



Les Amis des Bonobos au Congo (*Friends of Bonobos in Congo*)

2016 Annual Report



A message from Claudine André

LOLA YA BONOBO
Les Amis des Bonobos au Congo



The year 2016 ends with high levels of political uncertainty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at a new and important political transition period. Our beautiful country ! It is always on the front page because of its politics, which give us a very poor image. When believe me, everyone here is eager for peace !

The year 2016 saw its usual share of joy and of sorrow. We mysteriously lost some bonobos that we loved dearly. Meanwhile other bonobos filled us with happiness in the midst of our worries. Such is life...

Thanks to your presence at our sides, dear adoptive parents, sponsors, donors, friends of the bonobos in Congo, we close the year with the means to withstand these uncertain times. Thank you, thank you a million times for your support ! With our dedicated team of Congolese staff, we are all there near the Bonobos, and we will look after each other. Let our lucky star continue to shine over us !

Claudine André, Founding President.



PART 1: LOLA YA BONOBO

Bonobo Rehabilitation Center
LOLA YA BONOBO



The first objective of ABC is to combat the trade in illegal bushmeat and infant bonobos, by facilitating the implementation of the laws on the trade and detention of endangered species by relevant authorities.

ABC collaborated with officers from the Environment Ministry to confiscate bonobos that have been orphaned by the bushmeat trade.

These orphan bonobos are entrusted to ABC for their rehabilitation and long-term care at Lola ya Bonobo sanctuary.





Bonobo Rehabilitation Center

LOLA YA BONOBO



The Bonobos at the sanctuary

- Population on January 1, 2016: **73 Bonobos**
(37 males, 36 females)
- Population on December 31, 2016: **71 Bonobos**
(36 males, 35 females)



No new orphan was received in 2016

- Three bonobos were identified for rescue and should have been received in the nursery: 2 from Mbandaka and 1 from Kisangani.
- All three were intercepted at the last minute by ICCN in spite of the official paperwork we had obtained for their transfer to LOLA YA BONOBO. Two bonobos were placed by ICCN at the Kinshasa Zoo and died shortly afterwards. The third bonobo is reportedly still at the botanical garden in Kisangani.
- Why? The issue comes from an internal conflict over roles and responsibilities between ICCN, the scientific unit for management of in situ wildlife, and the General Secretariat of the Environment Ministry, our oversight authority. A difficult situation given the highly unstable political context.





There were 6 births at the Sanctuary in 2016

Three infants died shortly after they were born (lack of milk & poor maternal care).

The other infants are:

- **Ndona ya Lola**, a female born January 13, 2016 (mother: Maya)
- **Kitoko ya Lola**, a male born avril 17, 2016 (mother: Waka)
- **Baraka ya Lola**, a femelle born septembre 9, 2016 (mother: Kalina)

The females at the Sanctuary are put on anti-conceptional pills after their first delivery until their possible release at EKOLO YA BONOBO, but contraception accidents are quite frequent.





A difficult year at the Sanctuary: 8 deaths

Death of 3 bonobo orphans

- **Kananga**, female, 9 years, neurological trouble (25 April)
- **Lukuru**, female, 12 years, neurological trouble (10 May)
- **Ilebo**, male, 15 years, loss of consciousness, convulsion and drowning (17 May)

Death of 5 bonobos born at the Sanctuary

- The 3 newborn that did not receive proper maternal care
- **Lola ya Bonobo**, female, 2 years, diarrhea & parasites (2 June)
- **Jukuu ya Lola**, male, 10 months, diarrhea & parasites (12 August)



Kananga



Bonobo diet and nutrition

The diet of the Sanctuary's bonobos was altered this year based on advice from Jeroen Stevens (Plankendaal / Anthwerp zoo) and Dr Zanna Clay (Birmingham university) and phenological studies conducted at the release site. The new diet better mirrors what wild bonobos consume in the wild:

- Reduction in sugar-rich food; increase in food rich in fiber and vegetal protein
 - Leaves and legumes are distributed in the morning, when the bonobos are most hungry, in order to reduce waste and maximize their consumption. Fruit, a prized food of bonobos but too rich in sugar, are distributed in the afternoon.
 - Monkey bread recipe: croquettes made of lentils, plantain bananas, wheat, maize or cassava flour, and sesame or pumpkin seed. Distributed every lunch time.
- Enrichment in the enclosures: palm nut and (in the evening) pop corn





Bonobo diet and nutrition

To address shortfalls in the capacity of local vegetable growers to supply us with the quantity of quality food that bonobos require, we have introduced several measures:

- Creation of a small back-up vegetable garden within Lola ya Bonobo
- Regular harvesting of the sanctuary's fruit trees (mangoes, pink apples, breadfruit tree...)



- Support to the local growers with improved seed, organic fertilizer and phytosanitary products: production of cucumbers, cabbage, tomatoes, various local greens leaves and salads...



Preparation of a new bonobo reintroduction

- Process guided by the **IUCN recommendations** for Great Ape reintroduction.
- Collaboration with a **team of scientists** (Dr. Zanna Clay, Prof. Furiushi, Jeroen Stevens...) without emotional attachment to the bonobos, to validate the selection of bonobos to be released.
- **Selection criteria:** the bonobos' physical condition, behavior, social status, age and sex. The selection criteria also take into account the need to maintain the social balance of the groups that will remain at the sanctuary; the departure of the selected individuals should not negatively affect the social dynamics in the enclosures.
- Once the individuals were preliminarily selected, **veterinary tests** were conducted to verify that all the individuals were in good health (virology, parasitology, bacteriology). The analyses were conducted by the **National Institute for Biomedical Research (INRB)** and (virology) by the **Predict** team. The bonobos were also vaccinated as needed (most were already fully immunized).



13 Bonobos were eventually selected within enclosure #2

- 5 males: Mbandaka, Yolo, Bisengo ya Lola, Kole, Mayele ya Lola
- 8 females: Maya, Ndonga ya Lola, Muanda, Mvula ya Lola, Lisala, Nyota ya Lola, Malaika ya Lola, Masisi

Logistics

- Negotiations with the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC) to organize a cargo flight to transport the Bonobos from Kinshasa to Basankusu
- 9 transport cages were refurbished to hold the bonobos during the transfer

Quarantine

- Final installations at Totaka island, a 50 ha island located across from the release site, where the bonobos will spend 3-4 months in quarantine before being released at Ekolo ya Bonobo



Educational program - Kinshasa

Educational Program



Our motto:

Conservation start with Education

The 2nd objective of the association is to contribute to a better knowledge of bonobos and to an increased protection of the species with a range of educational and advocacy programs and by facilitating ethological studies at LOLA YA BONOBO



Educational program in Kinshasa

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- Educational sessions in **69 schools** throughout Kinshasa, reaching over **3,350 youth and children** (basic facts on bonobos, biodiversity conservation, role plays, etc.)
- **113 school and youth groups** (approximately **5,000 youth and teachers**) visited Lola ya Bonobo, including 29 groups who came on their own.
- **17 Kindness Clubs** took part in school outings at the Sanctuary (games and competitions, distribution of the book "Who saved Beni?" to school libraries)
- Many spontaneous visitors during the week-ends
- In total, **over 16,000 people visited the sanctuary** and observed the bonobos de visu





Les Singes vivent dans la Forêt



3 sur 4 espèces de Grands Singes en RDC



Capacity strengthening

Volunteer **Teresa Sauquet** (of Girona University's Mona Foundation, Spain) spent one month with the education team at Lola ya bonobo:

- Better targeting of **educational messages** and activities based on audiences and their ages.
- Design of new **pedagogical posters** for the education team.
- Development of an image based « **Educator's guide** » (work in progress).

Medias and Communication

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Documentary films and news reports:

- Une saison chez les bonobos (*A season with the bonobos*) aired in February 2016 on French TV France 4, in 6 episodes over three weeks. Very popular, the show aired again in 2016 and in 2017.
- The CBS/60 minutes segment on Lola ya Bonobo aired two more times in 2016. (Filmed in 2014, the show first aired in December 2015.)
- Shooting of a show with French TV personalities Muriel Robin and Chanee. (The show aired in March 2017 on France 3.)
- Short news report on France 24



Géo Magazine n°451 :

- Lola ya Bonobo was selected one of "50 exceptional sites on the African continent"! Lola ya Bonobo and Virunga National Park were the only two sites selected in the DRC



A better knowledge of the species is key to its effective protection. We collaborate with students and scientists from many countries to conduct non-invasive research at the sanctuary. We also invite visiting researchers to present their findings to Congolese students and scientists:

- Conference-discussion at **Kinshasa University (UNIKIN)** for students in Biology, on research conducted at Lola ya Bonobo by:
 - **Zanna Clay:** Post-doc at Psychology department, Birmingham University, UK.
Research topics: Cognition and empathy
 - **Cécile Sarabian:** PhD student at the Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University, Japan.
Research topic: Behavioral Ecology
- **Paulin Mungongo:** Graduate thesis in Veterinary medicine end (UNIKIN). Title: *Parasitological study on gastro-intestinal nematodes in bonobos at Lola ya Bonobo and development of an effective treatment*. Upon graduation, Paulin was recruited to join the sanctuary's medical team.



PART 2: EKOLO YA BONOBO



Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve



ABC contribute to the survival and protection of bonobos in their natural habitat by releasing socially stable groups of sanctuary rehabilitated bonobos in a special reserve in the primary forest of the DRC.

At end of 2016

- 13 bonobos released in 2009 and 2011
- 5 bonobos born at Ekolo ya Bonobo
- 14 bonobos visible in the reserve
- 4 bonobos split from the group in 2011-2012

Testing of GPS collars



- As part of preparations for the new bonobo release, in August 2015, 4 satellite GPS collars were fitted on 2 males and 2 females at Ekolo ya Bonobo.
 - 2 types of collars were tested:
 - **Sirtrack** (already used with Great Apes but fairly heavy)
 - **Followit** (lighter but never used with Great Apes)
 - Pilot testing over a +/- 6 month period in 2016.
 - Some collars worked better than others (battery life, strength of VHF signal, automatic drop-out mechanism, etc.)
- Based on results achieved during the pilot, we decided to use the Followit collars in the future. Main factors: their light weight and ease of use.



The Bonobos at Ekolo ya Bonobo

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- The collars confirmed that the bonobos have a defined **home range** within Ekolo ya Bonobo reserve: a band of **8 square kilometers** along the Lopori River to the south of the reserve. (Abundance of fruit throughout the year, limited human presence, proximity of the eco-guards, etc.)



- The bonobo group is **led by alfa female Etumbe**, assisted by Lukaya.
- **Sankuru** tends to split from the group, and leads some of the young males (Boyoma and/or Kubulu) to accompany her at the periphery of the group.

Anti-poaching patrols and wildlife monitoring



- **Protection of the released bonobos' habitat** is ensured throughout the Ekolo ya Bonobo reserve. Two teams of eco-guards are patrolling the forest 5 days a week to prevent poaching:
 - 306 cables or nylon snares were removed, 137 spent cartridges collected, 15 hunting dogs expelled, 4 hunting rifles seized, 2 hunters' camps destroyed.
- Wildlife data (traces and footprints, calls, droppings, food remains, nests, etc.) testify to the **positive impact of the released bonobo on local biodiversity** (role of umbrella species)
 - Increased number of wildlife present within the Ekolo ya Bonobo forest block
 - Increased diversity of animals seen in the reserve: Antelopes, leopards, monkeys, rodents, birds, turtoises, etc.
- **Awareness-raising with local and traditional authorities to enforce hunting regulations.** Advocacy for greater control of cartridges sold, delivery of hunting permits, respect of hunting calendars and quotas, etc.



- ❑ **Study of the Ekolo ya Bonobo forest block** in preparation of a new bonobo reintroduction, tentatively planned for 2017.
- ❑ A team of 12 (mix of our trackers and villagers) spent **60 days in the forest** from 7 August - 7 October, under the leadership of consultants Marius Kabongo (biologist) and Zico Monshe (cartographer). The completed:
 - 8 transects of 2 to 15 km
 - 40 plots of 25 m² covering a surface of **1,000 square meters**
- ❑ Collection of data on the fauna, flora, phenology and human presence (threats)
 - 147 species of flora (47 families) were identified, including 87 species eaten by bonobos
 - Abundance and diversity of the fauna, including many endangered species (giant pangolin, bongo, leopard, tortoises, otters, colobus....)
 - Human presence mainly to the North of the reserve (fishing on the Mulambi River)



❑ **Survey and monitoring of bushmeat markets**

- Objective: Monitor the evolution of hunting around Ekolo ya Bonobo and beyond (e.g. Lomako & Garamba parks) and use the findings to better target our awareness-raising program
 - 64 market surveys conducted
 - Over 350 hunters identified
 - Over 930 wholesale and 750 retail bushmeat vendors identified
- Reduction in the number of hunters & vendors over time over the course of the team's visits
- Greater presence of hunters on the markets located furthest from the reserve
- The most common species found on the markets include: Cercopithecus (small monkeys, 2 species), large antelope Sitatunga, Peters' Cephalopne, Nile Crocodile...
- Not a single report of elephant, leopard or bonobo meat. According to locals, people do not (anymore) consume bonobo meat in the region.



Conservation Education and Awareness-Raising

Education and Awareness-Raising

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Over 22,700 people reached in 2016!

- Awareness-raising of villagers and passers-by
 - On the 3 rivers that border Ekolo ya Bonobo (201 canoes = 2,300 people)
 - In the villages and settlements near the reserve (78 sessions = 1,600 adults + 1,100 children)
 - In the local schools (46 sessions = 4,750 students)
 - With Village Development Committees (36 sessions = 1,000 adults + 330 youth)
- 33 programs on the two local radios (rational use of the forest, hunting laws and regulations, etc.)
- 280 civil servants reached over 15 visits and work sessions
- 52 projections of films and documentaries on bonobos and wildlife conservation, thanks to the association's pedal-powered projector (over 6,000 adults + 5,400 children reached)



Conservation Education & Awareness-Raising at Ekolo ya Bonobo





Objective: generate community support for the release project and promote food and income sources alternative to the use of forest resources.

- ❑ Socio-economic activities are implemented through 6 Village Development Committees
- ❑ October 2016: Distribution of **text books and other school materials to 13 primary schools** for the start of the school year
 - 84 black boards, over 200 text books, clocks, and various other school supplies (notebooks, pens, chalk, pencils, erasers, etc.)
- ❑ Support to **agricultural activities**
 - 37 training sessions aimed to improve the local agricultural yields. Topics: ag cultivation techniques, field selection, seed selection and storage.
 - 923 households were reached, jointly they cultivate over 550 hectares of fields
 - Main challenges faced: agricultural tools, access to affordable, quality seed

Pilot fish pond project



Objectives: Decrease seasonal eel fishing within the reserve, improve household nutrition, provide an additional source of income

- Selection of the Kodoro community for the pilot project
- Technical training: selection of appropriate fish species, selection of fish pond location, quantity of fingerlings, breeding process, etc.
- Awareness-raising on rational river fishing (size of nets, fishing locations and seasons....)

The seasonal rise in river water did not allow the CDV to dig the fish ponds in 2016. The activities were conducted after flooding abated in January/February 2017.