

VOLCANOES



S A F A R I S

Partnership Trust
2024 Report

CONNECTING VOLCANOES LODGES TO COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION

Our Project Coordinators present highlights from 2024

2024 has been a successful year for VSPT. The projects continue to improve the livelihoods of local communities, promote the conservation of great apes and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

VSPT has continued to host community events at the lodges, bringing together stakeholders and partners working in conservation and ecotourism. VSP has strengthened important partnerships with conservation organisations.

The Roots and Shoots Program has been implemented in eight schools near Kyambura Gorge Lodge. The project will increase environmental education to schoolchildren to promote conservation.

The Kyambura Lion Monitoring Project in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area was launched in 2022 and continued its work to protect large carnivores in 2024.

At Mount Gahinga Lodge, seven new houses were constructed for the Gahinga Batwa Village on 3 acres of land. Sustainable electricity is being provided with solar panels.

In July 2024, Volcanoes Safaris opened its 5th lodge, Kibale Lodge in Uganda. New VSPT projects were initiated including a wildlife training program, and support for nearby schools.

We are grateful for your continued engagement and participation. We thank the dedicated staff, partners, lodge guests and supporters who have made the work possible.



Lilian Namakiika
Bwindi Lodge



Ronald Hagumimana
Mount Gahinga Lodge



Augustine Mudukoy
Kyambura Gorge Lodge



**Jean Nepomuscene
Manibishaka**
Virunga



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Partnerships

VSPT is grateful for the partnerships with conservation organizations and collaboration from park and wildlife authorities.

In 2024, VSPT continues to partner with Jane Goodall Institute, Gorilla Doctors, Conservation Through Public Health, Dian Fossey Fund, and other conservation organizations to promote the conservation of the great apes and wildlife, protect fragile habitats and improve the lives of the local communities living near the parks.



Praveen Moman, VSPT Chair, with Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder Conservation Through Public Health.



Jan Sadek, EU Ambassador, Dr Jane Goodall and Kevin James, VSPT Trustee

The Kyambura Gorge Ecotourism Project

The Kyambura Gorge Eco-tourism Project has undertaken a series of activities since 2009 to safeguard the Kyambura Gorge ecosystem.

Today, Volcanoes Safaris and VSPT are the single largest stakeholders in the Gorge ecosystem after the Ugandan Wildlife Authority. Without the intervention of Volcanoes Safaris and VSPT, the survival of the gorge and chimpanzees would be under severe threat.

Through these activities and the strategic assembling of adjoining sites next to the Kyambura Gorge, the VSPT helps to link Kyambura Gorge Lodge to the local community and promotes

sustainable eco-tourism and conservation in one of the most important areas for avian, primate and wildlife biodiversity in Africa.

Initiatives include not only those described below but also a series of smaller projects. The project is the first of its kind in the area and is an example of the pioneering work conducted by the VSPT.



VSPT Staff at Rwenzori Founders



Partnership with The Jane Goodall Institute

VSPT and the Jane Goodall Institute have been working together since 2021 to support the threatened chimpanzee population at Kyambura Gorge; reinforce community-led conservation and restore the natural habitats surrounding the Kyambura Gorge.

In 2024 the Roots and Shoots Program was implemented in 8 schools near Kyambura Gorge Lodge.



Eight selected schools participated in the program which aims to inspire and engage the younger generation on community-led conservation. Club members were taught how to erect nursery beds and also planted trees in the Kyambura buffer zone.

The project gives each student the resources to develop a plan and implement a project that benefits the natural habitat they live in.

Construction work was started on the Kyambura Discovery Centre which will showcase the work of VSPT and partners. It is expected to open in early 2025.

Lodge managers Prisilla and Philbert are joined by Peter Apell and James Byamukama from the Jane Goodall Institute.



As part of the Roots and Shoots program VSPT will provide:

1. Nature walks in Kyambura Gorge and wetlands to learn about the chimpanzees and ecosystems.
2. Class trips into the park to learn about ecotourism and see the animals in the park.
3. Space in the Kyambura buffer zone to plant tree seedlings.

Roots and Shoots students planting trees in the Kyambura Buffer Zone.

Roots and Shoots hosted at Kyambura VSPT Research Centre



Kyambura Coffee Cooperative

The Kyambura Coffee Cooperative is a community-based initiative designed to provide vocational training to women and an alternative and sustainable source of income. Twenty local women are actively involved in the cooperative.

The cooperative collected 1332kg of coffee during the two harvesting seasons (237kg Robusta and 1,095kg Arabica). For each kilo harvested, the Cooperative members receive payment from VSPT. The roasted coffee beans are sold to Volcanoes lodges and served to guests.

The cooperative also generate income by making coffee soap and scrub from the by-products.

In 2024 383 bars of soap and 97 were sold for \$4 each and 402 jars of coffee scrub and 35 were sold for \$10 each.



Weighing coffee after harvest

Elephant Trench

VSPT have been tackling the issue of elephants entering community land and crop raiding near Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

In 2024, VSPT continued to maintain the elephant trench between the community land and Queen Elizabeth National Park. The aim is to prevent the elephants from entering community land in search of food.



Beekeeping Project

The Kyambura Beekeepers Cooperative have been producing honey in Kyambura since 2006. The honey produced is available to buy in the lodge gift shop. Sales of the honey go directly to the Cooperative.



*Above: Guests visit the beekeeping project
Below: Trainee Caroline Kyarimpa in the wetland*

Kyambura Wetland Project

The VSPT secured 45-acres of wetland south of Kyambura Gorge in 2010. Previously used as an illegal brick works, the wetland has regenerated to its natural state and attracts over 225 species of birds, including a number of rare bird species such as white winged Warbler, Zebra Waxbill, Ross's Turaco and the African Emerald Cuckoo. Our VSPT coordinators were also thrilled to spot the Cinnamon Chested Bee Eater, The Grey Olive Greenbul and the Black Crowned Night Heron for the first time in the wetland. The Wetland Project also serves as a training ground for young wildlife guides.



Kyambura Youth Training

The Kyambura Youth Training Program provides local youths with training in hospitality and wildlife guiding. Each quarter VSPT welcomes three new trainees to enroll in the program.

In 2024 the program as provided practical training experience to 12 local youths; 4 in the wildlife and guiding program and 8 in the service and hospitality program.

6 of the 12 trainees have secured employment, including 3 at Volcanoes Safaris lodges. Caroline Kyarimpa, Rogers Asimwe and Ritah Najuna are now working at Kyambura Gorge Lodge. We continue to support other trainees who have graduated from our training program as they look for employment opportunities.

Top left: Katerega Sabir, Rita Najuna and Asimwe Rogers.

Top right: Training on camera traps in the Kyambura wetland.

Bottom Right: Hospitality training at Kyambura.

Bottom Left: Trainee guides Nuwamanya Frank and Shakira Kikansemeza



Kyambura Lion Monitoring Project

The Kyambura Lion Monitoring Project was launched in June 2022 following a Large Carnivore training workshop at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

Building on previous survey work in Uganda over the last three years this project now gives the Lion Monitoring Team a permanent base at Kyambura.

The project, led by Dr. Alexander Braczkowski and in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) aims to establish a science-based conservation program which supports the protection of carnivore populations and improves the livelihoods of local people



Searching for GPS signals from a lion collar.

living in and around the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area.

Lion Survey: August to November

The team has driven 9,333km over 89 days since August to survey and record individual lions in Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area. The survey recorded a total of 24 distinct lion individuals 86 times.

The lion team support the Uganda Wildlife Authority with capacity building and training in scientific monitoring.



Lion Team Trainee in the field.



Sorting camera trap equipment



Lions captured on VSPT camera trap in QENP.

Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone

The Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone serves as a wildlife buffer zone, separating the local communities from the threatened chimpanzee population and other wildlife living in the Kyambura Gorge.

Since 2009, VSPT has worked on purchasing a 3km long buffer along the northern part of the Gorge. Over the year, over 9 acres of land has been purchased and 15,000 indigenous trees planted on the buffer zone to contribute to the protection of wildlife and the communities in this area. VSPT is thankful to Rubirizi district local government in conjunction with WWF for the donation of 12,000 trees to the Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone.

The Kyambura VSPT Research Center has hosted guests during the year to participate in the Kyambura Buffer Walk and to plant a tree during their stay at Kyambura Gorge Lodge. Schools participating in the Roots and Shoots Program have planted trees in the buffer zone.



Roots and Shoots educational trip to learn about nature in the Kyambura Gorge ecosystem (left).



Volcanoes Safaris fam trip agents planting trees on a gorge walk (right).

Bwindi Bar

Bwindi Bar provides a practical training institution for local disadvantaged youths living near Bwindi National Park. The program offers practical experience and training in the tourism industry and creates job opportunities in the region. On graduation, trainees are armed with the appropriate skills set to go on to gain successful employment in hospitality in Volcanoes lodges or other lodges in the region.

In 2024 the trainees served 3,771 visitors at Bwindi Bar (644 from Volcanoes Safaris, 3,127 from the local community and other lodges). 17 trainees graduated in 2024, with 9 gaining full employment in lodges in the region.

VSPT Project Coordinators continue to work with the other graduates, including support in CV writing and job applications, to help them try to gain employment. In 2024 Laban Ntukunda started work at Bwindi Lodge after graduating from Bwindi Bar.



Bwindi Tea

VSPT has a simple tea processing project at Bwindi Lodge. Five local community members are employed to harvest the tea and earn an alternative and sustainable source of income. Guests are invited to experience a tea tour around the tea gardens at the lodge and learn about the tea-making process.

Over the year, 1895 kg of tea was harvested by the community and packaged into gifts or sold to the local tea factory.



Gahinga Batwa Village

The Batwa are thought to be one of the oldest surviving indigenous people in the Central African Region. Known for their unique culture in the forests, the Batwa of the Virunga Mountains survived by hunting small game, gathering plants and fruits, living in caves and constructing huts of leaves and branches. When Mgahinga National Park was created in 1991, they were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and subsequently suffered severe socio-economic problems.



The Gahinga Batwa Village has continued to be supported by VSPT in 2024.

New Batwa Houses

In December the building of seven new houses was completed. Rebecca Marilo, Jenina Zaninka, George Barabwiriza, Emmanuel Zabayo, Herbert Moses, Garagara Kobwa, Herbert Uwisoko and their families have each moved into a new home.

VSPT joined the community in celebrating the new houses with dances and cake.



Education

Many of the children from the Batwa village have excelled in their recent end-of-year exam results.

Mutuzo Sipera was 8th out of 110 in Primary One.

Shantale Annet was 6th out of 40 in Primary Two.

Tuyisenge Herbert was 7th out of 64 in Primary Three.

Tuyizere Ruth was 5th out of 62 in Primary Four.

Manirakiza was 8th out of 50 in Primary Five.



Adult education classes in the Gahinga Batwa Village Community Centre



Batwa children going to school

Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience

The Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience began in 2013 and involves members of the Gahinga Batwa community sharing their traditions and cultural history with Volcanoes guests. Guests can enjoy a dance performance which involves the re-enactment of traditional forest life including hunting, gathering and the use of medicinal plants. In 2024, 99 Volcanoes guests joined the Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience.



Batwa Vocational Centre

The Batwa Vocational Centre was opened in 2013. Throughout 2024, the Batwa received lessons in sewing and crafts which will allow them to repair and make their own clothes.

The Batwa make gifts which are sold to generate income for buying food, medicine and other necessary items within the community. The products are supplied both to the lodge and local market. The Community receive all the proceeds from craft sales at the Vocational Centre.

Agriculture

VSPT has provided the Batwa community with training in agriculture and farming. In April, the Community planted Irish potatoes and beans. These crops were harvested successfully in June and a second planting of Irish potatoes and beans was done in August.

Healthcare

Each week in the Community Centre the Batwa meet with a doctor and counsellor if they require any treatment. This is supported by VSPT.



*Top Right: Batwa harvesting potatoes
Bottom Left: Wooden crafts made by the Batwa at VSPT vocational center.
Bottom right: A food donation.*



Virunga Lodge Community Projects

Intore Dance Troop

The dance troupe perform the traditional Rwandan ballet called The Intore, which is based on the courtly victory dance of the Rwandan mwami (kings) for guests at Virunga.

Virunga Microcredit Project

A microcredit loan and savings scheme is available for 28 members of Sunzu Village which helps small business develop and generate income. Projects such as agricultural, weaving baskets, and breeding domestic animals are funded.

Virunga Solar Panel Project

The Solar Power project aims to provide access to electricity to local communities around Virunga Lodge. Electricity is the first step to improving the welfare of households, it is essential for a family to progress, to allow school-going children to read in the evening and for families to access information. 16 panels were donated in 2024.

One Sheep per Family Project

Since 2014 the “One Sheep Per Family” project has donated sheep to local people to use for manure, a natural and effective fertiliser for growing crops, and the sale of the lambs provide an income for the family. In 2024, the project contributed a sheep to all 175 families in Sunzu village and 205 families in Bugyeo village. We are thankful for the generous support of our Volcanoes Safaris guests in achieving this goal!

Virunga Lodge Ladies Crafts Group

The Virunga ladies craft group make local Rwandan crafts, which are sold to guests at Virunga Lodge. Crafts such as baskets, table placemats and coasters, and kitenge bathrobes are made and sold by the group.

Virunga Water Tank Project

Around the nearby villages in the dry season there is an acute shortage of water. In 2024, Virunga guests donated 120 water tanks to families living around the lodge. These donations were matched by Virunga Lodge.



Sheep donation to families in Sunzu Village

How to Support

To find out more about the projects, please visit: <https://volcanoessafarispartnershiptrust.com/>

You can donate to the Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust via [PayPal](#) Vor for tax-deductible donations from US residents via [Empowers Africa](#).

To learn more about the Albertine Apes Alliance, please visit: <https://albertineapesalliance.com/>

Thank you for your partnership and support

