

In a rare and encouraging development for wildlife conservation, Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) has recorded the birth of twin mountain gorillas; an event that conservationists describe as both exceptional and hopeful for the endangered species.

The twin males were born to a 22-year-old female gorilla named Mafuko and were discovered on January 3 by community trackers during a routine patrol. The trackers found Mafuko resting in dense forest vegetation, gently holding her newborns close. Early observations showed that both the mother and her infants were in good health.

Images released by the park capture the intimate moment, with Mafuko cradling the twins amid the thick foliage of Virunga. Twin births among mountain gorillas are extremely rare, accounting for roughly one percent of all recorded births. The last time such an event was documented in the park was in 2020.

Raising twins presents added challenges, particularly in the early months when infants rely entirely on their mother for feeding, warmth, and movement. Acknowledging this vulnerability, park authorities have increased monitoring around the family to ensure the newborns receive added protection during this critical stage of their development.

Virunga National Park; Africa's oldest national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site; covers more than 3,000 square miles and is home to one of the world's largest remaining populations of mountain gorillas. Despite its protected status, the park continues to face serious threats, including armed conflict, illegal logging, and poaching.

Born into the Kabirizi family, Mafuko later joined the Bageni family after her mother was killed by armed individuals in 2007. She officially became part of the Bageni group in 2013 during a family split, and years later, her sister Tumaini also joined her following interactions between the two groups.

Now 22 years old, Mafuko has given birth to seven offspring over her lifetime. She previously delivered twins in 2016, though they sadly survived for only a week. The successful birth and early survival of the current twins therefore carries particular significance for both the Bageni family and conservation teams working in the park.

In recent years, sustained anti-poaching efforts and community-led conservation

initiatives have contributed to a gradual increase in mountain gorilla numbers across the region. Park officials say the birth of these twins is a meaningful boost to those efforts, reinforcing cautious optimism about the long-term survival of the species within Virunga.