Handout -3.

Destruction of Biodiversity of plants and Animals by mining activities.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the Kahuzi-Biega National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 1980 because of its rich biodiversity in both plants and animals. In the late 1990s, armed factions involved in the civil war set up mining operations within the boundaries of the Park to extract valuable minerals such as tantalum and cassiterite. Thousands of Congolese whose lives had been devastated by the war subsequently flooded to the mines in search of income. An estimated 15,000 people were thought to be working at about a hundred sites throughout the Park.

Tragically, not only were tantalum and cassiterite extracted, but also trees, vegetation, and large mammals. The miners hired hunters to feed the people working at the mining sites. Gorillas, elephants, chimpanzees, buffaloes and antelope at first were easily found within proximity to the Park. But, as the months passed, it became increasingly difficult to find large mammals. Hunters searched longer and further. By March of 2001, most of the large animals had been killed. The Grauer's gorilla suffered the most, because this sub-species of gorilla is only found in this area. Before the mining, the total population was estimated to be 17,000 – with 86% living in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Now, it is estimated that only 2-3,000 Grauer's gorillas remain. According to Ian Redmond, the chairman of the Ape Alliance, the remaining Grauer's gorilla population is fragmented, which makes them more vulnerable to poaching and inbreeding. The fate of this sub-species is unknown at this time.