

Bonobos... Great Apes in Danger

Bonobos are a rare species of great ape. Highly intelligent, playful, and known for their peace-making, bonobos live only in the central rain forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This forest is also home to a great diversity of other species, including the forest elephant, many antelope and primate species, and the endemic Congo peafowl. Yet survival for bonobos and other wildlife is precarious in a country beset by war and poverty – factors that fuel hunting for the bushmeat trade. The conservation of bonobos is imperative because they are among humankind’s closest living relatives, they give us insight into the evolution of our own species, and they play an important ecological role in forest regeneration as seed dispersers. The bonobo is the conservation emblem for this endangered lowland forest ecosystem.

Our goal is to ensure the survival of the bonobo. The Zoological Society of Milwaukee’s (ZSM’s) Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative (BCBI) studies and protects bonobos in the Salonga National Park. The park is an immense wilderness critical for bonobo survival because of its size and value as an intact ecosystem. Despite being a park, the Salonga is under intense poaching pressure. Park guards need



Male bonobo
at Etate

support to patrol and enforce laws prohibiting the killing of bonobos and other protected species. Since 1997, the ZSM has worked alongside park guards to locate bonobo populations, study the forest habitat, and support anti-poaching activities. A world leader in bonobo conservation, the ZSM works in partnership with the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) and other international organizations to conserve the bonobo.

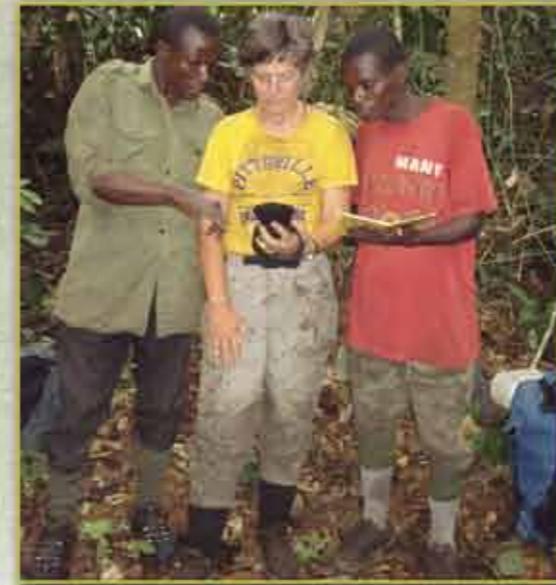
Etate

BCBI research and patrol activities are based at Etate in the northern sector of Salonga National Park. A former poaching camp, Etate functions as both a research station and an ICCN guard patrol post.

Etate Research Station/Patrol Post



Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative: What we do



Bonobo Surveys & Research

We survey areas of the park to locate bonobo and wildlife populations, study the forest types they inhabit, and analyze how human activities like hunting affect where bonobos live. The surveys not only compile information about where key mammal species occur, but they also pinpoint areas of poaching. Therefore, our survey data directly inform ICCN and help guards direct their anti-poaching activities.

Dr. Gay Reinartz, BCBI director, collects survey data with ICCN guards Bokitsi Bunda (left) and Ntoluke Ture.

Patrick Guislain (right), BCBI field site coordinator, teaches guards how to read maps, use GPS, and navigate.

Park Support & Guard Training

We help ICCN combat poaching through material support and guard training. Bunda, Edmond and other ICCN guards benefit directly from surveillance training, communication and field equipment, and logistical support for their patrols. They are now better prepared to do their jobs. Etate is one of the most active and advanced patrol posts in the park with frequent, systematic patrols covering a 200 square mile area and protecting over 500 bonobos.



Community Assistance

Communities around the Salonga subsist at mere survival levels. Improving the quality of life and nutrition for local people ultimately reduces their reliance on hunting and is critical for the park’s long-term conservation success. Toward this end, we support primary schools, adult literacy classes, and an agricultural cooperative near Etate.

ZSM staff distribute agricultural tools and supplies to villagers.



Bunda and Edmond know this place like the back of their hand. They have lived here all their lives, dedicating themselves as park guards to protect the endangered bonobo. Their job is not simple.

As they walk quietly along the forest path, they are watchful. Bunda comes upon a site strewn with broken branches and overturned leaves. He knows bonobos were recently at play here. High in the canopy Edmond spots several nests where a group of bonobos slept the previous night. Here the guards take a GPS reading so that they can note this place on a map and find it again.

While the guards patrol, they count bonobo nests and scan the path for footprints, snares, spent cartridges — signs that they are not alone. Bonobos and other wildlife in this primeval forest are at grave risk from illegal hunters.

The forest is the vast wilderness of the Salonga National Park — Bunda and Edmond's ancestral home — and the largest block of legally protected bonobo habitat in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



How Can I Help?

Please consider a financial gift to the Zoological Society of Milwaukee's Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative. Here are just a few ways your contribution can be used:

- **Research and surveys:** provide field equipment, fuel, medicines, food, and supplies for bonobo surveys.
- **Guard Sponsorship:** support Bunda, Edmond, and other park guards in the Etate Sector with food rations, medicines, supplies, and equipment.
- **Primary schools and adult literacy:** support teachers, and provide school and classroom supplies.

Please make checks payable to:
ZSM—BCBI Program

You can also make a secure online credit-card gift at:
www.bonoboconservation.org

Send your contribution and direct questions to:
Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative
Zoological Society of Milwaukee
10005 W. Blue Mound Road
Milwaukee, WI, USA, 53226
(414) 276-0339 www.bonoboconservation.org
e-mail: conservation@zoosociety.org



Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. To comply with WI Statute Section 440.455, a financial statement of the Zoological Society will be provided upon request.

Above photo: Richard Brodzeller
All other photos: Dr. Gay Reinartz or ZSM staff
Cover design by ZSM Creative Department

Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative

