

A Membership Newsletter January 2026



Election for Board Members for the 2026-2027 term was held on November 15, 2025. The vote overwhelmingly gave Susan Smith thumbs up to continue as an ACE Board Member. She has been such an asset to ACE in the past. All of ACE members send congratulations to Susan and look forward to working with her for two more years.

Board Member

This holiday season saw ACE again participate in the annual Holiday Bazaar at Zoo Atlanta on December 13, 2025. **Our sales from this event set a new record with a total of \$1,341.78!!!!** Totals for previous years are listed below:



Year	Total Sales
2025	\$1,341.78
2024	\$1,142.64
2023	\$ 925.64
2022	\$ 670.53
2019	\$ 773.00
2018	\$1,040.00



Sales at Holiday Bazaar Set Record

By Susan Smith

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Items sold included, as usual, painted ornaments from Zoo Atlanta gorillas and orangutans. Also, various ornaments and items donated by ACE members. A big hit was Karin Keller's coasters and magnets with photos of Zoo Atlanta animals on them. We also raffled off a Willie B. Jr. painting, which was won by Leslie Martin.

A tremendous thank you to all who shopped and supported ACE. A second big thank you goes to all who donated items for the sale. And last but not least, thank you to Leslie Martin, Jane Barron, Karin Keller and Barbara Cebula who worked with me to man our tables.



Georgia Gives on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2025

By Karin Keller

Once again Ape Conservation Effort hopped on the GAgives train to participate in Giving Tuesday. GAgives is a platform that allows Georgia nonprofits to promote their causes and join forces to take part in the year-end giving. Giving Tuesday is one of the highest volume days for charitable giving in the US, and last year \$36 million was raised in Georgia alone during this time. We are very pleased with this year's successful outcome. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the grand total of donations came to **\$1,875**.

This fundraiser is not just important to raise money, but it also accomplishes another very important goal. It gives us the opportunity to bring awareness to our mission, to the danger the great apes are facing for their survival, and the need to protect them and their

ecosystems. Awareness is the first step that leads to caring and caring will lead to action. And action was taken by so many who donated, posted on their social media, and helped networking to reach as many people as possible in their social circles to spread the word about ACE's work.

A heartfelt **Thank You** from all of us at ACE for your kind donations and your help in spreading the word. We truly ***APE-recciate*** your kindness.



HoneyBaked Ham – Goal Reached

By Susan Smith

This year our annual Fall HoneyBaked Ham campaign was another success. The campaign ran from October 15 – December 31, 2025. Each year we set a goal for our sales and this year the goal was \$300.

When gift cards are purchased, ACE receives 20% of the purchase

price. This year, over \$1,100 worth of cards were purchased, so ACE will receive **\$345** for our General Fund. A big “thank you” to everyone who purchased cards.

As in the past, we will have a Spring HoneyBaked Ham campaign. With Easter coming early this year, our campaign will start on March 15 and run through May 31, 2026. Stay tuned for more details in early spring.



Photo by Getty
Mining in DRC

where a comprehensive restriction prohibiting access has been previously put in place due to heavy rains and exacerbated risks of landslides in the territory.

DRC is the world's main source for cobalt, providing over 70% of global supply.

Those killed were wildcat miners, or small-scale miners who extract minerals without official permits or regulation. In only DRC there are between 1.5 to 2 million people working in the unregulated mining industry, which commonly sees deadly accidents.

At the time of the disaster, the Kalando mine had military security tasked with guarding it, due to previous clashes between the miners and the military during an ongoing dispute between the miners and the military during an ongoing dispute between wild cat miners, a

The devastating toll of cobalt mining leaves over 32 dead in Congo

By Erina Bazan Lopez

On November 15, a makeshift bridge on a cobalt and copper mine collapsed in Lualaba province in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) killing at least 32 people. The disaster occurred in a semi-industrial mine in the southeastern Kalando area of the province,

During the incident, a panic amongst the wildcat miners was caused by the firing of firearms by

security forces, which the DRC's Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Support and Guidance Service (SAEMAPE) reported as triggering a rush on the unstable bridge, resulting in its collapse. Their panicked rush led many to land one on top of the other, causing additional deaths and injuries, according to SAEMAPE. Lualaba Provincial Interior Minister Roy Kaumba stated on television that the collapse had caused at least 32 deaths, however the SAEMAPE report held that at least 40 people died from the accident.

Cobalt is one of three minerals known as "ferromagnetic elements" - elements which have strong ability to create magnetic fields, and that are easily susceptible to external magnetic fields, with Cobalt having the strongest magnetic properties out of all three. Cobalt's magnetic properties, hardness, high melting point and toughness make it ideal to create superalloys, or materials that keep mechanical strength even under extreme heat, which makes cobalt essential for manufacturing of digital technologies.

External influence from major Western and Chinese companies has been directly and indirectly attributed to

regulated and unregulated mining in Luabala. Some major companies operate mining groups in the region, and much of the wildcat mining industry finds coordinators or middlemen connected to China, where the majority of electronics manufacturing takes place globally.

The unregulated wildcat mining industry has no labor laws, no safety regulations and consistently has been subjected to reports of child labor. Government officials often turn a blind eye to the situation, and so do the mining operators and the manufacturing companies that receive the mineral. This practice of extraction for profit driven by external actors has long been draining resources from DRC and similar territories, at the high cost of lives for the people working in the industry and who live in the environment around the mines.

The exploitation of African people and resources by global powers, including China and former colonial states, has a long and well-known history. And yet, as the exploitation endures, it continues to hinder the country's path to stable development while its environmental damage seeps deeper in landscapes already pushed to the brink.

As capital profits are given priority over people's lives and their living conditions, the pursuits of green energy and progress will be tainted red by blood.

*Human Rights Research Center
December 3, 2025*

contribute to pollution from toxic substances like mercury and arsenic. Mines can cause deforestation, contaminated water, and destruction of crops.

*AI overview from Google
Search Mining in Congo
Basin*



Grauer's Gorilla Talk at Zoo Atlanta November 14, 2025

By Karin Keller

Almost six decades ago, when Dian Fossey set out to study the mountain gorillas in Rwanda, she understood the plight they faced and that they needed to be protected or would be extinct in the very near future. Today, out of the four gorilla species, the mountain gorilla is the only gorilla increasing in population thanks to the daily protection work that Dian Fossey started so many years ago.

Cobalt and Copper: The DRC is a leading global producer, with cobalt being crucial for batteries in electric vehicles and other electronics.

Gold and Diamonds: The DRC is a major producer of both, though their markets can be complicated by illicit activity and violence.

3T minerals: The region is rich in tantalum, tin, and tungsten, which are used in various electronics.

Environmental Impact: Mining activities

While the Fossey Gorilla Fund continues their work in the Virunga mountains, they also have expanded their work to monitor and protect the Grauer's gorillas in the nearby Congo Basin. For the last 25 years, Fossey Fund Director of Congo Programs, Urbain

Ngobobo, has been advocating for their protection. Zoo Atlanta staff and volunteers had a unique opportunity to learn directly from Urbain Ngobobo about this challenging but important work.

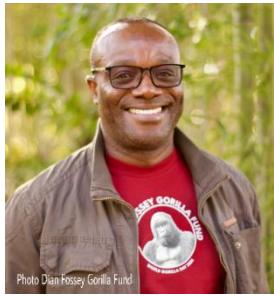


Photo by DFGFI
Urbain Ngobobo

Grauer's gorillas are endemic to the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and currently there are only about 6,800 left. This region has been plagued for decades by civil unrest, wars, extreme poverty, human rights abuses, and environmental degradation due to mining and logging. In addition, 74% of Grauer's gorillas live outside of protected areas, in forests they share with people that live in extreme poverty, and who depend on the forest's resources to survive.

These conditions make conservation work very challenging and contribute to the steep decline of the gorilla population. Although all four gorilla species are in danger of extinction, and the cross river gorillas only have a population of

a few hundred left, Urbain Ngobobo urged the International Primatological Society (IPS) to bring special attention to the Grauer's gorillas. Now, Grauer's are on the list of the world's 25-most-threatened primates by the IPS. This designation is important because it brings greater attention to the world about the crucial conservation work necessary to eliminate or at least reduce the threats the Grauer's gorillas are facing.

After many years of studying the area, the Fossey Fund established the Nkuba Conservation Area (NCA), a protected area of 2,400 square kilometers (600,000 acres) deep in the Congo Basin between Maiko and Kahuzi Biega national parks. It is now recognized as a Key Biodiversity Area by the IUCN. This area is protecting 2000 to 3000 Grauer's gorillas, endangered eastern chimpanzees, and dozens more threatened or endangered species. Protecting gorillas doesn't happen in a vacuum. It means all other species in the region as well as the forest benefit from these conservation efforts.

The achievement in the NCA was only possible with the collaboration of the local landowners, communities and the Congolese government.

The inclusion of local stakeholders and investment in sustainable development benefit the forest as well as the local communities by building strength and stability through education, skill training, employment, and dependable sources of income like beekeeping, fish farming, and vegetable gardens. This model of community-driven conservation means less reliance on forest resources and results in protecting wildlife and their ecosystems.

Nkuba Conservation Area was 25 years in the making and despite extreme conditions and challenges, it is a successful model of community conservationism. It is a great achievement as the long-term monitoring has shown the Grauer's gorilla population in this protected area is stable compared with the rest of Grauer's population, which is still declining in numbers. The work is continuing in the region with the goal of connecting the entire area from Maiko and Kahuzi Biega national parks to one entire protected area for the Grauer's gorillas to live and strive together with their surrounding human communities.



A Great Day of Golfing and Gorillas

By Susan Smith

October 13 was a beautiful fall day, great for golfing and in turn great for gorillas. It was the 12th annual Gorilla Golf tournament, held at White Oak Golf Club in Newnan, Georgia. Eleven golfers teed off at this new location for the tournament, and all agreed that it was a great course. In addition, the staff at White Oak provided excellent customer service and did a great job in supporting the event and our golfers.



Photo by Jodi Carrigan
Karin Keller, Vivienne Ferguson and Mihoko Mortell with a friend



Awards were given to the top three finishers – First Place – Brian Buckelew, Second Place – Sonny Christopher, Third Place –

Ryan Carrigan. Each of these awards includes a plaque that is painted by the gorillas at Zoo Atlanta.



Photo by Jodi Carrigan
Brian Buckelew
First Place winner

Josh Meyerchick, a gorilla keeper at Zoo Atlanta, won Longest Drive as well as “Closest to the Gorilla.”



Photo by Jodi Carrigan
Josh Meyerchick won
Closest to the Gorilla

A first-time participant, Mihoko Mortell was the top women's golfer.



Photo by Jodi Carrigan
Mihoko Mortell
and Jodi Carrigan

Each of the participants was asked to raise a minimum of \$500 as an entrance fee. Through sponsorships from friends and family, several of the golfers raised more than the required \$500. After all expenses, the 2025 Gorilla Golf Tournament raised **\$6,340** for the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund. Including years-past donations plus this year, Gorilla Golf has raised a total of **\$152,730** for the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.

Thank you to all the people who sponsored the golfers. Thanks to all the ACE members who supported the event by donating items for the raffle. (Always a big hit!!)

And now planning begins for 2026 Gorilla Golf.



Trump moves to ax species protections

Proposal comes as extinctions have accelerated globally.

By Matthew Brown,
Associated Press

BILLINGS, MONT. – President Donald Trump's administration moved Wednesday to roll back protections for imperiled species and the places they live, reviving a suite of changes to Endangered Species Act regulations during the Republican's first term that were

blocked under former Democratic President Joe Biden.

The changes include the elimination of the Fish and Wildlife Service's "blanket rule" that automatically protects animals and plants newly classified as threatened. Government agencies instead would have to craft species-specific rules for protections, a potentially lengthy process.

Environmentalists warned the changes could cause yearslong delays in efforts to save species such as the monarch butterfly, Florida manatee, California spotted owl and North American wolverine.

"We would have to wait until these poor animals are almost extinct before we can start protecting them. That's absurd and heartbreaking," said Stephanie Kurose with the Center for Biological Diversity.

The proposals come as extinctions have accelerated globally because of habitat loss and other pressures. Prior proposals during Trump's second term would revise the definition of "harm" under the Endangered Species Act and potentially bypass species protections for logging projects in national forest and on public lands.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a statement that the administration was restoring the Endangered Species Act to its original intent while respecting "the livelihoods of Americans who depend on our land and resources."

AJC
Nov. 22, 2025



Did you know?

Hold dearly that which you cherish.

Bob Alberti

Bonobos are unique among great apes because they are not dominated by males.

Claudine Andre



2025 ACE Board

Jane Barron
Susan Callaway
Barbara Cebula
Shelley DeWeese
Karin Keller
Jenny Reineck
Susan Smith

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