

COLTAN MINING IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Coltan mining in the DRC overlaps significantly with important habitats of two great apes: Eastern chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*) and Grauer's gorillas (*Gorilla beringei graueri*).

WHAT IS COLTAN?

Coltan is a shortened term for columbite and tantalite. Coltan ore is mined, and two components can be extracted

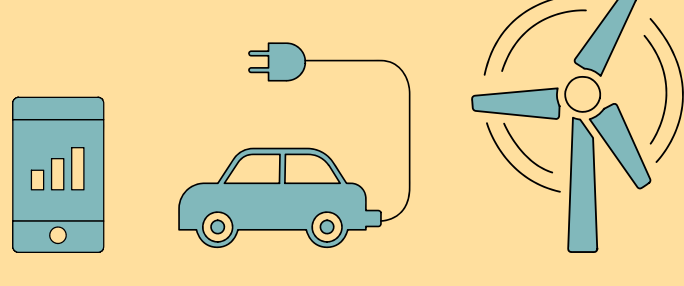
COLumbite¹
+ **TAN**talite
= **COLTAN**

¹ Columbite is also known by the name niobium

WHAT IS COLTAN USED FOR?

Used in capacitors which are present in almost all small electronic devices (e.g., phones, computers, cameras)

Used as an alloy in stainless steel, as a superconductor, and in reflective lenses



↑ in electronics, electric vehicles, wind farms, 5G, etc. = ↑ demand for coltan

COLTAN IN DRC



~30% of the world's coltan production

Estimated to have >80% of the world coltan reserves

ARTISANAL MINING is the most common method for mining coltan, and it is **DIFFICULT TO REGULATE**

LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRIAL MINING is less common but **BEING DEVELOPED**

IMPACTS OF COLTAN MINING ON GREAT APES

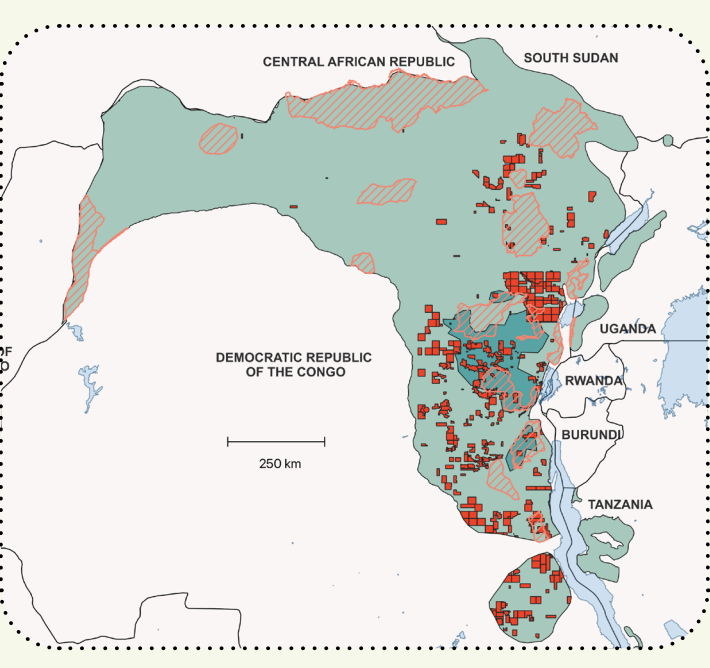
Direct impacts include habitat loss and pollution

Main problems are linked to indirect impacts, as there is massive migration of miners to these areas

Increasing population sizes lead to further habitat loss, poaching, and increase disease transmission risk

Tantalite is listed as a world conflict mineral

- Grauer's gorilla range
- Eastern chimpanzee range
- Coltan mines
- Protected Areas



GRAUER'S GORILLAS



Gorilla beringei graueri

Critically Endangered

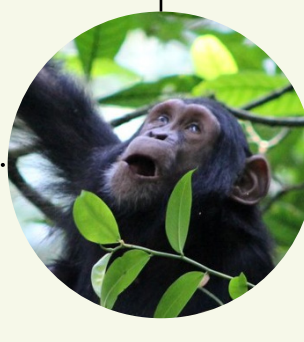
1 of 2 subspecies of eastern gorilla

~6,800, population has declined ~58% in 20 years

Coltan mining covers ~16% of the Grauer's gorilla range

Coltan mining occurs in 5 of 6 protected areas that Grauer's gorillas inhabit, and covers >10% of Grauer's gorillas protected areas

EASTERN CHIMPANZEES



Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii

Endangered

1 of 4 subspecies of chimpanzee

~37,000 (14,019–67,196)

Coltan mining covers ~8% of the eastern chimpanzee range in the DRC

Coltan mining occurs in 6 of 20 protected areas in the DRC that eastern chimpanzee inhabit. Of 379 coltan permits granted in eastern chimpanzee habitat, >15% are in protected areas

REDUCING IMPACTS OF COLTAN MINING ON APES

Increase regulation of mining in great ape habitat, particularly protected areas

Need greater accountability regarding where industries source coltan

Promote the recycling of electronic devices!

Increase transparency in the supply chain:

- Large companies import coltan from countries which refine it, usually not directly from the DRC

- 'Fingerprinting' coltan is possible and could be used to locate the origin of coltan in supply chains

Consult with the ITSCI Programme for Responsible Mineral Supply Chain to responsibly source coltan

SOURCES:

Mining concession data: Global Forest Watch, Trimble Landfolio Cadastre Map Portals, Revenue Development Foundation (online data repositories), mining company websites.
Coltan mining: statista.com, enactafrica.org
Protected Area layers: Protected Planet
Ape range layers: IUCN
Electronics recycling: <https://www.eco-cell.com> OR www.eridirect.com/consumer/recycle-search/

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Image credits: GRACE



The IUCN SSC PSG ARRC Task Force advises industrial development projects on implementation of the mitigation hierarchy and recommends ways for companies to contribute positively to ape conservation.

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