



EST. 1986  
**GORILLA  
DOCTORS**

# **THE GORILLA DOCTORS**

**2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

## SAVING A SPECIES

Gorilla Doctors is the **only organization in the world** providing life-saving veterinary care to eastern gorillas. Treating 'one gorilla at a time' with a science based One Health approach has helped lead to the extraordinary recovery of mountain gorillas in the wild. But there are still just over 1,000 on the planet, and the Grauer's gorilla remains critically endangered.

*Our collective efforts remain as vital as ever.*

# Gorilla Doctors' Annual Report 2023-2024

At the end of every fiscal year, I think it is important to reflect on the goals we set versus where we landed. I think of this as Gorilla Doctors' magnetic north recalibration. Magnetic north is the direction a compass needle moves as it orients with the Earth's magnetic field. I say this because our day-to-day work never has a fixed point like true north. In conservation, we are always having to adjust and realign our goals with the realities of implementation – an overall increase in operating costs of 20%, the sustained presence of rebel militia in DR Congo preventing our health monitoring of the mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park, the loss of much loved individuals like Ndeze, the longest surviving orphaned mountain gorilla, and the continuous emergence of pathogens impacting the health of both people and eastern gorillas.

That is enough to throw any organization off course, but that is one of the things I love most about leading the Gorilla Doctors team. They are some of the most resourceful, innovative, dedicated, and courageous people I have ever worked with. Gorilla Doctors knows how to be nimble, solve problems, and celebrate our successes, like

launching the Gorilla Doctors Michael Cranfield Regional One Health Laboratory, advancing Dr. Noel to serve as our first ever regional pathologist, hiring two new field veterinarians, and growing our community of donors, partners, and friends, to name just a few.

This annual report is in honor of each one of you who makes the work and continued positive impact of Gorilla Doctors possible. Thriving eastern gorillas in the wild is our true north. Until we arrive at that fixed point, we remain intrepid conservationists trekking together toward our magnetic north: saving a species, one gorilla at a time.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gilardi, DVM, Dipl. ACZM  
Executive Director



# IN MEMORIAM

## ANTOINE MUDAKIKWA, DVM

The conservation world lost a great pioneer of gorilla health with the passing of Dr. Tony Mudakikwa on September 20, 2024. Dr. Mudakikwa worked for more than 25 years championing gorillas and the health of their ecosystem. His long career in Rwanda included being the first Rwandan field veterinarian for Gorilla Doctors beginning in 1995. His tenure with Gorilla Doctors found him advancing to Field Director from 2001- 2002. His leadership inspired and paved the way for many future wildlife veterinarians and young gorilla doctors. Dr. Mudakikwa spent many years as head wildlife veterinarian for the Rwanda Development Board (RDB)—an important position, and one that kept Gorilla Doctors and Dr. Mudakikwa working together closely until his retirement from RDB. He served as a mentor, guide, and friend to many of our current team, and will be greatly missed by us all:

***“As a new recruit to the Uganda Wildlife Authority in 2001, I was sent to Rwanda for six weeks to be trained by Dr. Tony in gorilla health monitoring.”*** – Dr. Benard Ssebide, head veterinarian, Uganda

***“Dr. Tony was a mentor, a friend, and above all very much interested in seeing Rwanda become a beacon of wildlife health practices in the region.”*** – Dr. Julius Nziza, head veterinarian, Rwanda

***“Dr. Tony is my mentor and a great icon in the conservation and protection of gorillas.”*** – Dr. Jean-Paul Kabemba Lukusa, employee health program manager, DR Congo

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Head Veterinarian

**Cedric Kambere Kibengo, DVM**  
Field Veterinarian  
(as of August 1, 2024)

**Jean-Paul Kabemba Lukusa, MPH, PhD**  
Employee Health Program Manager

**Fabrice Katembo Malonga, DVM**  
Field Veterinarian

**Jean Cihebe Masumbuko**  
House Manager, Tshivanga Station

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**Jackson Mwenge**  
Senior Administrator

**Adolphine "Lina" Nturubika, DVM**  
Field Veterinarian

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Head Veterinarian

**Methode Bahizi, DVM**  
Clinical Diagnostics Manager

**Innocent Barimenshi**  
Kinigi Facility Caretaker

**Joseph Maniraguha**  
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**Justine Mukeshimana**  
Housekeeper

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Guard

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Guard

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Guard

**Schadrack Niyonzima, MBA**  
Senior Administrator

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**Benard Jasper Ssebide, DVM, MSc**  
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Field Veterinarian

**Deo Mbonye**  
Kisoro Facility Guard

**Dilly Muhumuza**  
Field Assistant, EEIDI Project  
(thru June 30, 2024)

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Senior Administrator

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Senior Field Veterinarian

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Senior Field Veterinarian

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Buhoma Facility Guard

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Laboratory Specialist

# Annual Summary July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



## Gorilla Doctors (\*MGVP, Inc.) Fiscal Health Report

Revenue: \$2,145,683

Expenditures: \$2,317,935



### Our Gorilla Patients

Mountain and Grauer's gorillas combined

**67** Groups

**~800** Habituated Gorillas

**5** National Parks



### Research in Action

**3** Scientific Publications

**4** Major Research  
Projects



### One Health for All

**5** Graduate Degree Trainees  
+3 MSc graduates in 2024!

**6** Internships

**30** Events, Presentations, &  
Meetings around the World



### Y(our) Impact

**396** Health Checks

#### Clinical Interventions by Type

**29** gastrointestinal parasites

**23** respiratory illness

**9** other types of illness

**3** traumatic injuries

**2** snare rescues

**66** Total

57 Partial Interventions:

*treatment administered remotely via dart*

9 Full Interventions:

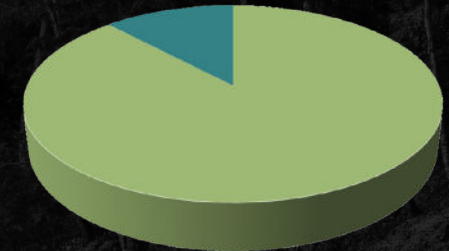
*anesthesia required for more hands-on treatment*

**8** Wild Animals Rescued & Treated  
from Illegal Wildlife Trade

**2** chimpanzees

**2** bonobos

**4** monkeys



**82% Programs**

*Investment in Gorilla Doctors' core program expenses (veterinary care, scientific research, and One Health initiatives)*

**18% Administration**

*Includes management, development, communications, and finance functions that support programs and mission*

\*Gorilla Doctors (MGVP, Inc.) financials are audited annually and the organization is in good standing

### Global Contribution

Gorilla Doctors is committed to the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our mission contributes to three of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs):



Calendar cover, Dr. Mudakikwa, Annual Summary background, and February, May, August, and September images from Muhoza and Dushishoze groups in Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. Taken January and February 2024 by Skyler Bishop for Gorilla Doctors. Thank you, Skyler!

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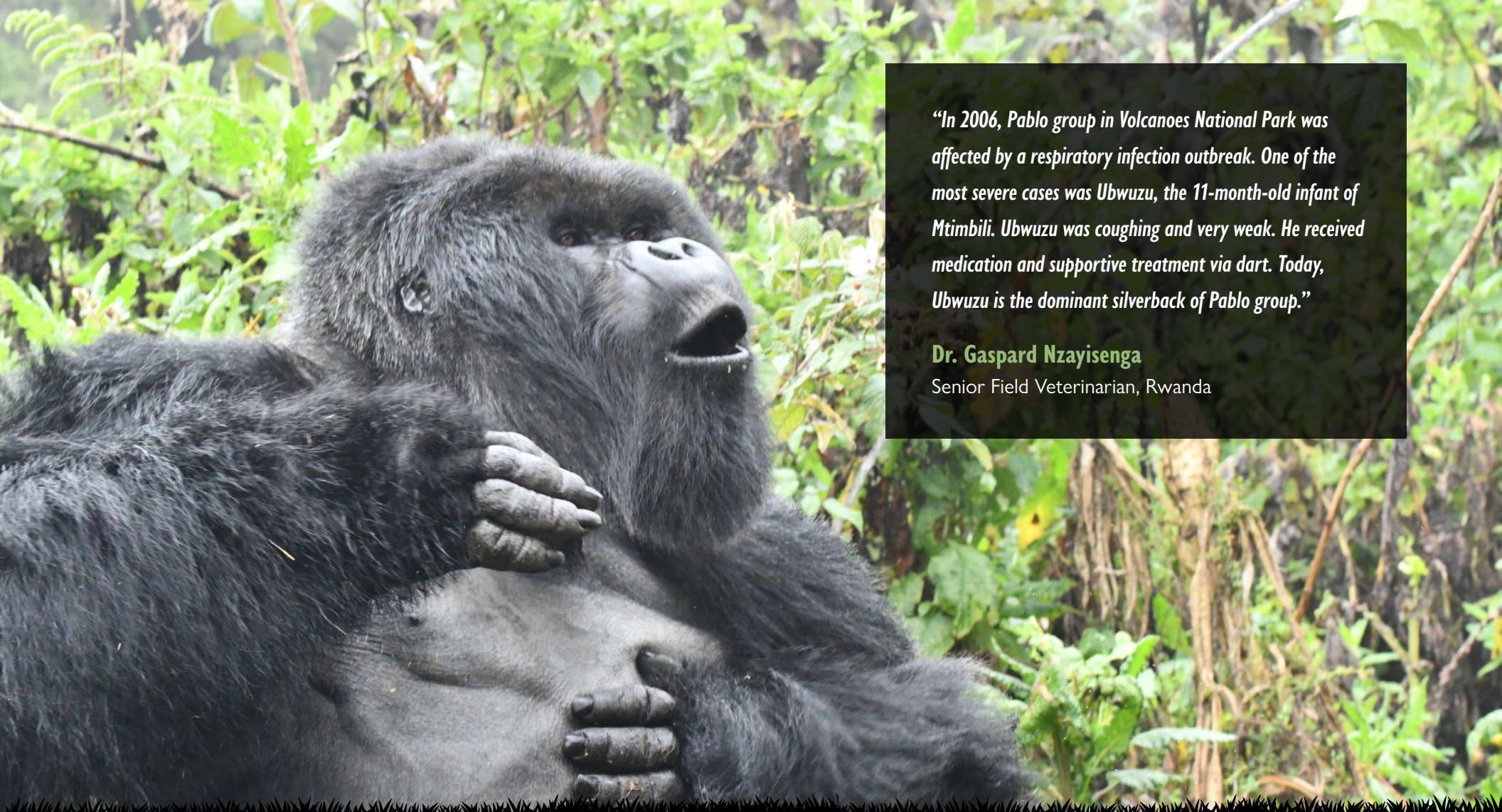
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## Gorilla Guardians®

*The list of our 2023-2024  
Gorilla Guardians® is  
featured in the month of  
September.*

**Every gift helps Gorilla Doctors achieve its mission. In FY 23-24, hundreds of donors gave gifts from \$1 - \$499.**

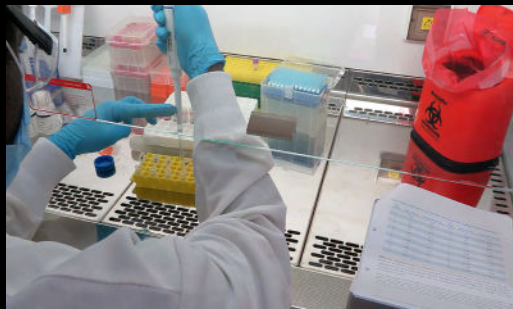
Gorilla Doctors is a partnership between Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, Inc. (MGVP, Inc.) and the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine's Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center (94-6036494). MGVP, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (06-1752363).



*“In 2006, Pablo group in Volcanoes National Park was affected by a respiratory infection outbreak. One of the most severe cases was Ubwuzu, the 11-month-old infant of Mtimbili. Ubwuzu was coughing and very weak. He received medication and supportive treatment via dart. Today, Ubwuzu is the dominant silverback of Pablo group.”*

**Dr. Gaspard Nzayisenga**

Senior Field Veterinarian, Rwanda



### **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT**

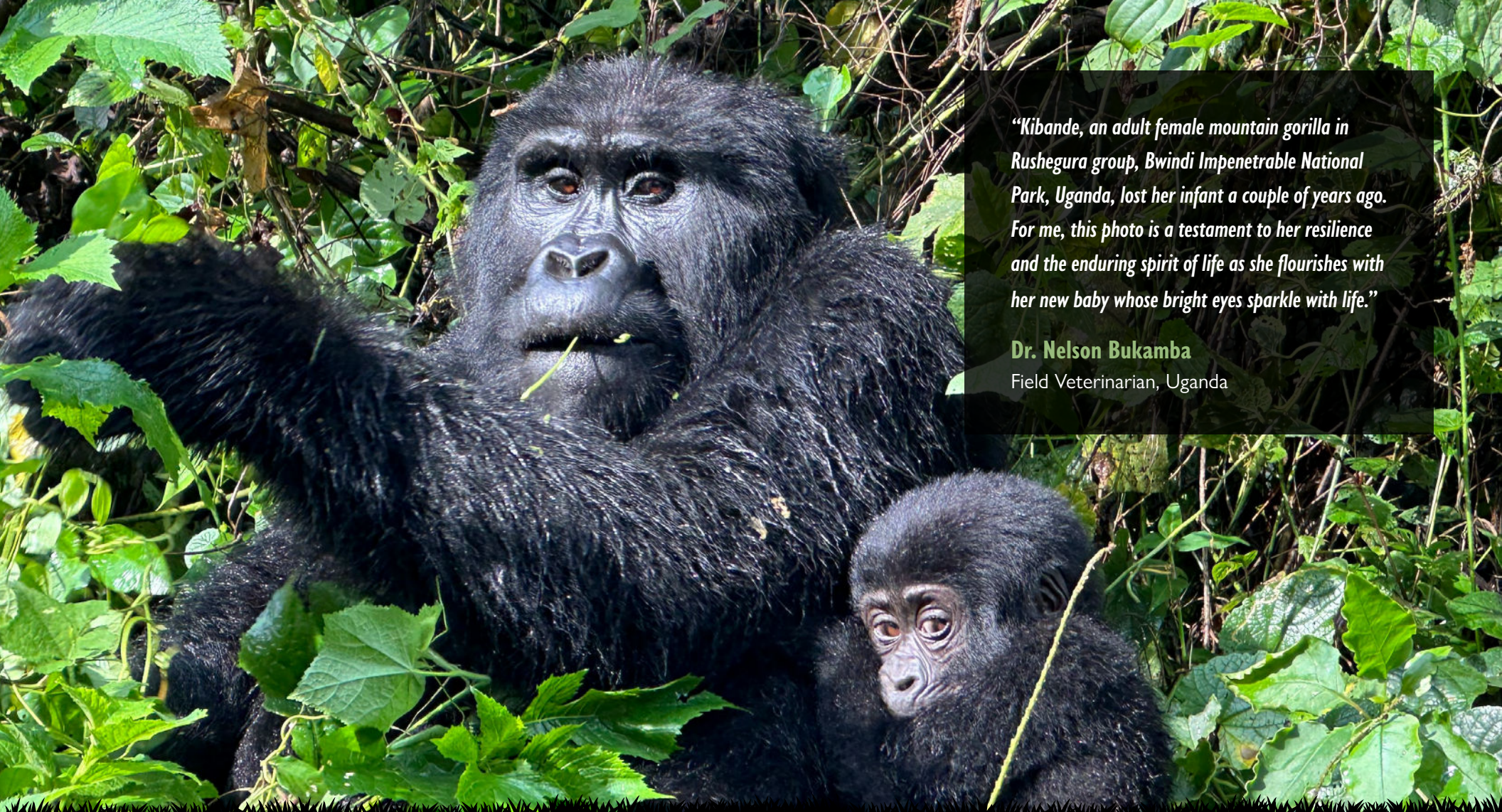
On January 31, 2024, Gorilla Doctors celebrated the opening of the Gorilla Doctors Michael Cranfield Regional One Health Laboratory at our regional headquarters in Musanze, Rwanda. Serving as a beacon for wildlife health in the region, Gorilla Doctors can now diagnose cause of illness within 24 hours of sample collection, including detection of human-borne pathogens impacting gorilla health.





### **VETERINARY MEDICINE HIGHLIGHT**

January through March of 2024 saw our teams in Rwanda and Uganda monitoring and treating multiple gorilla groups experiencing severe respiratory infection outbreaks. Most individual gorillas recover without treatment, but respiratory illness is still the second leading cause of mortality in mountain gorillas. During this period, 19 mountain gorilla patients across six groups required supportive treatment. All but one made full recoveries. Use this QR code to follow 'a day in the life' of a gorilla doctor in the field.



*“Kibande, an adult female mountain gorilla in Rushegura group, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, lost her infant a couple of years ago. For me, this photo is a testament to her resilience and the enduring spirit of life as she flourishes with her new baby whose bright eyes sparkle with life.”*

**Dr. Nelson Bukamba**  
Field Veterinarian, Uganda



### **ONE HEALTH HIGHLIGHT**

As part of our commitment to One Health, Gorilla Doctors often assists Virunga National Park (PNVi) with veterinary support for wildlife other than gorillas. Last year, PNVi launched a lion collaring program to collect important data on population size and movement, and health. Dr. Eddy led the veterinary aspects of the collaring effort by developing the field protocol, anesthetizing individual lions, collecting samples, and providing medical treatment as needed.



*“Mpungwe, a large group of Grauer’s gorillas in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo keeps challenging us. We are still working to fully habituate and identify individuals, and they often hide in the dense vegetation while we try to conduct our visual health assessments. This curious juvenile munching on epiphytes gave me a little break during one routine health check and I was able to observe a nice full belly and healthy hair coat.”*

**Dr. Lina Nturubika**

Field Veterinarian, DR Congo



### SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

In April 2024, Gorilla Doctors DR Congo team provided trainings and logistical and technical support for a wildlife census in the highlands sector of Kahuzi-Biega and the southern sector of Maiko National Parks. The primary goal of the census was to assess Grauer’s gorilla, chimpanzee, and other wildlife for a baseline against which to monitor population trends. Census teams collected samples for Gorilla Doctors to investigate infectious disease threats, gastrointestinal parasites, and genetic identification.



### **VETERINARY MEDICINE HIGHLIGHT**

After having disappeared into deep, unprotected forest for more than three weeks, Mpungwe group was visited by Dr. Lina upon their return to Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Dr. Lina observed a juvenile with a wire snare cutting through skin and muscle. Drs. Eddy and Fabrice rushed to the forest to join Dr. Lina in rescuing the infant from the snare. Lead silverback Mpungwe kept charging the intervention team. After more than two hours, they successfully anesthetized the juvenile, removed the snare, and treated his severe wounds. The infant ultimately lost the hand, but the stump fully healed and he has adapted well.

*“I see gorillas every week, yet I never tire of locking eyes with them and observing their daily activities and routines. Although I cannot think for them, from what I observe, they seem to have learned and accepted how to coexist with humans, despite the many threats we pose to them. I took this picture of Isango Gakuru from the Hirwa group venturing outside the park. He is a twin, and it is rare for great apes to give birth to twins and successfully raise them.”*

**Dr. Adrien Emile Ntwari**  
Field Veterinarian, Rwanda



## GORILLA DOCTORS LIVE: SCIENCE EDITION

In June 2024, Gorilla Doctors launched a new annual series: **Gorilla Doctors LIVE: Science Edition** where we explore our scientific research and how it helps keep gorillas healthy and in the wild where they belong. Use the QR code to watch the recording and keep an eye on your email and social media for our 2025 Save the Date announcement! Not on our email list? Sign up using the QR code on the very last page.



*“Seeing Mukono with an infant always makes me smile. Mukono lost her left eye and a hand, likely from a snare when she was young. For our critically endangered Grauer’s gorilla patients, Mukono’s survival, resilience and infant, Youssoupha, give me hope for the future.”*

**Dr. Fabrice Katembo Malonga**  
Field Veterinarian, DR Congo



### **CAPACITY STRENGTHENING HIGHLIGHT**

After serving as a field veterinarian for more than a decade, Dr. Noel spent 10 months in the U.S. studying pathology at the University of California, Davis and Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Noel now serves as Gorilla Doctors’ regional pathologist based in Rwanda where he conducts post-mortem examinations, prepares and analyzes tissue samples, and works to advance our understanding of gorilla health. Use the QR code to learn more about Dr. Noel’s new role.





### ONE HEALTH HIGHLIGHT

With funding from the Czech Embassy in DR Congo, Dr. Jean-Paul Lukusa, our employee health program manager, conducted an education and awareness workshop for the directors of Kahuzi-Biega National Park. In August, he worked with local physicians to conduct annual health examinations for 106 park personnel. An additional 50 park personnel and their families volunteered to participate in parasite screening and receive de-worming medication. Follow-up samples were collected one month later to analyze the efficacy of treatment.





**Gorilla Guardians® champion gorilla health by providing reliable, regular funding for the core work of our veterinarians who monitor gorilla health every day. We are so grateful to our Gorilla Guardians from the 2023-2024 fiscal year, a powerful group dedicated to healthy, thriving gorillas in the wild. Use the QR code to learn more and become a Gorilla Guardian®.**



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 Linda Verstraten  
 Bruce Wagman  
 Amber Waite  
 Mo Wasley  
 Dr. Mardy Wasserman  
 Scarlet Watts  
 Dawn Wicks  
 Liz Williamson  
 Mary Wilson  
 Tammy Winston  
 Clyde Wright  
 Martin Wyatt  
 Susan Yager  
 Mark Zabukovec

*“Sometimes our gorilla patients can experience a sudden onset of acute, non-specific symptoms and we rush into the forest to assess their condition and conduct an intervention if needed. Part of my job is to make sure the field kits are always ready to go. And in the case of our intervention on silverback Ishavu in February 2024, I was also ready to go and support Dr. Gaspard. In this photo I am collecting a blood sample.”*

**Dr. Methodé Bahizi**  
Clinical Diagnostics Manager



### CAPACITY STRENGTHENING HIGHLIGHT

Drs. Adrien (left) and Gaspard (center) both graduated with their master’s degrees from Makerere University in Uganda. Support for Dr. Gaspard was provided by the Houston Zoo and Docs4GreatApes. Dr. Adrien’s studies were supported by The Mountain Gorilla Society of Canada through the Rotary Club of Edmonton Riverview and The World Rotary Fund. Dr. Nelson (right) also completed his master’s degree from the University of Edinburgh and received the “best dissertation thesis” award.

*“Every time there is a newborn baby gorilla, I can’t help but fall for this precious yet helpless and dependent creature. The baby gorilla is so adorable and valuable in all ramifications. It’s a reason to celebrate and have renewed hope for the future of the species. It also makes me appreciate the exceptional maternal capacity to solely care for and grow her defenseless infant through thick and thin until complete independence. Furthermore, it reminds me of the importance of our continuous close health monitoring from the very early stage of baby gorilla development and how this is crucial for population health.”*

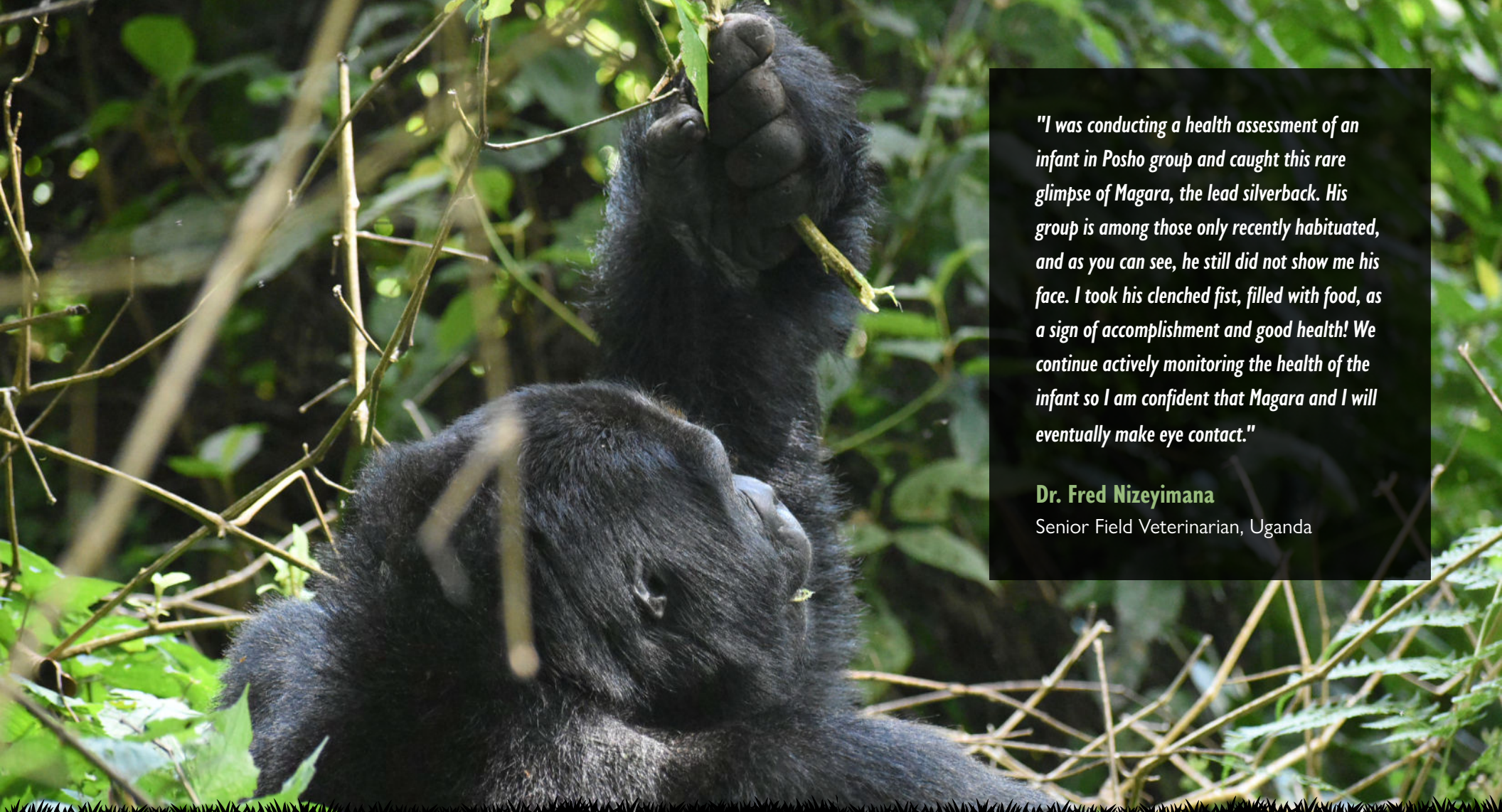
**Dr. Gaspard Nzayisenga**

Senior Field Veterinarian, Rwanda



## **GORILLA DOCTORS GROWTH**

Thanks to a generous gift from the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, we are in the process of building a new, permanent base of operations in DR Congo. In partnership with Virunga National Park, the new facility will be located in Rumangabo next to park headquarters. This new facility will significantly advance our ability to respond and treat our mountain gorilla patients in the Mikeno sector of Virunga National Park, home to nearly one-third of the total world population of mountain gorillas.



*"I was conducting a health assessment of an infant in Posho group and caught this rare glimpse of Magara, the lead silverback. His group is among those only recently habituated, and as you can see, he still did not show me his face. I took his clenched fist, filled with food, as a sign of accomplishment and good health! We continue actively monitoring the health of the infant so I am confident that Magara and I will eventually make eye contact."*

**Dr. Fred Nizeyimana**

Senior Field Veterinarian, Uganda

## GORILLA DOCTORS CORE VALUES

**AWE:** Revere the natural world we all share.

**ONE HEALTH:** Recognize that the health of animals, people, and the planet are inextricably linked.

**SCIENCE:** Uphold data, facts, and knowledge as our path to discovery and understanding.

**COLLABORATION:** Embrace diverse voices working in community to achieve lasting impact.

**INTEGRITY:** Choose honesty, authenticity, excellence, and respect in every moment.

**COURAGE:** Stay true to our values and persevere in the face of everyday and extraordinary global challenges.


Read about Gorilla Doctors'  
Way Forward:




# Meet the Gorilla Doctors

Gorilla Doctors protect the health of mountain and Grauer's gorillas in five national parks across Rwanda, Uganda, and DR Congo.

**DR Congo**




**Dr. EDDY KAMBALE SYALUHA**  
Head Veterinarian




**Dr. CEDRIC KAMBERE KIBENGO**  
Field Veterinarian




**Dr. JEAN-PAUL LUKUSA**  
Employee Health Manager



**Dr. FABRICE KATEMBO MALONGA**  
Field Veterinarian



**JACKSON MWENGE**  
Senior Administrator



**Dr. LINA NTURUBIKA**  
Field Veterinarian

**Uganda**



**Dr. BENARD SEBIDE**  
Head Veterinarian



**Dr. NELSON BUKAMBA**  
Field Veterinarian



**SYLVIA NAKIMERA**  
Senior Administrator



**Dr. FRED NIZEYIMANA**  
Senior Field Veterinarian



**Dr. RICKY OKWIR OKELLO**  
Senior Field Veterinarian

**Rwanda**



**Dr. JULIUS NZIZA**  
Head Veterinarian



**Dr. METHODE BAHIZI**  
Clinical Diagnostics Manager



**SCHADRACK NIYONZIMA**  
Senior Administrator



**Dr. JEAN BOSCO NOHERI**  
Regional Pathologist



**LEON NTAHOBAVUKIRA**  
House Manager



**Dr. ADRIEN EMILE NTWARI**  
Field Veterinarian



**Dr. GASPARD NZAYISENGA**  
Senior Field Veterinarian



**Dr. JEAN CLAUDE TUMUSHIME**  
Regional Molecular Laboratory Manager



**CLEMENTINE USANASE**  
Data Clerk

**USA**



**Dr. KIRSTEN GILARDI**  
Executive Director



**AMY BOND**  
Chief Communications Officer



**Dr. TIERRA SMILEY EVANS**  
Chief Veterinary & Scientific Officer



**CAROLYN FORLEY**  
Development Assistant



**Dr. LINDA LOWENSTINE**  
Veterinary Pathologist



**DONNA M. PLATT**  
Chief Development Officer



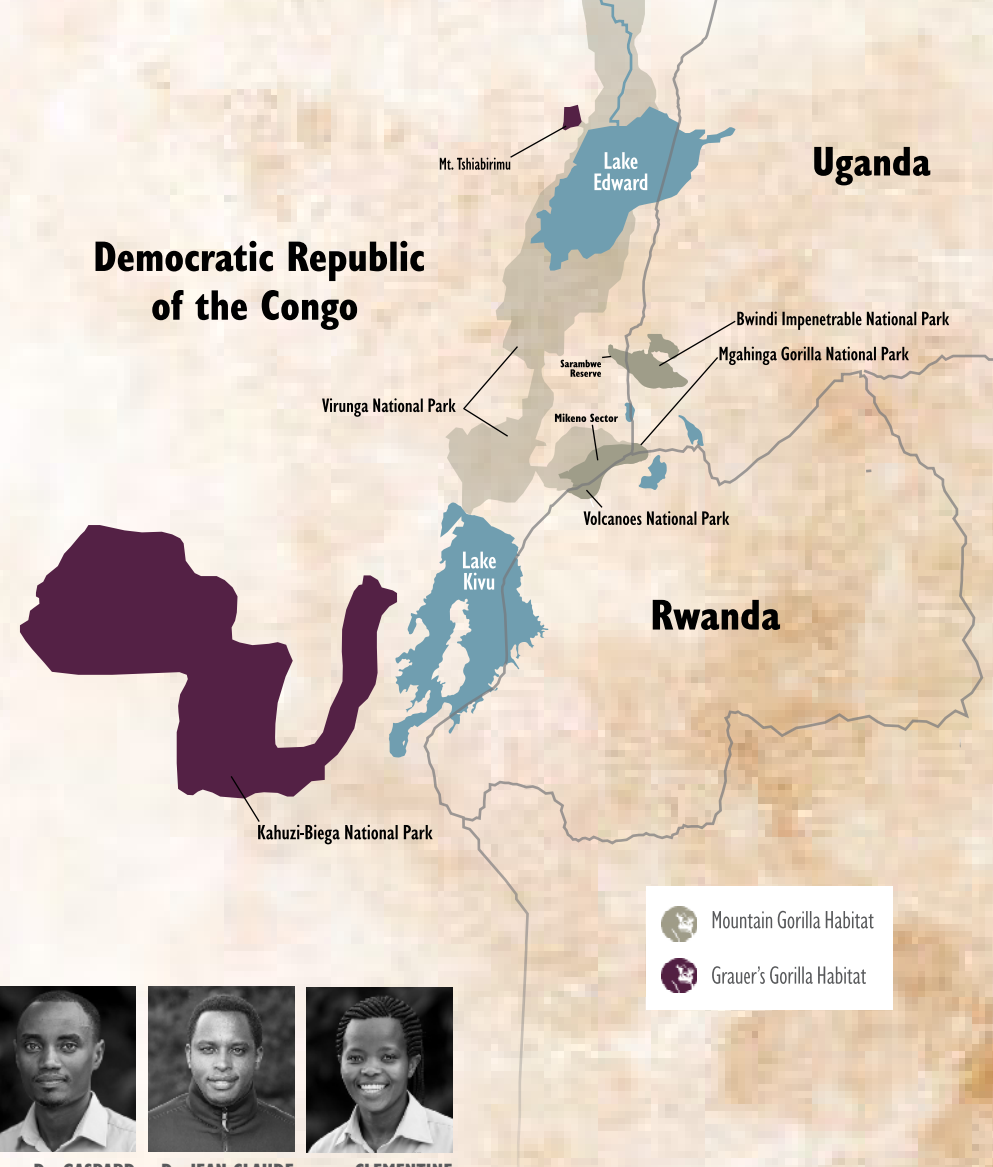
**EUNAH PRESTON**  
Marketing & Design Specialist



**DENISE RAYCRAFT**  
Bookkeeper



**Dr. ALEXANDRE TREMEAU-BRAVARD**  
Laboratory Specialist



Join our email list to receive all things Gorilla Doctors right to your inbox!



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