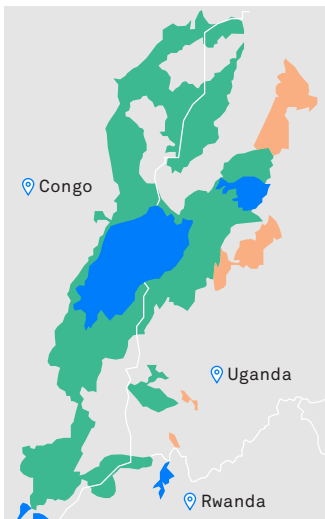


protecting wildlife in the Greater Virunga landscape

USD\$23 billion

estimated global value of illegal wildlife trade, one of the largest forms of transnational organized crime. Illegal wildlife trade is the unlawful and unsustainable harvest of and trade in animals and parts or products derived from them



Map of the Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL)

- Protected areas outside Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) treaty
- Protected areas under Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) treaty
- Water
- Land

► A hippopotamus with her calf walking along the Shire River in Liwonde National Park, Malawi, during sunset.



Working with law enforcers to disrupt cross-border wildlife smuggling routes

Stretching across Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda, the Greater Virunga Landscape is one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet. With Virunga and Queen Elizabeth National Parks at its center, it is home to some of the world's rarest species of plants and animals.

Rampant poaching and trafficking are threatening the region's wildlife populations, with numbers plummeting across species like pangolins, elephants, hippos and monkeys, as poachers kill and trap these animals and sell them for their parts. Limited resources and political insecurity make it even more difficult for law enforcement officers to protect wildlife. Virunga National Park has borne a bigger brunt with multiple instances of rangers being killed by suspected militias. 13 rangers were murdered in April 2020 and a further six in January 2021.

Uncontrolled illegal exploitation of wildlife and other natural resources in the Virunga landscape threatens sustainable human development and is a major threat to political stability in the region, often allowing non-state armed groups and transnational criminal networks to operate.

Around Virunga National Park this volatile, complex, volatile and complex situation has eroded community structures which enable further corruption and destabilization. Additionally, pressures on both communities and the law enforcement officers who protect these areas, mean that both parties fear for their survival. Close collaboration with communities is essential to create stability and successfully combat poaching and trafficking.



Photo: © IFAW



Photo: © IFAW

12
community members
working with IFAW in Queen
Elizabeth National Park

150
150 multi-agency law
enforcement officers trained
in QE and Virunga

75
judicial officers and
prosecutors participated
in an IFAW symposium on
wildlife crime

◀ Supported Queen Elizabeth
with a 12 block ranger command
centre equipped with water
harvesting tanks, solar power
for battery charging, kitchen
and toilet blocks.

▶ Inspection of rangers from
Queen Elizabeth Conservation
Area during the handover of
the ranger outpost constructed
by IFAW to Uganda Wildlife
Authority.

▶ **see how
at ifaw.org**



#KeepItWild

Tragically, the killing of 18 people (13 of them rangers) in Virunga National Park in April 2020, and another six rangers killed in January 2021, has brought renewed global attention to the issue. The relatively porous border between Uganda and DRC, including Lake Edward, which lies between Virunga and Queen Elizabeth National Parks, serves as an important transit route for transporting illegal wildlife products. The poorly protected borders, coupled with high levels of corruption, limited arrests and prosecution (especially in DRC), enable the flow of illegal goods between the two countries.

Preventing and combatting wildlife crime requires a holistic approach and a significant increase in investments that combines community involvement, strengthened law enforcement, and improved judicial and prosecutorial capacities.

A partnership to protect vulnerable wildlife in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In September 2020, IFAW and IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands started a Project funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to build law enforcement capacity to stop the poaching and trafficking of protected wildlife between Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The goal of the project is to reduce poaching and trafficking of wildlife species and their products by strengthening transboundary

collaboration. The partnership seeks to improve investigations into illicit trade, increase on-the-ground operations and strengthen law enforcement presence. It has already led to more arrests and prosecutions by law enforcement and judiciary agencies—with a focus on engaging community members in information gathering to better protect landscapes and animals along the Uganda-DRC Southern border.

Through logistical support, training, cross-border collaboration and information sharing, achievements of the project thus far have included:

- ▶ Investigation of traffickers, routes, concealments, and illicit methods of operations in between Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda
- ▶ Promotion of interagency and cross-border law enforcement cooperation between Virunga and Queen Elizabeth National Parks and at key border points in the landscape
- ▶ Strengthened prosecutorial capacity in DRC to target transboundary wildlife criminals
- ▶ Engagement with local communities in the disruption and prevention of wildlife crime and environmental threats around Lake Edward, which falls into both Virunga National Park and Queen Elizabeth National Park and spans the border between DRC and Uganda