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Woods Hole Research Center Scientist Part of International Initiatives to Save the Great Apes

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The extinction of the great apes -- gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos (pygmy chimpanzees) and orangutans -- is imminent if strict conservation practices are not implemented in the immediate future. Once these practices have been initially implemented, ape populations must be monitored to evaluate their success and to create incentives for effective protection. Dr. Nadine Laporte, an associate scientist with the Woods Hole Research Center, is involved in international initiatives working to assess and protect these animals and their habitats.

Conservation efforts to save the great apes must identify, prioritize, and optimize actions and investments to protect these diminishing populations. According to Laporte, "In West Africa, most of the dense humid forest has been converted to agriculture, causing a fragmentation of chimpanzee habitat. The same is true in Uganda, where 25 percent of the country's chimpanzee population is found in only one place, Kibale National Park. Only two small pockets of mountain gorilla habitat remain in vast areas converted for agriculture --the Virunga Conservation area at the tri-national border of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda, and the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda. The situation is no better in Southeast Asia, where industrial logging followed by industrial palm plantations has destroyed extensive track of orangutan habitat. "

Most recently, Laporte and her Center colleagues, in collaboration with the Harvard Peabody Museum and the Max Planck Institute, are supporting The Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) by initiating a website containing a preliminary list of priority ape populations and sites.