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## Great Ape Trust conservation grant recipients report on Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project

*Project assists conservation in one of Africa's most diverse ecosystems*

Des Moines, Iowa – August 29, 2007 – The recipients of a Great Ape Trust of Iowa conservation grant are teaching Ugandans living near the Kibale National Park more sustainable practices to lessen their dependency on the rain forest for cooking fuel.

Michael Stern and Rebecca Goldstone, founders of the Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project and Museum, a program of the non-profit group Chimp-n-Sea Wildlife Conservation Fund, recently gave an educational presentation to the Great Ape Trust staff about the project as part of a North American tour to raise money to support their conservation efforts in western Uganda. The Kibale National Park is the home range of one of Africa's largest and best-studied chimpanzee populations.

Kibale did not become a national park until 1993, when the government of Uganda made that designation to protect the vast piece of equatorial rainforest that was previously managed as a logged forest reserve. Located at the intersection of the central and eastern African ecosystems, it is about two hours by vehicle from Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition to chimpanzees, the Kibale National Park also provides habitat for 13 other primate species, some 350 species of bird, 144

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species of butterfly, forest elephants, buffalo, antelopes and leopards. It is considered one of the most diverse ecosystems in Africa.

The current threat to Kibale is not posed by commercial logging, as it is in many other rain forests providing habitat for great apes, but by the everyday struggle for wood by villagers, who rely on it to fuel their cooking stoves. Stern and Goldstone said their 2006 survey of 213 households in the area revealed that 96 percent struggle to find wood, and only 55 percent were growing their own wood. Of those not growing their own wood supply, 82 percent said they did not have enough space.

In response, the Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project promotes *Sesbania sesban*, a small fast-growing tree species indigenous to Uganda. In India, where *S. sesban* has a long history of use to add nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil and as cut-and-carry forage for livestock, the crop is harvested eight times a year. Though expected to yield fewer cuttings in Uganda, it still is expected to positively affect the struggle for firewood. Forty trees will yield 32 pounds of wood and 30 pounds of leaves for livestock just six months after planting, and a typical farm can fit more than 200 trees around its boundary, without taking away valuable space from the crops.

The survey also revealed that 96 percent of respondents use traditional three-stone stoves, compared with 4 percent who use energy-saving stoves. As part of the project, Stern and Goldstone are promoting the use of modern brick stoves, which reduce the amount of firewood needed and produce less smoke, addressing a significant health concern expressed by Ugandan women. The stoves are built using local materials for about \$1 each.

The Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project differs from past programs in the region. Though well-financed, “the long-term sustainability wasn’t there” because of a “give-away” mentality, Goldstone and Stern said. Their project charges reasonable fees based on the local economy, where people live on about \$1 a day. The cost helps fuel local responsibility and personal investment, which should lead to greater self-sufficiency. An added feature called a hay box allows further efficiencies. The insular effect of hay in a cooking box saves about 95 percent on the amount of wood needed.

As the centerpiece of the project’s education campaign, Great Ape Trust has fully funded the natural history museum in nearby Kaburala, where artifacts and educational

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materials are displayed to enhance villagers' knowledge of chimpanzees, other apes, the park itself, and the links between fuel, trees and chimpanzees. Though they live nearby, many Ugandans have never been to the park. The museum opened in October 2006 and operates two to three days a week, averaging about 470 visitors a month.

## ***GREAT APE TRUST BACKGROUND***

Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a scientific research facility in southeast Des Moines dedicated to understanding the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. When completed, Great Ape Trust will be the largest great ape facility in North America and one of the first worldwide to include all four types of great ape – bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans – for noninvasive interdisciplinary studies of their cognitive and communicative capabilities.

Great Ape Trust is dedicated to providing sanctuary and an honorable life for great apes, studying the intelligence of great apes, advancing conservation of great apes and providing unique educational experiences about great apes. Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). To learn more about Great Ape Trust of Iowa, go to [www.GreatApeTrust.org](http://www.GreatApeTrust.org).

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Insights Through Collaborations with Apes