

# State of the Apes

Extractive Industries and Ape Conservation



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Great apes and gibbons are in peril, their survival threatened by habitat loss, disease, hunting and illegal trade. There is wide acceptance that conservation, industry, civil society and legislative communities need to work together to ensure development is not at the expense of the environment. This cooperation can only succeed in a context of reliable data, comprehensive analysis and better understanding that enables effective communication and collaboration.

The *State of the Apes series* - of which this is the first - was conceived to create this context, providing objective and rigorous analysis on critical ape



**E**xtractive industries are never 'good' for the environment, but there are practical and effective ways in which they can be made less 'bad'. Constructive cooperation between extractives, government and conservation and environmental organizations can help ensure that employment, economic development and profit can be created in ways that minimize the threats to biodiversity and ecosystems. And cooperation is crucial if the world's gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons are to survive.

Rapid growth in demand for natural resources such as timber, minerals, oil and gas is driving the encroachment of extractive industries into ape habitats. Burgeoning human populations and global economic growth fuel this demand whilst also making meeting it more complex.

International law, trade agreements and finance trends play a central role in shaping the practice of industries whose operations are implicated in biodiversity loss and deforestation, and in which traditional land rights and tenure are often threatened. A sustainable future for the extractives demands not only a clear understanding of the impact of current practice, but a bold approach to devising means by which it can be improved.

The first step is to understand the type, scale and duration of extractive impacts on apes and on the wider environment. Generalizations are not easy, not only because ape species are affected in different ways and varying intensities due to their species-specific social organization and ecology, but chiefly because some industries – such as industrial logging - are better studied and understood than others.

Urgent, substantial and long-term research is needed to rectify the imbalance in our knowledge and understanding of the impacts of the oil, gas and mining sectors compared

to the timber industry. This greater knowledge base will make it possible to develop and build on practical and effective best practice guidelines that will help shape more sustainable approaches.

It is abundantly clear that extraction in ape habitat has both direct and indirect impacts, with the latter being much more serious and enduring, particularly in mining and in oil and gas. Extractive industries inevitably destroy a certain amount of forest in the course of establishing and conducting their business, but the effect of these direct impacts is dwarfed by the indirect impacts. These include wider habitat disturbance through the building of roads and infrastructure, noise and pollution, and the increase in illegal hunting and capture, small-scale agriculture and disease resulting from greater accessibility and the increase of human populations in formerly remote forests. All ape species reproduce slowly and infants remain dependent on the care of their mother for many years. Ape populations are, therefore, very slow to recover when mortality rates increase as a result of killing, stress and disease, or loss of habitat and food.

Recent trends towards more ecologically informed logging practices are changing the way decisions are made in logging areas, and offer a chance to remedy policy failures and lack of accountability that has typified most timber operations in the past. Sustainable Forestry Management involves partnerships between conservation practitioners and logging companies to mitigate their impacts on apes and other species. While some changes in current practice have made a positive impact on forest biodiversity, there is no escaping the fact that any form of logging results in changes in ape behavior, such as forcing groups to move from their habitual range areas, dispersing populations and threatening their viability.

conservation issues, and providing robust statistics on the status and welfare of apes, both captive and in situ.

*Extractive Industries and Ape Conservation* analyses the impact of extractive industries on apes and ape habitat, showing that such impacts extend far beyond the immediate area of extraction, and persist long after extraction is complete. But it also accepts the inevitability of extraction in countries where apes live, and looks for solutions that will enable economic and social development while conserving the natural world on whose health we all ultimately depend.

The mitigation hierarchy is a best practice approach to managing biodiversity risk, and forms a part of the International Finance Corporation's Performance Standards. It advocates applying efforts early in the extractive development planning process to;

1. Prevent or avoid adverse impacts to biodiversity wherever possible;
2. Then to minimize and reduce impacts that cannot be avoided;
3. And then to repair or restore impacts that cannot be avoided, minimized or reduced.

The mitigation hierarchy demands that only after all these actions are implemented should project developers respond to remaining residual effects through compensation measures, ideally via biodiversity offsets.

To be effective, this comprehensive planning and assessment process needs to be incorporated into the very earliest stages of extractive project planning. This represents a substantial change to current practice, in which environmental and conservation issues are typically considered only once a site's extractive potential has been investigated, and therefore only when large amounts of investment have already been committed.

Ape range state governments are increasingly aware of the importance of emphasizing environmental considerations in national policies and legislation, and several are working in partnership with NGOs and with extractive companies to develop clear guidelines and best practice. These vary from the development of a national strategy for biodiversity offsets in Guinea, legislative and regulatory frameworks that prescribe industry behavior in relation to tropical forest conservation in Gabon, and Indonesia's logging moratorium to enhance forest management in relation to orangutans.

The potential for meaningful implementation of policy is significantly hampered, however, when loopholes and weak enforcement are exploited by government agents and the private sector, or when inadequate and poorly planned measures are adopted. This disconnect points to a fundamental aspect of natural resource protection in ape range states that needs to be addressed. Environmental protection needs to be considered as a central component of all economic development strategies and initiatives, and not as an add-on or a secondary consideration handed to less powerful departments or organizations to enforce.

Finding solutions to these huge and highly complex problems is neither quick nor simple, but it is vital. It involves collaboration and time-consuming assessment by specialists in disciplines that are not core to extractive industry competences, along with extensive consultation with diverse stakeholders.

It is true, however, that only through such cooperation and collaboration can operators, financiers, governments, NGOs, local people and consumers have confidence in the management of the ecosystems and biodiversity on which all human and non-human life ultimately depend.

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Current dominant thinking and practice in the private and public sectors continually assert that peoples' development needs are in conflict with, or mutually exclusive to, the need to conserve the biosphere on which we depend. Consequently, we are asked to either diminish development in the name of conservation or diminish conservation in the name of development. Efforts to identify complementary objectives, or mutually acceptable trade-offs and compromises indicate, however, that this does not always have to be the case. *Extractive Industries and Ape Conservation*, the first volume in the new *State of the Apes* series draws attention to the evolving context within which great ape and gibbon habitats are increasingly interfacing with extractive industries.

Aimed at a broad range of policy makers, industry experts and decision makers, academics, researchers, and NGOs these publications aim to influence debate, practice and policy, seeking to reconcile ape conservation and welfare, and economic and social development, through objective and rigorous analysis.

“ **The State of the Apes is the most comprehensive assessment to date of the threats confronting man's closest cousins and what can be done to address them. It urgently calls for collective action to ensure their survival and is a must-read for policy-makers, business leaders, conservationists, researchers and anyone who has an interest in ape conservation and the interface with economic development.** ”

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