

VOLCANOES SAFARIS PARTNERSHIP TRUST (VSPT) ANNUAL REPORT 2022

HIGHLIGHTS

2022 was a successful year for VSPT. All Volcanoes Safaris lodges returned to higher occupancies following the covid pandemic as a large number of guests were able to travel on safaris that had been postponed during the last 2 years. Engagement and participation in the projects increased due to the increase in guest numbers.

2022 was the 25th anniversary of Volcanoes Safaris and there have been a series of events and new partnerships announced to celebrate the milestone.

In November VS and VSPT hosted a conservation retreat at Mount Gahinga Lodge with twenty-five conservation partners. **The Albertine Rift Ecosystems and Great Apes: Conservation Challenges 2022 to 2050.** It reflected on the successes and challenges of the last 25 years of working in the region and discussed collaborative action needed to take to safeguard the great apes and their tiny 'island' ecosystems going forward to 2050. **The Albertine Rift Conservation and Tourism group** was set up to coordinate ongoing action.



During 2022 there was progress on developing a joint project with the Jane Goodall Institute in Uganda to protect the Kyambura ecosystem, implement a Roots and Shoots program with local schools, and to review the potential for creating a wildlife corridor from Kyambura gorge to other nearby chimpanzee habitats.

In August VSPT provided over \$12,000 of support for a survey for large carnivores in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area particularly for African lion, leopard and spotted hyena. The survey collected data over a 5 month period using remote camera traps and a network of field teams.

VSPT held a training workshop for park rangers, VSPT field staff and local stakeholders at the Community and Conservation Centre at Kyambura Gorge Lodge on carnivore monitoring techniques. Towards the end of the year VSPT staff have started to monitor wildlife in and around the lodge grounds using camera traps set at night.

VSPT provided \$12,000 of support to Conservation Through Public Health for gorilla health monitoring and community engagement in Bwindi and to install 10 mobile toilets along the Ivy Trail pathway between Buhoma and Nketo in Bwindi Forest which is used by local people and tourists.

In August VSPT engaged the services of VCP LLP, who are professional fundraisers. Vijay Chitnis and Justin Moul have been providing support to VS staff on fundraising methods and also providing support to strengthen marketing of VSPT. A number of previous VS lodge guests have been contacted in late 2022 and so far one donor has contributed approximately \$60,000 to buy 5 acres of land to extend the Gahinga Batwa Village and purchase solar powered lighting for all 20 batwa homes. 10 new houses will be built on the new land in early 2023.

REVIEW OF PROJECTS

KYAMBURA GORGE ECO-TOURISM PROJECT

The Kyambura Gorge Eco-Tourism Project links the local community to conservation. The aim of the initiative is to promote sustainable eco-tourism and conserve the Greater Kyambura landscape, which is one of the most important areas for avian, primate and wildlife biodiversity in Africa. It consists of a series of projects that are managed by the Project Coordinator based at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

Kyambura Wetland

Expenditure \$29,000 land purchased

The VSPT secured a 30-acre wetland south of Kyambura Gorge in 2010. Previously used as an illegal brick works site, the wetland has now regenerated back to its natural state and attracts over 100 species of birds.

In 2022 the wetlands have been expanded with an additional 6 acres of land. The trails have been maintained and indigenous trees and plants that have been planted have been cared for. 144 guests from Kyambura Gorge Lodge have taken birding and nature walks in the wetland during the year. A number of rare bird species have been spotted in the wetland during the year including white winged warbler, zebra waxbill, Ross's turaco, African emerald cuckoo and the scaly throated honeyguide.



Kyambura Coffee Cooperative

Income \$5,878 Expenditure \$8,276

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

VSPT pays the women \$2.2 for every kilo of clean coffee beans harvested. Proceeds of processed coffee, either to Volcanoes Lodges, other lodges, or to walk in guests at VSPT, are split equally between the Coffee Cooperative members and VSPT.

In 2022 1227kgs of Robusta red beans and 4243 kgs of Arabica coffee were harvested, resulting in 823kg of clean beans.

The Cooperative use coffee by-products to make coffee soap and scrub. In 2022 they made 476 bars of soap which were sold for \$4 each, and 70 jars of coffee scrub which were sold for \$10 each. The soap and scrub is bought by Volcanoes lodges to use in guest bathrooms and as gifts.



Kyambura Youth Training Programme Expenditure \$900

The Kyambura Training Programme provides training to local youths in two programs: service and hospitality, and wildlife and guiding. Each quarter three new trainees are enrolled in the program.

Nine of the trainees graduated in 2022, two of which have gone on to work for VSPT or VS full time. Immaculate Nabasa is employed by VSPT as a Wildlife Guide and has been participating in the carnivore survey since October. Shakira Atukwatse has been employed in the service department in Mount Gahinga Lodge.



Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone
Expenditure \$32,000

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

In 2022 3.9 acres of land have been purchased at a cost of \$32,492. 11,500 indigenous trees were planted in the buffer zone in 2022. Guests at Kyambura Gorge Lodge participate in this project and have collectively planted 125 tree seedlings during the year.



Beekeeping project
Expenditure \$750

There are 40 beehives located in the lodge grounds, which serve to provide honey to local people and also to act as a fence to deter elephants from leaving the park and encroaching on local communities. The hives were moved during the year to find better locations for them to produce honey. There is a part time consultant who has been training VSPT staff for the last year.

When honey is produced it is served to lodge guests and also available to buy in the lodge gift shop. Lodge guests also take a bee tour and learn about the production and harvesting of honey.

By the end of 2022, 36 clients had done the bee tour.



Carnivore Survey.
Grant Income \$10,000, Expenditure \$28,500

In August VSPT provided over \$12,000 of support for a survey for large carnivores in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area (QECA) particularly for African lion, leopard and spotted hyena. The survey collected data over a 5 month period using remote camera traps and a network of field teams.

VSPT held a training workshop for park rangers, VSPT field staff and local stakeholders at the Community and Conservation Centre at Kyambura Gorge Lodge led by Dr Tutilo Mudumba, Dr Arjun Gopaldaswamy and Dr Alexander Braczkowski, on carnivore monitoring techniques. Towards the end of the year VSPT staff have started to monitor wildlife in and around the lodge grounds using camera traps set at night.



The results from the surveys are expected to be published in February 2023. Dr Alexander Brackowski is developing a plan for 2023 to work jointly with VSPT and UWA on a number of conservation initiatives to help protect the carnivore populations in QECA.



BWINDI LODGE

1. Bwindi Bar

Income \$7,300, Expenditure \$12,400

Bwindi Bar, the “Harry’s Bar of Uganda”, is located on Buhoma high street at the edge of the Volcanoes Safaris Bwindi Lodge site. The bar provides a practical training institution for local disadvantaged youths living near Bwindi National Park.

The program provides practical experience and training in the tourism industry, and creates job opportunities in the region. Thanks to this program, trainees are armed with the appropriate skills set to go on to gain successful employment in hospitality in Volcanoes lodges or other hotels and lodges in the region.

In 2022 11 trainees graduated the training program. Two of which have gone on to work in Volcanoes lodges in housekeeping and service and one trainee has been employed by VSPT and joined the wildlife monitoring team in Kyambura.



2. Tea Processing

Income \$400, Expenditure \$1,000

In 2013 VSPT began simple tea processing at Bwindi Lodge. Guests at Bwindi Lodge can experience a tea tour around the tea gardens at the lodge and understand the tea-making process.

Proceeds from the sale of tea are split equally between VSPT and the tea cooperative members. Tea harvested from the site during 2022 generated \$385 of income. 264 guests from Bwindi Lodge took a tea tour in 2022.

MOUNT GAHINGA LODGE

The Batwa community is a minority hunter-gatherer group who traditionally lived within the forests of Mount Gahinga. When Mgahinga National Park was gazetted in 1991, they were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and subsequently suffered severe socio-economic problems. This community remains marginalized and is one of the poorest communities in Uganda.

1. Gahinga Batwa Village

Expenditure \$85,800

With international attention on conservation of the endangered mountain gorillas, the Mgahinga part of the Virunga volcanoes in Uganda was turned into a national park in 1991 to provide protection to the wildlife from poaching and habitat encroachment. The creation of the park required the Batwa to be removed from their homes in the mountains and be displaced in a modern world unfamiliar to them.

VSPT has built a permanent village for the Batwa community and their families. About 10 acres of land was purchased to allow them to build homes, a community centre and have land for agricultural and recreational use. The homes were completed in early 2018 and the official launch of the village was in May 2018.

The Gahinga Batwa Village has been funded by VSPT supported by Volcanoes Safaris, the Adventure Travel Conservation Fund (ATCF), as well as donations received from guests. The settlement enables the Batwa to break the cycle of manual labour and land rental payments and to use the land for growing crops. This supports the community's development and allow their children to access education and health facilities.

A football pitch has been built by members of the Batwa community in the Batwa Village to provide a recreational space for the Batwa to play football. A 60,000 litre water tank facility has been built on nearby land allowing the Batwa community access to water.

In 2022, VSPT continues to work with the Batwa community to provide improved health and medical resources and education, and adult literacy classes. During 2022 \$18,000 was provided for food and scholastic materials to the batwa children on a monthly basis. We also have a doctor and a councillor who visits the village four times every month for medical check-up and counselling respectively.

In 2022 we bought 4.9 acres of land for the batwa community at a cost of \$68,000. One donor made a contribution of just over \$60,000 which enabled VSPT to purchase 5 acres of land in December 2022 and solar powered lighting for all 20 homes. Another donation of \$10,000 received in late 2022 is being used to fund the building of up to 10 new homes on the new land.



2. Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience

The Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience began in 2013 and involves members of the Gahinga Batwa community delivering a genuine cultural experience for Volcanoes Safaris clients. The trail is on the grounds of Mount Gahinga Lodge and the performance involves the re-enactment of traditional forest life including hunting and gathering as well as seeking out medicinal plants and domestic home life. In 2022 21 Volcanoes Safaris guests experienced Batwa life through the Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience.



3. Batwa Vocational Centre and Agricultural Project

Expenditure \$900

The Batwa Vocational Centre was opened in 2013 and is the hub of the educational work conducted by the VSPT with the Batwa. Here the VSPT has donated land which is used to learn how to farm, particularly potatoes and wheat.

The Batwa are being taught sewing skills and how to make crafts, which will allow them to repair and make their own clothes. The products are also sold which generates an income to allow them to pay for food, medicine and other necessary items within the community. The products are supplied both to the lodge and local markets.

The Gahinga Village Batwa community receive 100% of the proceeds from craft sales at the Vocational Centre. During 2022, 32 Volcanoes Safaris clients visited the Vocational Centre and some purchased crafts. VSPT bought potato seedlings and food for the women at the vocational Centre.



VIRUNGA LODGE

Intore Dance Troop
Expenditure \$4,300

Intore Dance is the finest example of Rwanda's varied musical and dance tradition. Since its inception in 2009 VSPT has trained and equipped a troop of local dancers and trainers based at Virunga Lodge.



Virunga One Sheep Project
Income \$1950 Expenditure \$3,840

In June 2014 Virunga Lodge launched the “One Sheep Per Family” project, to provide one sheep to each of the 140 families in the Sunzu community. The sheep manure provides natural and effective fertiliser for growing crops. As well as providing manure, selling lambs provide income for the family.

During the 2022, 96 sheep were donated, each costing \$40.



Virunga Lodge Water Tank Project
Donation \$4,410, Expenditure \$8,820

Although it rains heavily around Virunga Lodge, there are very few facilities for water catchment and storage and in the dry season there is an acute shortage of water. The villagers in Sunzu and Bugeyo village around the lodge, where over 300 families live, do not have enough clean water for drinking or growing crops. Virunga Lodge guests donate water tanks to families living around the lodge.

In 2022 VSPT donated 37 water tanks.



Virunga Lodge Crafts Project

Income \$905 and Expenditure \$652

A group of 10 local ladies make local Rwandan crafts, which are sold directly to guests at Virunga Lodge, as well as to all Volcanoes Safaris lodges. Crafts such as baskets, table placemats and coasters, and kitenge bathrobes are made and sold by the group.



Virunga Lodge Solar Panel Project

Villages on the islands surrounding Virunga Lodge lack access to mains electricity. 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.

Virunga Lodge Microcredit Project

In March 2018 VSPT launched a microcredit loan and savings scheme for members of Sunzu Village. The objective of the project is to provide a loan that will help to generate income from investment in small scale sustainable agricultural projects, as well as weaving baskets, and breeding domestic animals. The fund is managed by a local committee and has 32 members. Loans are given for 6 months and repaid at an interest rate of 5%.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The VSPT would like to thank its dedicated staff and partners in the field, who have made possible the work and objectives of the trust. The VSPT would like to thank the staff of Volcanoes Safaris who provide precious marketing, administrative and bookkeeping support. Finally the VSPT would also like to thank the Trustees for their continued support and guidance.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:

Trustee

Date


2/6/23