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Bonobo Conservation Initiative

Founded in 1998, the Bonobo Conservation Initiative is the only international organization dedicated to conservation of bonobos in the wild.



Our Mission

To ensure the survival of the bonobo (*Pan paniscus*) and its tropical rainforest habitat in the Congo Basin. By working with local and indigenous Congolese people through cooperative conservation and community development programs, as well as on national and international policy, the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) is establishing new protected areas and leading efforts to safeguard bonobos wherever they are found.



BCI President Sally Coxie rallies reporters after rescuing an orphan bonobo, whose mother was killed by poachers.

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The Challenges

- The world's entire wild population of bonobos, a species of great ape most closely related to humans, is in danger of extinction from bushmeat hunting and habitat destruction.
- The rainforest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the only place on earth where free-living bonobos exist, is threatened by logging and human encroachment.
- The people in this rainforest live in extreme poverty and urgently need health services, education and sustainable means of earning a livelihood.



Protecting Bonobos: Our Closest Primate Cousins

A highly endangered species of great ape, bonobos are humankind's closest living primate relatives, along with chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), yet most people don't even know that bonobos exist. The last to be discovered and the least known great ape species, bonobos could be the first to become extinct unless concerted action is taken now to protect them and their rainforest home. These great apes are complex beings with profound intelligence, emotional expression and sensitivity. We have much to learn about them, and they have much to teach us about ourselves.

Biologically speaking, bonobos and humans share more than 98% of the same genetic material. Bonobos are more closely related to human beings than they are to gorillas!

But the most unusual and compelling feature of bonobos is their society. In contrast to the competitive, male-dominated culture of chimpanzees, bonobo society is peaceful, matriarchal and more egalitarian. Female bonobos form close bonds and alliances with each other. Harmonious coexistence is the norm.

Bonobos exhibit care and compassion for each other and habitually engage in a great deal of creative sexual activity, with members of either gender. Sex transcends reproduction in bonobo society, as it does in human society, and serves to promote bonding, reduce tensions and share pleasure.

Bonobos serve as a powerful flagship species for rainforest conservation, as well as for peace and cooperation. They only live in only one country: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire).

The greatest threats to bonobos are hunting and habitat destruction, primarily from logging. Recent surveys have confirmed bonobos in strategic areas, however the population is fragmented and declining. While the exact population is unknown, current estimates range from 10,000 to 50,000—or even fewer remaining in the wild.

“Environmental news—particularly when it comes out of Africa—is too often about despair and failure and all at once here’s a tale in which imaginative people are saving remarkable animals and doing so in a way that can heal whole countries. That’s the kind of news that we rarely get to report.”

*—Jeffrey Kluger, Science editor, TIME magazine
(referencing coverage of BCI’s work in the April 21, 2008 article, Eden for the Peaceful Apes)*

The future of bonobos is brighter, thanks to the recent establishment of the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve. Harboring more than 1,000 bonobos, it is one of the only sites where wild bonobos are habituated to human presence and can be easily viewed.

The Congo Basin Rainforest: Life Support for Our Planet

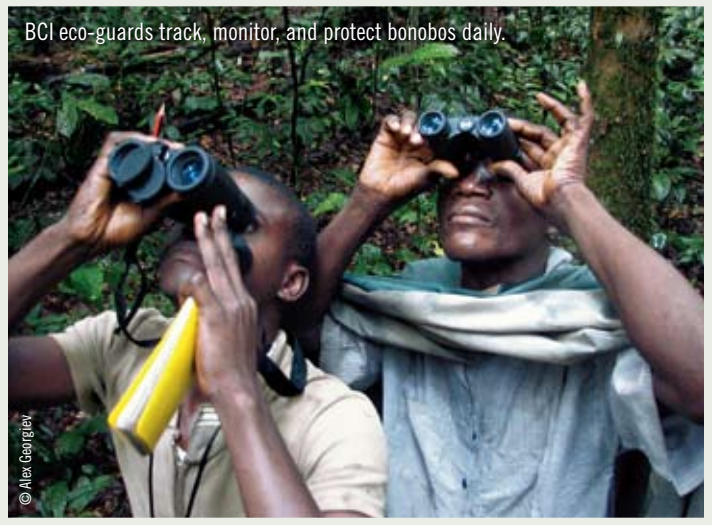
The Congo Basin forest is the second largest contiguous rainforest on earth, representing one-fourth of the world's rainforest. More than half of Africa's wild plant and animal species live in the Congo forest.

The rainforest's value for preserving biodiversity, for carbon sequestration and the mitigation of global climate change is incalculable. We can't live without it. It is the second lung of the world. The protection of this region provides other global benefits, including saving important genetic stock that may provide life saving drugs and new food sources to the world, and the safeguarding of a critically important watershed.

This essential global resource, with its outstanding biodiversity, is under immediate threat from industrial logging interests, human settlement expansion, and bushmeat hunting. We are in a race against time to protect key areas of habitat from exploitation.

"A huge forest sanctuary may save thousands of these gentle, sexy apes within their home. They have found their perfect champion in the BCI and Sally Coxe."

—Dr. Frans de Waal, director, Living Links Center, Emory University
Author, *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape*



BCI eco-guards track, monitor, and protect bonobos daily.



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Protecting bonobo habitat in the Congo Basin safeguards many important species and a globally significant watershed. Bienvenu Mupenda of BCI works on the frontlines to promote conservation programs.

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OUR WORK

- Preserving rainforest habitat
- Protecting bonobos and biodiversity
- Empowering the Congolese people to lead conservation efforts

Saving Rainforest, Protecting Habitat

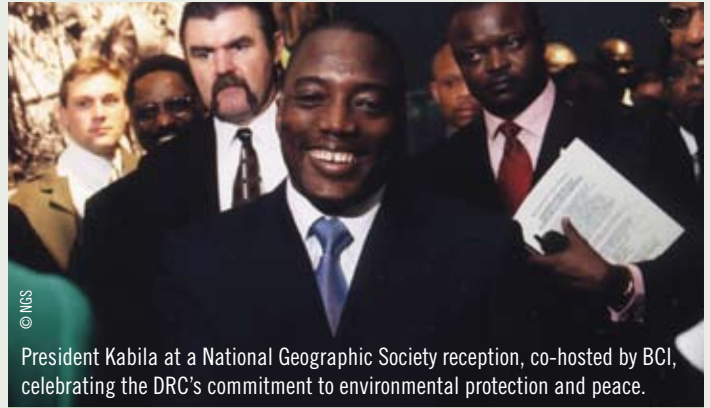
The bonobo habitat encompasses the heart of the Congo Basin rainforest, an area of critical importance to all life on Earth.

BCI has successfully motivated communities and the national government to protect vital tracts of rainforest. Together, we have created two important protected areas to date:

- **Sankuru Nature Reserve:** In 2007, the 11,803 square mile (30,570 km²) Sankuru Nature Reserve was officially established, through the efforts of BCI and local NGO partner *Action Communautaire pour la Protection des Primates du Kasai* (ACOPRIK), in collaboration with the Congolese Institute for Conservation of Nature (ICCN). Larger than the state of Massachusetts or the country of Belgium, it is the world's largest continuous protected area for great apes—and the first large-scale community managed protected area in the DRC.
- **Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve:** In May 2009, the 1,847 square mile (4,875 km²) Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve was officially designated through the initiative of local NGO *Vie Sauvage* (VS), in partnership with BCI and the ICCN. The keystone for the Bonobo Peace Forest, this innovative community-managed reserve harbors more than 1,000 bonobos! Kokolopori is one of the only sites where bonobos are habituated to human presence, and can be viewed and studied daily.

BCI has forged partnerships and initiated conservation programs, spanning a large portion of the bonobo habitat. Leaders from each site have joined together to form the Coalition for Community Conservation of Bonobos (CCCB). This dynamic coalition will link and amplify indigenous Congolese voices, serve as a management structure for the Bonobo Peace Forest, and create a network for information sharing, collaboration, and improving local governance.

Of utmost importance is our work to protect habitat by converting unexploited logging concessions to conservation concessions, and by reforesting degraded areas.



President Kabila at a National Geographic Society reception, co-hosted by BCI, celebrating the DRC's commitment to environmental protection and peace.

Our Vision: The Bonobo Peace Forest

The Bonobo Peace Forest is a constellation of community-based reserves and conservation concessions linked by habitat corridors, and supported by sustainable development. Our goal is to ensure the long-term survival of bonobos throughout their habitat by creating a large band of locally managed protection. This project is endorsed by communities in the bonobo range, the government of the DRC, UNESCO, and others.

Bonobos serve as a powerful flagship for conservation, as well as for peace in the war-torn country. DRC's President, Joseph Kabila embraces the link between peace and wise management of natural resources, particularly given that the recent war in DRC was driven by illegal exploitation of the country's natural wealth.



Protecting Bonobos & Biodiversity

When BCI hit the ground as the Congo war was winding down, very little was known about the status of the bonobo population, and conservation programs aimed at protecting bonobos were virtually non-existent. Due to the unstable political situation and the remoteness of the habitat, bonobos had been studied and protected at only a few isolated sites since the mid 1970s. The first order of business was to find out where bonobos still existed in viable numbers. This is what BCI set out to do.

With leading scientists of the Congolese *Centre de Recherche en Ecologie et Foresterie* and local conservation partners, BCI has:

- Discovered or confirmed the existence of bonobos in eleven strategic regions
- Implemented more than 25 research expeditions
- Trained, equipped, and sustained support for 12 bonobo monitoring teams to date
- Habituated 5 groups of bonobos, for research and tourism
- Rescued more than a dozen orphan bonobos, whose mothers were killed by poachers
- Gained local agreements to protect bonobos at 12 important sites, leading to the creation of two legally protected nature reserves to date, spanning 13,650 square miles (35,435 km²)—an area larger than the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined!

BCI identifies bonobo populations and areas of important biodiversity, while at the same time motivating local people to engage in conservation. This has resulted in locally-based protection at every site where BCI is actively working—and the official establishment of two nature reserves.

Although bonobos have been traditionally protected by some ethnic groups, hunting for the commercial bushmeat trade is an omnipresent danger. BCI works to thwart illegal hunting and raise awareness about bonobos—in the Congo and worldwide. One of our most successful efforts is the production of radio spots and songs with Congolese music idols WerraSon and Papa Wemba. These are having a far-reaching and resounding effect!

BCI also works to protect all biodiversity in the bonobo habitat, including other rare and endangered species. We are supporting the first field studies of the rare Salongo monkey and our surveys were the first to discover the endemic okapi in the Kasai province, which had previously not been known to exist south of the Congo River.

“These peaceful, intelligent bonobos are a very special treasure for DRC and all humanity. We need to protect them—and we might learn some valuable lessons from them too—about how to live in cooperation and harmony with each other.”

—Spokesperson for President Kabila



BCI field teams work with communities throughout the bonobo habitat. Above, local people learn about their rights under the new DRC forest law.



"BCI has confounded classic conservation models by basing decisions on indigenous knowledge and using local social structures to spread awareness. Their approach gives communities a long-term stake in the forests by providing health facilities, education programs, and alternative employment opportunities in areas threatened by logging concerns and commercial hunters."

—National Geographic Magazine, International Edition

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Building Capacity, Empowering Communities

The most cost-effective and sustainable way to protect bonobos is by engaging local Congolese people to take the lead in conservation.

- BCI trains Congolese scientists, eco-guards and conservationists in survey methods, participatory mapping techniques, information technology, and monitoring protocols.
- BCI has sent ten students to college to study conservation biology and protected area management, so that they can become skilled leaders and educate others in turn.
- With local partner Vie Sauvage and regional government authorities, BCI founded the Djolu Technical College for Conservation and Rural Development, the only institute of higher learning in an extremely important area of the bonobo habitat. The college offers bright, motivated young people in this remote region the opportunity to earn a college degree, so that they can become the next generation of leaders in conservation.

- BCI works to strengthen primary and secondary schools, all of which lack basic materials and desperately need support. These investments build a firm foundation for the future.
- BCI supports livelihood and humanitarian programs that engage and motivate local communities, providing alternative sources of income, other than bushmeat hunting and trading.

BCI's livelihood programs include:

- micro-credit programs, particularly for women
- conservation enterprise, working with local cooperatives
- sustainable agriculture programs, which improve yields and reduce impact on the forest
- establishment of medical clinics to serve local communities
- infrastructure support (communications, transport, and tools)
- educational programs and aid for local schools
- pilot eco-tourism programs

Joining Forces: The Kokolopori-Falls Church Sister City Partnership

Falls Church, Virginia and Kokolopori, DRC have teamed up to promote mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation in support of peace and environmental protection. This dynamic partnership helped lead to the recent establishment of the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve, an area larger than the state of Rhode Island.

Administered under the auspices of BCI, this innovative community-to-community program is the first official Sister City partnership between the US and the DRC. Citizens of Falls Church have provided invaluable livelihood support to residents of Kokolopori, including funding for a health clinic, aid to local schools, and a micro-credit fund.

For more information, visit www.kokolopori-partnership.org.



The Bonobo's Neighbors: The People of the Congo Basin Rainforest

For centuries, the people of Congo's equatorial forest have lived in harmony with their environment. They are natural conservationists and respect the sacredness of the forest. Some groups, such as the Bongando people of Kokolopori, continue to enforce ancestral taboos against the killing of bonobos.

The brutal wars that raged in the Congo from 1996 to 2003 devastated these communities, destroying most means of livelihood and leaving virtually no infrastructure for transportation, communication, healthcare or education—which was lacking to begin with. Throughout the bonobo habitat, a region of over 150,000 square miles, the population exists at a subsistence level.

Recognizing that the local people are the ultimate stewards of the rainforest, BCI works to address their livelihood and humanitarian needs, while promoting a conservation ethic. We strive to provide the tools and infrastructure necessary for long-term solutions that allow Congolese to protect their resources and provide for their children's future. They are the most integral part of the solution.



BCI's pilot health clinic at Kokolopori is now operational, with a dedicated doctor, nursing staff and supplies.



Micro-credit programs for women and community cooperatives boost local economies.

Bonobo Conservation Initiative: The Power of Partnership

The Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) is an innovative and efficient nonprofit conservation organization with offices in Washington, D.C. and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Founded in 1998, BCI is the only international organization dedicated solely to the conservation of wild bonobos in their natural habitat. BCI works closely with Congolese organizations and international partners, building teams and coalitions to address the complex problem of bonobo conservation.

BCI's professional Congolese staff and partners have a profound knowledge of their environment and their culture. By partnering with committed local conservation organizations and Congolese institutes such as the *Centre de Recherche en Ecologie et Foresterie* (CREF), *Vie Sauvage* (VS), *Action Communautaire pour les Primates du Kasai* (ACOPRIK) and others, BCI has achieved outstanding results with limited resources. BCI supports over 175 Congolese conservation workers and has provided training, equipment and support to over a dozen Congolese NGOs and institutes.

BCI also collaborates with a broad array of international conservation, humanitarian and development organizations, as well as universities, artists and private sector partners.

Together we can do what none of us can do alone.



How YOU Can Help

BCI is grateful for your interest in our work. We are seeking support to take our conservation programs to the next level of effectiveness.

Your contribution will help bring bonobos back from the brink of extinction, protect the second largest rainforest in the world, and improve the quality of life for thousands of rainforest inhabitants.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Bonobo Conservation Initiative or volunteer your time or talents to our mission, please write to the address below or visit our web site at www.bonobo.org.



**Thank you sincerely
for your support.**

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