

**Conservation Through Public Health: Press Release on the Proceedings of
2019 African Primatological Society Conference 3rd– 5th September 2019
Friday 6th September 2019**

Primatologists, Primate Researchers and Tourism Experts from across Africa and Globally Gather in Entebbe for the Continent’s Biggest Primate Conference

The second congress of the African Primatological Society has just been hosted in Entebbe, Uganda from 3 - 5 September 2019, following the inaugural congress held in Bingerville, Ivory Coast in 2017. The three-day event was a resounding success, bringing together over 300 primate experts, including aspiring primatologists, researchers, conservation practitioners, tourism stakeholders and policy makers from Africa and across the globe to share ideas and research findings, to discuss this year’s theme: ‘Challenges and Opportunities in Primate Conservation in Africa’, and find ways to promote active participation of native African primatologists in the international primatology arena. With 250 out of 312 delegates from 24 different African countries, the APS more than achieved its goal of providing an accessible platform for African primatologists, in particular, to collaborate, network and discuss pressing challenges and issues, as well as opportunities and possible solutions, facing Africa’s primates. The USA, Europe, UK, Asia, Australia and Latin America were all very well represented at the conference as well.

Kicking off the conference on day one, 3rd September, with dancing and entertainment from the Batwa community of Mgahinga National Park, delegates were in high spirits for the conference opening. Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, APS Vice President, Founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health and Chair of the APS Conference 2019 organizing committee, provided an overview of the conference and thanked donors and partners for their support in making the conference possible and sustainable where branded aluminum water bottles and Gorilla Conservation coffee from farmers around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park was given to delegates. She highlighted the importance of the conference in supporting African primatology and conservation of African primates, noting that one third of primate species occur in Africa, some of which are endangered or critically endangered. The APS 2019 conference video was also played, highlighting threats to primates of Uganda, which has over 15 species of primates.

Dr. Inza Kone, President of the APS and Directeur General of the Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques in Ivory Coast, provided a brief background and overview of the APS. Since 2012, prominent African primatologists have been working towards establishing a group that will promote more active and inclusive engagement of native Africans working in primate conservation and research, coordinate the efforts of African primatologists, enhance their experience and influence in their various areas of work and strengthen the impact of their conservation actions. These efforts culminated in the formation of the African Primatological Society (APS) in April 2016. The APS held the inaugural meeting in Bingerville, Côte d’Ivoire in July 2017.

Famed primatologist, Dr. Jane Goodall, joined the conference through video link, and talked about her first years studying the Chimpanzees of Gombe National Park in Tanzania. It was in her early days, after months of getting the chimps to accept her, that Dr. Jane Goodall discovered that chimps used tools. It was previously thought that only humans were able to use tools. She remembered being struck by how like humans the chimps were, in so many ways, and commented that “you can’t share your life with any animal and not know they have personalities.”

The congress was officially opened by Hon. Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities representing the Prime Minister of Uganda, Rt Hon. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda. Noting that gazetted protected areas and forests cover 20% of Uganda’s total land, he highlighted that Uganda’s

leaders were dedicated to conservation, which is especially important given the competing demands for land – growing population and demand for energy. Uganda’s rich biodiversity includes 54% of the world’s remaining mountain gorillas; 11% of world recorded species of birds, constituting 50% of Africa’s bird species; 39% of Africa’s mammal species and 1,249 recorded species of butterflies, amongst many other wildlife attributes.

Through a combination of efforts – he thanked UWA, conservation NGOs and international supporters in particular that Uganda’s once decreasing Mountain Gorilla numbers have been reversed and are now showing positive growth. However, their habitat is threatened, which points again to why this conference is very important. Primates and their habitats are under threat from deforestation, disease, hunting for bushmeat, poaching and human-wildlife conflict. Rapid population growth is also a major problem facing Uganda’s protected areas, wildlife and primates.

Hon. Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities stressed the importance of protecting primates for conservation and sustainable development, saying it deserves a concerted multi-sectoral effort. He also noted that Uganda is very proud to host the second APS conference.

The first day of the APS 2019 conference saw a series of presentations by renowned primatologists and experts, including Sam Mwandha, UWA Executive Director, who put the importance of primates to Uganda’s economy into perspective by highlighting that 60% of UWA revenue comes from primate tourism. UWA receives around 60 billion UGX (equivalent to about 16 million USD) every year from primate tourism.

The first afternoon of the APS conference saw researchers across Africa discussing African primates’ status on the IUCN red listing as well as the state of primatology in each of the six regions in Africa (East, West, South, North and Central Africa and Madagascar). Sadly, there was a similar theme running through the discussions pertaining to each region, with primates across the continent coming under threat due to human activity. This perhaps set the scene for discussions on day two when delegates divided into groups depending on their areas of expertise. Key themes for day two included Conservation and Management; Ecology and Behavior; Diversity, Taxonomy and Status; Ecology and Behaviour; Health, Tourism and Education. There was also a special breakaway workshop to develop an action plan for the Red Colobus, which was presented on the third day of the conference. Red Colobus monkeys are among the most threatened group of primates in Africa, and are considered to be on Red Alert, facing an extinction crisis requiring urgent, targeted, and coordinated conservation action. Inspiring presentations on strides that have been made in building Ugandan capacity in primatology were given by prominent primatologists from the UK, USA and Japan, Prof. Vernon Reynolds, Prof. Jessica Rothman and Prof. Takeshi Furuichi. Also present at the conference was the Japanese Ambassador to Uganda, His Excellency Kazuaki Kameda and the Mayor of Entebbe, His Worship Vincent de Paul Mayanja.

On the evening of the second day of the 2019 APS conference, delegates enjoyed dinner at UWEC’s floating restaurant. During the evening, the award ceremony for the event was held, with the following prizes awarded:

Best Oral Presentation: Ramanankirahina Rindrahatsarana, for the presentation on Female dominance, affiliation and aggression in western woolly lemurs in Madagascar.

Best Poster Presentation: Jonathan A Musa for his poster on Population Estimates of Diurnal Primates on Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Sierra Leone.

For outstanding service in building African capacity in primate research and conservation, the following five APS awards were presented:

- Professor Vernon Reynolds, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oxford, UK
- Professor John Oates, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Hunter
- Prof Jonah Ratsimbazafy, President of the Madagascar Primate Research Group (GERP)
- Dr. Jane Goodall, Founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and UN Messenger of Peace
- Professor Isabirye Basuta, retired Professor from Makerere University Department of Zoology who has trained most of the primatologists in Uganda

Dr. Russ Mittermeier, APS Patron and Chief Conservation Officer, Global Wildlife Conservation, was presented with an APS award for outstanding commitment and support in building African Leadership in Primatology

Thursday 5th September, the third day of the APS 2019 conference, saw Prof. Jonah Ratsimbazafy, discussing the potential for African leadership in primatology in shaping national and regional conservation policy". Dr Fabian Leendertz of The Robert Koch Institute, followed with a discussion on epidemiological issues in primate research and conservation projects.

The mid-morning session saw a lively round table discussion about opportunities and challenges for sustainable development through primate ecotourism, focusing on the Uganda experience. It was moderated by CTPH Founder and CEO, Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka and panelists included Lilly Ajarova - CEO of Uganda Tourism Board, Pontious Ezuma - Bwindi and Mgahinga Conservation Area Chief Park Warden, Nelson Guma - Kibale Conservation Area Chief Park Warden, Alice Mbayahi - International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) Communications Officer, Dr. Robert Bitariho, Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC) Director, Praveen Morman - Volcanoes Safaris Founder and President, Amos Wekesa - Great Lakes Safaris Founder and Managing Director and Dr. Helga Rainer - Arcus Foundation Conservation Director – Great Ape and Gibbon Program. They shared their views, broadly agreeing that great ape tourism has boosted Uganda's economy, but should be done sustainably and through a conservation lens. A specific recommendation was wearing of masks during visits to gorillas and chimpanzees in Uganda to minimize disease transmission between people and great apes as has been instituted at other great ape sites in Tanzania, DRC and Ivory Coast. It was also recommended to develop primate tourism beyond the great apes where golden monkey and nocturnal primate tourism are already showing great potential in Uganda and that primate tourism in Africa should be guided by a common regional strategy.

A closing technical presentation to wrap up the conference was given by APS Patron Dr Russ Mittermeier demonstrating the links between primate research, conservation and ecotourism.

As the conference neared its final sessions, the following 2019 Strategic Implementation Interventions and Declarations were agreed:

- We need more Africa-based programs to build leadership and empowerment
- It is important that we strengthen regional and Global Integration of African Primatologists for the good of primates across the globe
- Through our collaborations as the APS, we must make an effort to review and implement our proposed action plans
- It is vital that we engage a multi-sectoral approach in promoting conservation efforts including governments, local communities, the private sector and NGOs.

After a vote of thanks for the organizers, particularly mentioning Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka and her team at Conservation Through Public Health and Dr. Inza Kone, President of the APS, the organizing committee and the congress sponsors, Dr. Inza Kone brought an end to the friendly debate which had played out over the course of the conference by answering the question 'where is the capital of

primatology in the world?' by declaring that the global capital of primatology is Africa! He also announced that the next APS conference will be held in 2021, in Gabon.

With a total of 163 presentations including 136 oral presentations - 21 in plenary and 115 in breakout sessions and 27 poster presentations, the APS made significant strides in building African leadership in Primatology at this conference.

Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH) headed the APS 2019 organizing committee, working closely with Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques (CSRS) in Ivory Coast, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda Tourism Board, Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC), the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Makerere University, National Forestry Authority, Integrated Rural Community Empowerment (IRUCE), African Institute on Food Security and Environment (AIFE Uganda), Bwindi and Mgahinga Trust, Chimpanzee Trust, Jane Goodall Institute, Budongo Conservation Field Station, Ebo Forest Project, Institute of Primate Research in Kenya, other partner NGOs, Let's Go Travel, Tourism Uganda, International Airtime Topup, Gorilla Conservation Coffee, Urge Uganda, PFT Events and Add Value. The following organizations supported the conference: Arcus Foundation, Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation, Houston Zoo, Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, Solidaridad, San Diego Zoo, Primate Conservation Inc, Rare Species Fund, Zoo Victoria, Heidelberg Zoo, PASRES, West African Primate Conservation Action (WAPCA), Nkuringo Safari Lodge, Volcanoes Safaris and BDO East Africa as well as, a number of individual donors of which we are extremely grateful.

At the Annual General Meeting held immediately after the APS 2019 conference, Uganda's Wako Ronald, Senior Primate Keeper at UWEC was appointed to the APS Executive Committee as the Captive Care and Breeding Officer.

Please see <https://apsuganda.africanprimatologicalsociety.org/> for more information.