

IPS - Lawrence Jacobsen Education Development Grant Application

Please complete the following application in the space provided. The application along with a 1-page vitae of the principal investigator should not exceed 6 pages. Font should be no less than 12pt. Please direct any questions regarding your application or this award to Dr. Patrícia Izar (patrizar@usp.br).

Application Due: March 1st

Name

Last: Kahlenberg

First: Sonya

Middle Initial: M.

Project

Title of Proposed Project: Using public pledges to motivate conservation action around Grauer's gorilla habitat in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Contact Information

Address: GRACE Center
P.O. Box 334
Cumberland Center, Maine 04021

Phone: +1-207-807-3861

Fax: None

Email: skahlenberg@gracegorillas.org

Provide a 200 word summary of your proposal:

In Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education (GRACE) Center is the world's only sanctuary for Critically Endangered Grauer's gorillas (*Gorilla beringei graueri*). GRACE already leads a popular and successful education program for local community members who visit the sanctuary. Because encouraging pro-conservation actions (e.g., tree planting, etc.) is the ultimate goal, we propose adding a public pledge component to this program to increase motivation for and the number of such actions. After completing the local visitor program at GRACE, participants will be given the option to sign a pledge that commits them to undertaking a conservation action within the next 6 months. As a public display of this commitment, a photo of pledge signers will be exhibited at GRACE. Once a conservation action is completed and verified by GRACE educators, people will be considered "Gorilla Protectors". This status will be recognized using a special bracelet, an item previously used by GRACE that has proven to be highly coveted by local people. We anticipate a high rate of participation among visitors that will boost ongoing efforts to conserve the nearby forest, which is home to an important population of wild Grauer's gorillas.

1. Describe the purpose of this request. Provide detail on the conservation need and the educational objectives. (1/2 page maximum)

Conservation need: Only 3,800 wild Grauer's gorillas remain in Eastern DRC, the only place where they are found, and they have suffered a catastrophic 77% population decline in just 20 years due to poaching fueled by war, humanitarian crises, and the proliferation of illegal mining in the region¹. Grauer's gorillas were uplisted to Critically Endangered status in 2016² and are considered to be among the 25 most endangered primates in the world^{3,4}. GRACE is working as part of a Conservation Action Plan⁵ for this taxon and is the only conservation NGO working near the Tayna Nature Reserve, a priority habitat that contains around 8% of the remaining wild Grauer's gorilla population.

Educational objectives: In addition to operating the world's only sanctuary for orphaned Grauer's gorillas, GRACE leads conservation education efforts in the Tayna region, including youth conservation clubs, classroom visits, and community projects focused on sustainable living. The cornerstone of GRACE's education work, however, is our local visitors program. Each week, GRACE hosts small groups of community leaders (2017 total = 1,066 people) to participate in a structured education program that teaches about gorillas and how human behavior impacts wildlife and the forest. Comparisons of pre vs. post program surveys show that people gain knowledge about gorillas and their role in conservation as a result of participating. The ultimate goal of this work, however, is for people to take meaningful local conservation actions. Here, we propose a new public pledge system at GRACE to encourage involvement in local conservation and to hold people accountable for actions they pledge to take.

2. What methods will be used to implement the program? Please provide specific details. (1/2 page maximum)

After participating in GRACE's local visitor program, people will have the option to sign a written pledge to personally commit to undertaking a local conservation action. They can choose from pre-determined actions (e.g., volunteering to plant and care for native trees or trees to be used for fuelwood, switching to reusable bags for market days, etc.) or they can come up with their own action approved by GRACE educators. People who take the pledge will have their photo taken (with sign saying "I pledge to protect gorillas") then publicly displayed on a wall at GRACE's Education and Community Center. They will also receive a copy of the photo to keep. They then must complete their chosen action within 6 months in order to be considered a "Gorilla Protector". After GRACE educators confirm that pledged actions have been completed, participants receive a special bracelet designating their new status. Over the past year, we have used bracelets for participants in our various education programs and have found them to be very popular. People are not only proud to wear them but also use them as a conversation piece to talk to others about their involvement with GRACE. To receive their bracelet, Gorilla Protectors must also agree to discuss the significance of their bracelets with friends and family and to describe the conservation action they completed in order to get it. The pledge will be an option that accompanies the written post-evaluation that all visitors already complete. Photos will be taken by GRACE educators then printed and laminated on site (lamination is to protect photos against humidity). Bracelets will be purchased in the U.S. then hand-carried to GRACE.

3. What methods will be used to evaluate the success of your program?

This program will be considered a success if we are able to recruit the majority of visitors to make conservation action pledges and to follow up on those pledges. Indicators for these outcomes will be the % of people who sign the pledge after participating in the local visitor program and then the % that end up completing their conservation action to become Gorilla Protectors. We also are piloting the idea that a public display of commitment will be of interest to people who visit GRACE and will lead to better recruitment over time. Indicators for this include the % people who attend to photos on the pledge wall and the change over time of the % of Gorilla Protectors retained from the pledge groups. The latter indicator will not be possible to measure over a 1-year period so will be measured over 5 years. To collect data on people's interest in the pledge wall, we will measure the % of people who either talk about or physically approach the wall to look at photos during the first 5 min inside the Education Center prior to the start of the visitor program.

4. Describe the potential conservation impact.

A survey conducted in 2017 showed that people living around Tayna Nature Reserve and GRACE are supportive of GRACE's conservation efforts and proud of the project. We wish to take this local enthusiasm a step further, however, by having people commit to local conservation actions. In our area, the planting of fast-growing trees such as eucalyptus has been beneficial because it prevents people from cutting down gorilla habitat for fuelwood. GRACE leads this planting project and grows saplings on our farm that people can take if they wish to plant and care for trees. We hope to expand this and other local conservation efforts through the proposed pledge campaign in order to make a bigger impact. An equally important goal is to encourage people to take personal responsibility for conservation and to demonstrate that everyone can make a difference and contribute to solutions.

5. Provide a timeline for the education initiative.

- Jun-Jul 2018: Purchase equipment and supplies to create pledge wall and set up at GRACE
- Aug 2018: Incorporate pledges and evaluation into visitor program and begin Gorilla Protector initiative
- Apr 2019: Analyze & summarize data, write final report for IPS

6. Budget – Please provide detailed information for all expenditures not to exceed \$1500.00. Do you have additional funds for this program? If so, please list funding sources and amounts.

<i>Expense</i>	<i>Total cost (\$)</i>	<i>Requested from IPS</i>	<i>Other funding secured*</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Salaries for 3 educators (x 1 year @ 5% of time)	396	--	396	To administer and run project
Bracelets (x 2,500 ct)	1,300	1,000	300	For Gorilla Protectors
Laminating machine	75	75	--	Photos for pledge wall
Photo printer, paper & toner	250	250	--	Photos for pledge wall
Copying and other office costs	100	50	50	Paper and ink to print/copy pledges & evaluations
Transportation	1,000	--	1,000	For educators to visit villages/follow up on pledges
Misc/unforeseen	125	125	--	
Total	3,246	1,500	1,746	

* To be covered by GRACE's operating funds, which come from major zoo partners, foundation grants, and individual donors.

References Cited

1. Plumptre, A.J., Nixon, S., Kujirakwinja, D.K., Vieilledent, G., Critchlow, R., Williamson, E.A., Nishuli, R., Kirkby, A.E., Hall, J.S. (2016). Catastrophic decline of world's largest primate: 80% loss of Grauer's gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*) population justifies Critically Endangered status. *PLoS ONE* 11(10): e0162697. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0162697
2. Plumptre, A., Nixon, S., Caillaud, D., Hall, J.S., Hart, J.A., Nishuli, R. & Williamson, E.A. 2016. *Gorilla beringei ssp. graueri*. (errata version published in 2016) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016: e.T39995A102328430. Downloaded on 22 February 2017.
3. Schwitzer, C., Mittermeier, R. A., Rylands, A. B., Taylor, L. A., Chiozza, F., Williamson, E. A., Wallis, J. and Clark, F. E. (eds.). 2014. *Primates in Peril: The World's 25 Most Endangered Primates 2012–2014*. IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group (PSG), International Primatological Society (IPS), Conservation International (CI), and Bristol Zoological Society, Arlington, VA, 87pp.
4. Schwitzer, C., Mittermeier, R.A., Rylands, A.B., Chiozza, F., Williamson, E.A., Wallis, J. and Cotton, A. (eds.). 2015. *Primates in Peril: The World's 25 Most Endangered Primates 2014–2016*. IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group (PSG), International Primatological Society (IPS), Conservation International (CI), and Bristol Zoological Society, Arlington, VA, 93pp.
5. Maldonado, O., Aveling, C., Cox, D., Nixon, S., Nishuli, R., Merlo, D., Pintea, L. & Williamson, E. (2012). *Grauer's Gorillas and Chimpanzees in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (Kahuzi-Biega, Maiko, Tayna and Itombwe Landscape): Conservation Action Plan 2012–2022*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group, Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation & Tourism, Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature & the Jane Goodall Institute.

(Optional Section)

Conservation through Community Involvement (CCI)

If you plan to include community conservation in your program you may be eligible for an additional award of \$500 to support these initiatives. Please describe your Community Conservation Initiative (CCI) component below, addressing how these funds will be used and how this will impact conservation in your region. For more information on CCI and suggested CCI practices, please see the Guidelines for Conservation through Community Involvement posted in the publications section of the IPS website. (Do NOT exceed the space provided here. If you are not applying for CCI funds, write “Not Applicable.”)

In DRC, work is ongoing to increase protection for national parks and community reserves where Grauer’s gorillas and other primates (including chimpanzees) live. However, work at the community level is also necessary to ensure people have viable protein alternatives to deter the poaching of primates and other wildlife. In 2017, the Lubero region, where GRACE is located, experienced a period of insecurity and many villagers were forced to flee their homes. The situation has stabilized and people have returned, however, nearly all livestock were stolen or eaten by the armed groups that passed through the villages. Without livestock to meet their protein needs, local people often turn to the forest to feed their families.

In 2018, we are launching an animal husbandry project that will help provide a much-needed source of protein for people in the food-insecure Tayna area as well as an alternative to hunting inside gorilla habitat. As women are often the ones responsible for providing food for the family, this project focuses on providing women the resources they need to jumpstart a guinea pig breeding program. Guinea pigs breed quickly, are easy to care for, and are a regular and favored food source in this area and culture.

Thirty women will be chosen for the program and will be provided with guinea pig starter stock. The program will be sustained through a “pay it forward” model whereby some offspring produced are given to other families in the village. GRACE staff and several leaders from the local women’s group will be trained as “trainers” using a guinea pig husbandry manual made in collaboration with experts from Disney’s Animal Kingdom and will train and evaluate women who participate. This training is to ensure that all participants have the skills needed to meet the welfare needs of the animals they receive as well as be able to successfully breed and rear guinea pigs. Record-keeping skills will also be emphasized to facilitate evaluation of the program.

If funded, we will use CCI support to help fund our new community guinea pig program. Specifically, the \$500 will be used to pay for transport for project meetings and trainings and partial support for salaries of the Congolese staff overseeing the project.

**Send this application with a 1-page vitae of the principal investigator to:
Dr. Patrícia Izar (patrizar@usp.br).**