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BABY GORILLA SEIZED IN CONGO TRAFFICKING RING BUST

A baby gorilla has been seized from animal traffickers in eastern DR Congo by the [Congolese Wildlife Authority](#) following a 3-month undercover investigation to bust an international wildlife smuggling ring.

One suspected trafficker was caught and arrested at Goma International Airport on Sunday while disembarking from a flight from Walikale (in the interior of the country and close to gorilla habitat) with an eastern lowland gorilla (only found in DR Congo). The gorilla was found concealed under clothes at the bottom of a bag and was suffering from over-heating and dehydration after spending over 6 hours in transit.

"Our work has revealed a significant upsurge in the trafficking of baby gorillas in recent months, possibly as a result of the war last year. Investigations have yet to reveal where these animals are being sent and who is buying them, but on the ground sources tell us that a baby gorilla can fetch up to \$20,000," said [Emmanuel de Merode](#), Director of Virunga National Park. "We must remember that for each trafficked baby gorilla, several gorillas have probably been killed in the wild. If we want to preserve our gorillas - and other wildlife - significant resources must be invested to put a stop to these trafficking rings."



The female eastern lowland gorilla, aged approximately 2 years, is currently being looked after by ICCN carers and the vets of the [Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project](#). She has a puncture wound on her right leg, and has sustained additional injuries on other parts of her body. It is not known how long ago she was taken from the forests of eastern DR Congo. She remains weak, and is suffering from dehydration and malnutrition, but is responding to treatment administered by MGVP.



Some 1,100 Park Rangers protect the National Parks of eastern DR Congo, a region affected by a 12-year civil war and current political instability. These parks are home to mountain gorillas, lowland gorillas, chimpanzees, forest elephants and rhinos, among other wildlife. The Rangers have remained active in protecting these parks, 4 of which have been classified as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Poaching, wildlife trafficking and habitat destruction remain the key threats to the survival of the wildlife in these parks.

Note: Video will be available as of 6pm GMT.

Editor's Notes:

The [Congolese Wildlife Authority](#) (ICCN) and its Rangers work throughout the country to protect the National Parks of Congo and their wildlife from poachers, rebel groups, illegal miners and land invasions. Over 150 Rangers have been killed in the last 10 years protecting the 5 parks of eastern DRC, and Rangers worked throughout the civil war, rarely receiving a salary.

Gorillas are the largest of the living primates. The Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) is one of the two subspecies of Eastern Gorilla and is found in the Virunga volcanoes region of Central Africa and in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda. The Lowland Eastern Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*), also known as the Grauer's Gorilla, is a subspecies of Eastern Gorilla and is only found in the forests of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Virunga National Park, Africa's oldest national park (established in 1925) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979, is home to 200 of the world's mountain gorillas and a small population of eastern lowland gorillas. Formerly known as Albert National Park, Virunga lies in eastern DR Congo and covers 7,800 square kilometers. The park is managed by the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature, the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN).

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