



## **Environment: journeys through a changing world**

*What is habituation?*

### **James Byamukama, International Gorilla Conservation Programme**

Habituation of mountain gorillas, in particular, is a process of making the wild group of gorillas being tolerant to the appearance of human beings in their vicinity, and in the case of mountain gorillas to be tolerant of people to be as close as seven metres, which is the viewing range, but habituation is not intended, and has never been intended to transform the behaviour of gorillas from being wild to being like tamed animals, they still maintain their wildness, behaving the same way they should behave, feeding, mating, resting, if there's any disturbance from another wild group, reacting the same way. And it has been observed that during the habituation process the most difficult time is when the group that's being habituated is being in touch with another wild group, and at this particular time always we'll come in but the rangers withdraw because when the habituated group no longer puts any confidence in this team, this also applies when the tracking happens, when there's been an interaction then they forget all about that relationship that had been, that had been established. This demonstrates that actually the, even when gorillas have been habituated, they still keep wild.