

The 16th Kwita Izina Gorilla Naming Ceremony will be held virtually on World Gorilla Day, on 24 September 2020, the Rwanda Development Board has announced.

Under the theme “Conservation and Sustainable Tourism – A Foundation for Future Generations”, 24 baby gorillas will be named by the Volcanoes National Park staff – the frontliners of conservation who protect and care for them every day.

The namers will include the park rangers, guides, wardens, trackers and veterinary doctors.

World Gorilla Day marks the day that renowned gorilla conservationist Dian Fossey established the Karisoke Research Center in Rwanda in 1967. It is a day that encourages people around the globe to join conservation efforts to protect gorillas in the wild.

This year’s virtual event will feature updates from the field on how rangers, vets and researchers work everyday to protect gorillas and a handover ceremony of the community project RDB embarked on to improve access to potable water for the communities living around Nyungwe National Park.

The community project is part of the Tourism Revenue Share Programme, in which 10% of total tourism park revenues are invested back into communities, contributing to the development of communities living adjacent to Rwanda’s national parks.

Additionally, this year, RDB is working with conservation and private sector partners to organise the Conversation on Conservation, a virtual session that will bring together scholars, researchers, conservationists, policy makers and the private sector to discuss, debate and find solutions to today’s conservation challenges.

Speaking during her remarks at a virtual press conference held on 4 September, RDB Chief Tourism Officer, Belise Kariza noted:

“Having Kwita Izina virtually this year gives us the opportunity to celebrate those who are at the forefront of protecting the endangered mountain gorillas and share Rwanda’s conservation success with Rwandans. We hope to inspire everyone to visit our beautiful country and experience the wonder of trekking to see the mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. Rwanda is open for tourism, and the sector underpins so much of our conservation work. That’s why we are proud of the

impact of sustainable tourism on our national development and environmental protection efforts.”

The practice of giving a name to a newborn baby, known as ‘Kwita Izina’, has been part of Rwandan culture for centuries. The name attributed to a baby gorilla plays a significant role in the ongoing programme of monitoring each individual gorilla in its family group and habitat.