

Record-breaking Global Petition to Protect Cross River Gorillas

Yaounde, Cameroon - On July 18, 2013 a petition with almost 75,000 signatures in support of Cross River Gorilla conservation has been delivered to the Cameroon Minister of Forestry and Wildlife His Excellency, Ngwese Philip and Prime Minister of Cameroon, His Excellency Philemon Yang.

The signers expressed their deep concern over the senselessly violent murder of a male Cross River Gorilla in March in North West Cameroon. The killing of this silverback gorilla was ordered by the Chief of Gendarmerie Brigade based in Pinyin, about 33km away from a proposed gorilla sanctuary.

The death of this gorilla remains a very big loss not just to Cameroon and local conservation efforts, but to the conservation world at large and resulted in a global outcry.

Within a few months, thousands of people sent letters and emails and signed the online petition. The petition received almost 75,000 signatures from 196 countries -virtually every country in the world.

"This phenomenal response shows that people are overwhelmingly against the killing of this critically endangered species", says Arend de Haas, Director of the African Conservation Foundation. "It is one of the most successful internet petition campaigns for great apes ever."

The top 10 countries with the most signatures are the United States, Canada, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Russian Federation, and South Africa.

The petition attracted attentions from people in unexpected countries like Antarctica (2 signatures), Lebanon (61 signatures), and North Korea (3 signatures). This world-wide response is an indication that the conservation of globally threatened species is not just the concern of conservation organisations but also that of the global community, declared Louis Nkambi, the Executive Director of the Environment and Rural Development Foundation and Country Director for the African Conservation Foundation Cameroon.

Global citizens urge the Cameroon Government to:

1. Accelerate the creation of Great Ape Reserves in the Lebialem Highlands;
2. Sensitise and train Police and other Armed Forces concerning critically endangered species;
3. Define strict procedures for local authorities to follow in responding to wildlife issues; and
4. Implement fines and penalties for the murder of Cross River Gorillas and other globally threatened species.

Cross River Gorillas are Africa's rarest and most threatened ape and it belongs to the world's 25 most threatened wildlife species. Only about 300 of them survive in the Nigeria-Cameroon border region.

A sincere thank you to all of our supporters who have signed and shared the petition. Your voice helps us to bring these urgent matters to the Cameroon Government's attention.

75,000 signatures equals someone speaking out for Cross River gorillas every 7 minutes for one year.

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