



ABAXIS SUPPORTS THE HEALTH & SURVIVAL OF MOUNTAIN GORILLAS



A donation of state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment to the Gorilla Doctors has helped the organization to carry out its mission - to ensure the health and survival of every mountain gorilla through veterinary and human health initiatives. The Gorilla Doctors, powered by the non-profit Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project and the University of California, Davis is an international veterinary team working in all three countries where mountain gorillas live: Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Gorilla Doctors is the only group providing critically-endangered wild mountain gorillas with direct, life-saving medical care.

With an estimated 880 mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) left in the world today, Gorilla Doctors works to ensure the health and well-being of every individual gorilla possible. In addition to providing mountain gorillas with healthcare, the group monitors the health of DRC's Grauer's or eastern lowland gorillas and intervenes to help sick

individuals when possible. As a non-profit, we are funded solely through grants and donations.

While critically endangered, mountain gorillas are the only subspecies of non-human great ape growing in number. A 2010 census of the Virunga Massif, the mountain gorilla's main stronghold, showed a remarkable population increase of 26.3% over the previous seven years. A 2011 study* of this same population showed that over a 22-year period the number of habituated gorillas - about 70% of the overall population - by 4.1% annually while the number of unhabituated gorillas increased by 0.7% annually. The difference in the growth rates was attributed to the fact that habituated gorillas benefited from "extreme conservation" practices such as veterinary care. In fact, the veterinary program may be responsible for up to 40% of the difference between the growth rates of the two subpopulations. The species has a fighting chance for survival as the Gorilla Doctors continue to work to address conservation challenges.

*PLoS One 6(6) e19788

ON LOCATION



The Gorilla Doctors team at the compound in Musanze, Rwanda



Dr. Dawn Zimmerman uses the i-STAT to recheck the hematocrit of Baraka, a 4mo Grauer's gorilla orphan confiscated from traffickers/poachers, who initially exhibited an anemia.



Barbel Kohler, Manager of Business Development, Abaxis Europe.



Collecting blood from a silverback in Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda.



Examining an elderly female mountain gorilla in Bwindi National Park, Uganda.

The Gorilla Doctors gorilla healthcare program includes:

- Monitoring the health of mountain and Grauer's gorilla groups to ensure the early detection of disease and injury.
- Staging medical interventions to dart sick animals with antibiotics or anesthetize and treat gorillas suffering from human-induced or life-threatening trauma.
- Rescuing and providing veterinary care to gorillas orphaned by packers.
- Documenting and studying health trends to better predict disease outbreaks.
- Conducting post mortem examinations on dead gorillas to learn more about the health problems that contributed to their deaths.
- Preserving tissue and fluid samples to be used by researchers investigation primate health issues.

To provide quality healthcare to this critically endangered species, the Gorilla Doctors need quality, efficient laboratory equipment. The wild gorillas are treated in the forest often under harsh terrain and weather; therefore, the need for sturdy, portable, easy-to-use diagnostic equipment that yields results quickly and predictably is paramount. To this end, the equipment donated by Abaxis, the i-STAT and VS2 are invaluable to the work being carried out by the Gorilla Doctors.

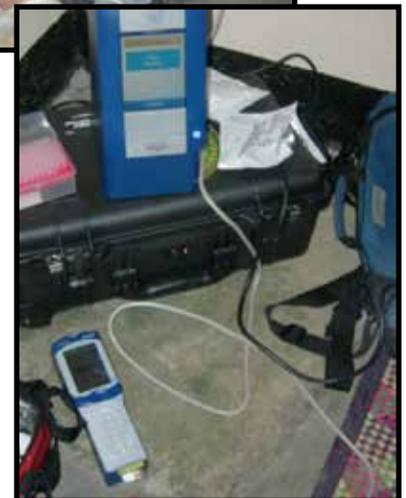
Abaxis first became a supplier in 2011, with the installation of an i-STAT, followed by a second installation of equipment and supplies including an new VS2 chemistry



Barbel Kohler (above, right)

analyzer. At both times, Gorilla Doctors were fortunate to have Barbel Kohler, Business Development Manager of Abaxis Europe, accompany the shipments and teach the veterinarians how to use and maintain the equipment, with

in-house demonstrations. She even accompanied the vets to perform an ovariohysterectomy on a local domestic cat, one of the many ways the Gorilla Doctors offers capacity building for our in-country veterinarians.





5-month-old eastern lowland gorilla orpahn, Baraka

This equipment has proven to be extremely important for clinical cases and has been used for a weak and emaciated elderly female in Bwindi National Park (Uganda); a young adult female with an enlarged tongue and unable to eat in Volcanoes National Park (Rwanda); and two juvenile eastern lowland gorillas caught in wire snares in Kahuzi-Biega National Park (Democratic Republic of Congo), to name a recent few. In addition to the confiscated orphans, the equipment has benefitted the rare golden monkey (only found in Rwanda), and domestic animals throughout three countries where Gorilla Doctors work.

With increased funding in the future, the Gorilla Doctors hope to use the full potential of these machines in documenting baseline biochemistry values in wild mountain gorillas, and in researching prevalence of diseases (for example using troponin to assess cardiac health).

The Gorilla Doctors would like to thank Abaxis, especially Achim Henkel (Managing Director, Abaxis Europe) and Barbel Kohler (Manager of Business Development, Abaxis Europe).

To learn more about the Gorilla Doctors or make a donation to support their work, please visit [www. GorillaDoctors.org](http://www.GorillaDoctors.org)



Drs. Methode Bahizi (left) and Jean Bosco Noheli (right) use the new VS2 biochemistry profiles on two newly confiscated infant gorillas, Isangi and Baraka.