively to their **Conservation**

13. GRASP indicates that there is a growing concern that poaching of high-value species could increase caused by factors such as job losses during national lockdowns. Thus, there have been calls for economic support to offset the loss of income and employment from tourism as well as measures to support public health in local communities. Given the economic importance of wildlife tourism to great ape range States, it is important to support great ape conservation as economic recovery efforts move ahead.
14. The Apes Seizure Database, developed by GRASP in partnership with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC), is the first global database to gauge the scale and scope of poaching and illegal trade in great apes. The database is an online reporting system to assist national authorities, civil society and businesses in monitoring and acting upon illegal trade in live animals, body parts and bushmeat. The database was launched at the 17th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), where it received a positive response from both participants and the media. The Apes Seizures database has received a boost with new funding and with new functionalities designed to facilitate data submission and analysis.
15. A new project with involvement of GRASP and the IUCN Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Apes will look into human and wildlife health monitoring in great ape areas in Central Africa and will also explore how health indicators can be better included in development planning.
16. The IUCN Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Ape's ARRC Task Force, with support from GRASP, will be launching a training programme in Central Africa to strengthen the capacity of primatologists in advising industrial development projects. These projects harbor many direct and indirect impacts, including creating roads, which in turn facilitate the trade in apes. This training is thus aimed at improving mitigation of impacts of these projects on apes.
17. The CITES Secretariat, GRASP and the IUCN Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Apes will continue to closely monitor the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in great ape range States.

Conclusion

18. On this occasion, the Secretariat has no specific recommendations for further action for the Standing Committee to report to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Recommendations

19. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) note the report of the Secretariat provided in the present document.
 - b) include details of its consideration of the implementation of Resolution Conf. 13.4 (Rev. CoP18) in its report under paragraph 2 i) of Annex 1 to Resolution Conf. 18.2 on *Establishment of Committees*.

SUMMARY OF SEIZURES OF SPECIMENS OF GREAT APE SPECIES
AS REPORTED BY CITES PARTIES IN THEIR ANNUAL ILLEGAL TRADE REPORTS
(2016 TO 2020), ACCESSED NOVEMBER 2021

Year	Reporting country (ISO country code)	Scientific Name (as reported)	Description of specimen ⁵	Original quantity	Original unit
2016	FR	<i>Gorilla</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SPE	1	NUM
2016	BD	<i>Pan</i>	CLA	1	NUM
2016	CI	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2016	CI	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2016	KW	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2016	US	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKU	2	NUM
2017	US	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SPE	1	MLT
2017	NP	<i>Pan</i>	BOD	2	NUM
2017	GB	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	BOD	2	NUM
2017	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	BOD	3	NUM
2017	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2017	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIV	30	NUM
2017	US	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SPE	1	MLT
2017	GB	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>		1	NUM
2017	TH	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	2	NUM
2017	TH	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	2	NUM
2017	GB	<i>Pongo</i>	SKU	2	NUM
2018	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2018	GB	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKU	2	NUM
2018	TR	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2018	TR	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2018	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2018	GB	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	SKU	3	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIV	2	NUM
2018	MY	<i>Pongo abelii</i>	LIV	3	NUM
2018	DE	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2018	GB	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKU	3	NUM

⁵ For explanation of codes see [here](#)

Year	Reporting country (ISO country code)	Scientific Name (as reported)	Description of specimen ⁵	Original quantity	Original unit
2019	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	FOO	1	NUM
2019	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2019	MM	<i>Pan</i>	FEA	48 ⁶	BAG
2019	HK	<i>Pan</i>	FEA		
2019	HK	<i>Pan</i>	FEA		
2019	HK	<i>Pan</i>	FEA		
2019	GN	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>		1	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	1	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	2	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	3	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	3	NUM
2019	ID	<i>Pongo</i>	LIV	3	NUM
2019	BE	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKP	1	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Pan</i>	BOP	2	NUM
2020	TR	<i>Pan</i>	LIV	17	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Pan</i>	SKU	1	NUM
2020	CD	<i>Pan paniscus</i>	SKP	4	NUM
2020	FR	<i>Pongo pygmaeus</i>	SKU	3	NUM

⁶ This is likely to be an incorrect entry as FEA refers to Feathers