



GROWTH & Gratitude

2023 Annual Report



FRIENDS OF
BONOBOS



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OPPOSITE PAGE: Monkoto sits calmly, meeting the camera with a curious, unmistakable bonobo gaze.



Rescue & CARE



Nursery by the Numbers



7

Bonobo orphans
arrived at Lola



2

Bonobos graduated
from the nursery



2

Nursery bonobos
passed away



Ikoto: Lola's Youngest Orphan Ever

Ikoto, the smallest and youngest bonobo ever rescued by ABC, began his life in peril. Alone and vulnerable, **his rescue was a critical, rapid intervention made possible by you!**

Upon arriving at Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary, Ikoto received urgent medical care and, with your help, grew stronger, learning to trust and socialize. He is cared for by Mama Yvonne and Mama Huguette.

At only three months old and with just six teeth upon rescue, Ikoto required specialized care. Most of the orphans who come to Lola are one or two years old, and Lola's veterinarians consulted with zoo partners in the United States for tips on caring for a bonobo so young.

For his first year, Ikoto was fed a high-nutrient infant formula. Before transitioning to the nursery with older orphans, he had to meet developmental milestones such as holding his head up, eating solid foods, sitting up, and beginning to climb. He also had to be socially and emotionally ready for the playful energy of the nursery!

Ikoto's journey from stressful rescue to happy days in the nursery is a testament to your unwavering support.

You provided baby bonobos with safety and love

Lenda and Lombo: Friendship & Recovery

Orphaned bonobos Lenda and Lombo, a female and male, respectively, were rescued together in 2023. These two young bonobos formed an immediate bond during their rescue with Dr. Jonas, who provided the essential care they needed from the very beginning.

Their shared experience and mutual support have been crucial to their recovery. This bond has helped them navigate the challenges of their new environment at Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary, where they continue to thrive.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Orphaned baby bonobo Ikoto with Mama Huguette

LEFT TO RIGHT: Ikoto and Lombo receiving care at Lola



Loolo and Lowale take a final ride with surrogate mothers Huguette and Ruth

Loolo and Lowale: Growth Brings Change

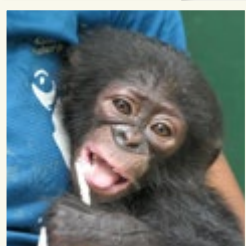
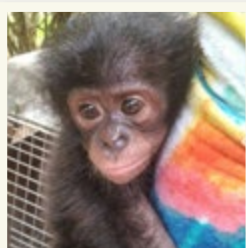
We are thrilled to share that Loolo and Lowale, both females who arrived in 2021, have successfully moved to the semi-wild adult bonobo enclosures at Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary! This bittersweet transition marks their growth from nursery care to living with adult bonobos. Lowale was rescued from a bushmeat hunter who confined her in a woven basket, while Loolo arrived despondent and bearing scars from being tied up.

Thanks to your support, these young bonobos were utterly transformed by the care they received.

Your Impact

The journeys of these bonobos, as well as Bola, a female, and Djeka, a male, also rescued in 2023, highlight the vital role you play in our mission. Your donations provided the medical care, nutritious food, loving surrogate mamas, and safe environment these bonobos need to survive. Your support gives these precious orphans a new chance at life.

In their new environment, they are learning essential skills, expanding their social connections, and enjoying more space to roam. This move prepares them for an eventual release into the protected wilds of the Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve.



Remembering Ikau and Osanga

In 2023, we faced the heartbreaking loss of Ikau and Osanga to respiratory illness, a common threat for young and vulnerable bonobos. And when bonobos begin their lives experiencing trauma, they become even more susceptible. Despite our best efforts, medicines, and treatment, Ikau and Osanga succumbed when a wave of illness swept through the nursery in December. Other bonobos who fell ill were able to recover.

Together, we honor Ikau and Osanga by striving to protect and care for the bonobos who need us most. **Each bonobo we rescue is given a chance at life because of you.** Although Ikau and Osanga's lives were cut short, **they lived with love, play, and friendships, thanks to your support.**

TOP TO BOTTOM: Ikau, Osanga

Balangala's Incredible Story

Sometimes, Lola ya Bonobo must save a bonobo's life more than once. Last year, veterinarians Raphaël Belais, Jonas Mukamba, and Dalton Akamba put their heart and soul into saving Balangala.

Last February, Lola caretakers noticed something off with Balangala, a normally feisty 7-year-old male. He was alone and listless. When his group came into the dormitory that night, he was moved to the infirmary, and the vets made their diagnosis: amoebic dysentery. It would turn out to be one of the worst cases they have ever seen.

The care team started Balangala on antibiotics along with oral and intravenous rehydration serums. Yet, over the next few weeks, he got worse. The vets mashed soft fruits with protein powder and hand-fed him. Immobile and unable to absorb nutrients from the foods he was given, Balangala quickly became emaciated.

Soon, a new problem arose: bed sores. To alleviate his pain, the vets repositioned him frequently. With new medicines and round-the-clock care, Balangala began to improve. But his skin remained in terrible shape.

A breakthrough came in April. A visiting researcher, Stephanie Kordon, arranged shipment of a small anti-ulcer mattress. It provided airflow around the bonobo's body to promote healing.

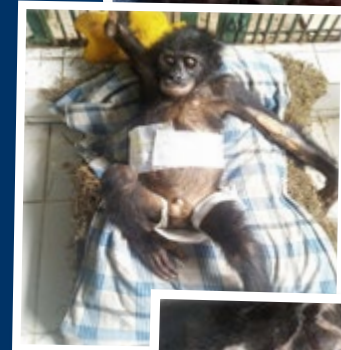
Then, another stroke of luck: A doctor in Kinshasa who treats burn patients suggested wound care techniques and a combination of salves for Balangala's severe skin ulcers. "His recipe worked quite well," Belais said.

SCAN TO VIEW
VIDEO



Throughout his illness, Balangala seemed to understand his caregivers were not the cause of his pain. "He trusts us," Belais said.

Little by little, Balangala recovered. Six months after his ordeal began, on August 28, 2023, Balangala returned to his group. They welcomed him back and even honored him by letting him walk in front, Dr. Mukamba said.



Happy Birthdays!

A birth at Lola ya Bonobo is always a joyful occasion, particularly because bonobos are endangered with fewer and fewer left in the wild. Given that bonobos only give birth every three to five years, each new baby is a cause for celebration.

In 2023, we were thrilled to welcome two new babies. On March 4th, **Elonga** gave birth to a healthy male, **Botosi ya Lola** (meaning “respect” in Lingala).

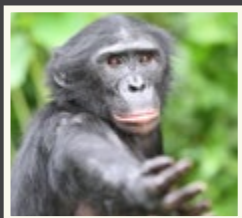
Elonga, an attentive and protective mother, has been providing excellent care to Botosi, ensuring he is well-fed and safe. This birth was particularly heartwarming for our team, as Elonga had previously lost her first baby.

We also celebrated the birth of **Mpico ya Lola** (“courageous”), born to **N'Djili**. Before her rescue, N'Djili was kept with an owl and other exotic animals and faced difficult circumstances, but now she has become a mama! She has taken quite well to this new role, and her son is thriving.

Births at Lola are more than just numbers; they represent hope and progress in our mission to protect and preserve bonobos!



ABOVE: N'djili and her baby Mpico at Lola



In Memoriam

As we celebrate new life at Lola, we also remember and mourn the beloved bonobos we lost during the year.

- **Lalia**, a 10-year-old female, and **Kitoko**, an 8-year-old male, died of pneumonia.
- **Kembo ya Lola**, Moseka's 1½-year-old baby, also succumbed to a respiratory illness.
- **Singi and Lomako** tragically passed away from accidental deaths in the forest enclosures, possibly due to heart failure.

Each of these bonobos was cherished and is deeply missed.

TOP TO BOTTOM: Lomako, Lalia, Singi

Research at Lola ya Bonobo

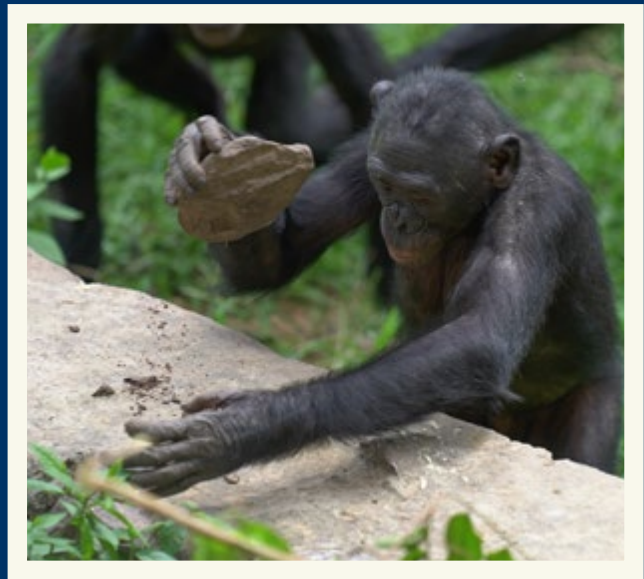
Lola ya Bonobo has a vital role in advancing knowledge of this little-known species. As the only sanctuary in the world where bonobos live in a semi-wild yet managed environment, it is well suited for observational studies. Over the last three decades, research conducted at Lola has led to dozens of scientific publications.

In 2024, Lola staff collaborated on two new bonobo research projects that will add to the growing understanding of bonobos. The studies are non-invasive and bonobo welfare is always paramount.

One study sought to understand bonobos' use of tools. Tool use is uncommon among wild bonobos, but occurs daily at Lola, where bonobos pound nuts with rocks and use sticks for various purposes.



Dr. Elisa Demuru observes a bonobo orphan's response to being tickled



A bonobo at Lola uses a rock to open nuts

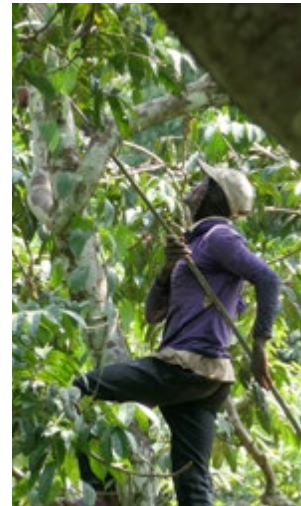
You're advancing scientific knowledge

Lara Zanutto, a University of Zurich PhD student advised by Dr. Zanna Clay (University of Durham, UK) and Kat Koops (University of Zurich), led the study. Zanutto drilled holes into logs to see how bonobos would extract food hidden inside. Over eight weeks, she observed tool use among both enclosure bonobos and nursery bonobos.

To investigate empathy among bonobos, Dr. Elisa Demuru (University of Lyon), Dr. Ivan Norscia (University of Turin), and students observed play and reactions to tickling over a 12-week period. Tickling is known among humans and our closest living relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos. Their study is the first to scientifically investigate this behavior in bonobos.

The researchers videotaped surrogate mamas briefly tickling the young bonobos. They measured behavioral and physiological responses to the mother's tickling and caressing through heart rates and perspiration. They also collected urine samples from the youngsters before and after to look for variations in hormonal levels (i.e., oxytocin and cortisol).

You provided care for all the bonobos of Lola ya Bonobo



Seventy bonobos live in three forested enclosures on Lola ya Bonobo's 100-acre site. **You provided the staff and equipment needed to feed the bonobos, monitor their health, treat injuries and illnesses, and maintain their night dormitories.**

You provided the tools and salaries needed to keep miles and miles of fencing in good repair, cope with flooding and erosion, replace a water pump, and handle numerous other site maintenance needs.

You supported the Lola ya Bonobo farm, where local residents are employed to plant, tend, and harvest fruits and vegetables for bonobos such as cucumbers, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes. After training in permaculture, the crop yield increased.

In 2023, sanctuary staff planted sugar cane, thanks to donated cuttings from the Kwilu Ngongo Sugar Company. They also planted hundreds of fruit trees donated by the Marist Brothers of Bobokoli: 99 orange and grapefruit, 50 papaya, 14 passion fruit, three baobab, and one cocoa tree.

The harvests will go a long way toward feeding the bonobos of Lola, who eat more than 300,000 pounds of food each year!



Lola veterinarian Dr. Jonas Mukamba examines Lombo, held by Mama Peguy Kiadi

Congo Staff Updates

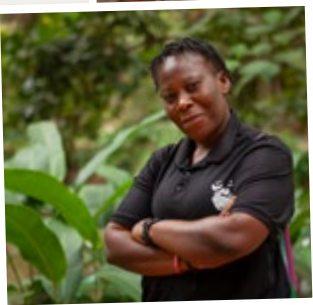
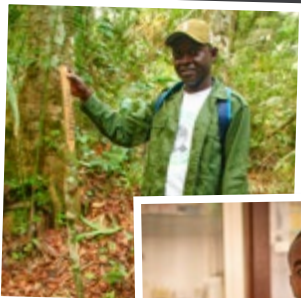
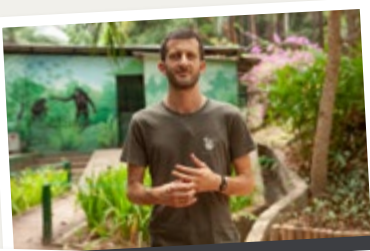
To streamline operations, ABC made several staff changes.

- **Dr. Raphaël Belais** was named sanctuary director, overseeing all staff and operations at Lola ya Bonobo.
- **Dr. Jonas Mukamba** and **Dr. Dalton Akamba** now direct daily veterinary care and manage long-term health of the bonobos.
- **Suzy Kwetuenda** — formerly manager of visitor services and bonobo social-emotional wellness — now heads visitor services and manages the Lola physical plant. She frequently serves as a spokesperson for ABC at Lola.

Experienced surrogate mother **Niclette Bonyoka** returned after previously relocating due to her husband's job.

At Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve, **Naomi Baye** was hired to oversee community engagement and sensitization in place of Alain Bwanga, who returned to his previous employer. ABC was pleased to recruit a female manager as part of an effort to increase female representation at all levels.

Papy Ithambala had previously been promoted to site manager, from science and technical director, following the departure of Dr. Cintia Garai.



TOP TO BOTTOM: Dr. Raphaël Belais, Papy Ithambala, Dr. Dalton Akamba, Suzy Kwetuenda

Rewild & PROTECT

**First
provincial-level
protected** area in
DRC, created by
and for Congolese
people

**World's
only site for
rewilded
bonobos**

**120,000-acre
protected rainforest**
in Équateur Province,
DR Congo

Contains
centuries-old
peat which
functions as a
**climate-stabilizing
carbon bank**

**Provides jobs
and other
benefits to
local partners**

Managed in
**partnership with
local communities,**
the provincial
government,
and national
environmental
authorities

You protected rainforest and rewilded bonobos

To keep our amazing ape cousins safe for the long term, we also must **protect their habitat in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**. Because after the bonobos of Lola are rehabilitated, they need to be able to return to the wild — where they belong. That's where Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve comes in.



Thanks to you,
all of this happened
at Ekolo in the last year!

- New forest guards joined the team and received extensive training.
- The new school wing we built with the Baenga community opened.
- Survey teams mapped boundaries for Ekolo's expansion.
- A camera trap study documented species being protected in Ekolo along with bonobos.
- Rebuilding began for facilities lost during unrest and fires.
- We expanded communications and conflict resolution efforts.

OPPOSITE PAGE: View of Ekolo Reserve from the river **ABOVE:** Sankuru, a rewilded bonobo, at Ekolo

Violence at Ekolo ya Bonobo



Before and after the attacks at Ekolo ya Bonobo

In June 2023, Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve experienced two weeks of violence and insecurity. A group of young men attacked, setting fire to our installations and to homes in nearby villages. While staff managed to withdraw much of our equipment, all structures at our Elonda base camp were burned down.



We are grateful no humans were harmed during the attacks. However, we are devastated that four bonobos were killed. We mourn the loss of Tembo, Kole, Masisi, and her daughter Boyokoni ya Lola.

The turmoil culminated in armed protests around ABC's office in Basankusu. To control the unrest the governor rapidly deployed military forces (FARDC) and police officers to the area. The contingent conducted patrols in Basankusu and around Ekolo for about four months and remained in reduced numbers through the end of the year.

What Happened?

In a tense pre-election context, the instability seems to have been fomented by local politicians who exploited complaints about ABC and tensions among the partner communities of the reserve. The violence appeared to be led by some members of the Ilonga Pôo, one of three community partners in EBCR since 2008. However, their complaints had never been brought to the Ekolo Conflict Resolution Committee.

At subsequent meetings involving hundreds of participants, the Ilonga Pôo aired grievances about perceived violations of ABC's commitments with their community. Some were misunderstandings due to lack of information about the Ekolo project. When their traditional leader died, new leaders weren't fully informed.

Community representatives objected to the presence of six ICCN eco-guards in ABC patrol teams and an assault on a prominent member of their community. They decried the arrest of another local leader who was hunting in the reserve. They argued that their community was under-represented among those hired locally by ABC and that socioeconomic development projects have been inadequate. They also sought to regain access to the Molambi River on the eastern edge of the reserve.

Education and Communication

Local communities are at the root of our conservation mission. We share the belief that conservation can contribute to local development in a more sustainable way than unchecked exploitation of the forest.

To seek resolution of the issues, ABC held numerous meetings with local residents, provincial authorities, and national environmental representatives—a process that continues today. At the same time, ABC supported the legal authorities' efforts to identify and charge the men responsible for the criminal acts.

The attacks underscored the need to devote more effort and resources to outreach and education about the Ekolo project. With your support, we're also improving security and developing new socioeconomic projects.

The Baenga and Lisafa (other communities involved in Ekolo Community Reserve) remained steadfast in their support of our shared bonobo conservation project. The same is true of the Bokakata community, whose traditional lands are in the area being mapped for Ekolo expansion.

As soon as calm was restored, forest guard patrols and bonobo tracking resumed in the reserve, and reconstruction work began.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Police presence and community meetings following the attacks on Ekolo

Loss leads to renewed commitment

“My journey with bonobo conservation began in 2011, in Kole, DRC, where I was working in public health. It was there that I encountered an illegally captured orphaned baby bonobo and determined to bring him to safety. Kole’s rescue was incredibly fulfilling and he lived contentedly for a number of years at Lola ya Bonobo before he was selected for rewilding.

Learning of Kole’s passing was heart-wrenching. Yet, it reinforced my commitment to bonobo conservation. His death, unexpected and tragic, fueled my desire to contribute actively to the cause.

It became clear to me that, despite the remarkable progress and relentless work at Lola and Ekolo, more needs to be done to preserve bonobos. **Joining the Advisory Board for Friends of Bonobos is my way of actively participating in the collective mission to save bonobos.** The multidimensional challenges they face require expertise from diverse fields, and I am determined to bring together a team of experts to preserve this species for future generations.

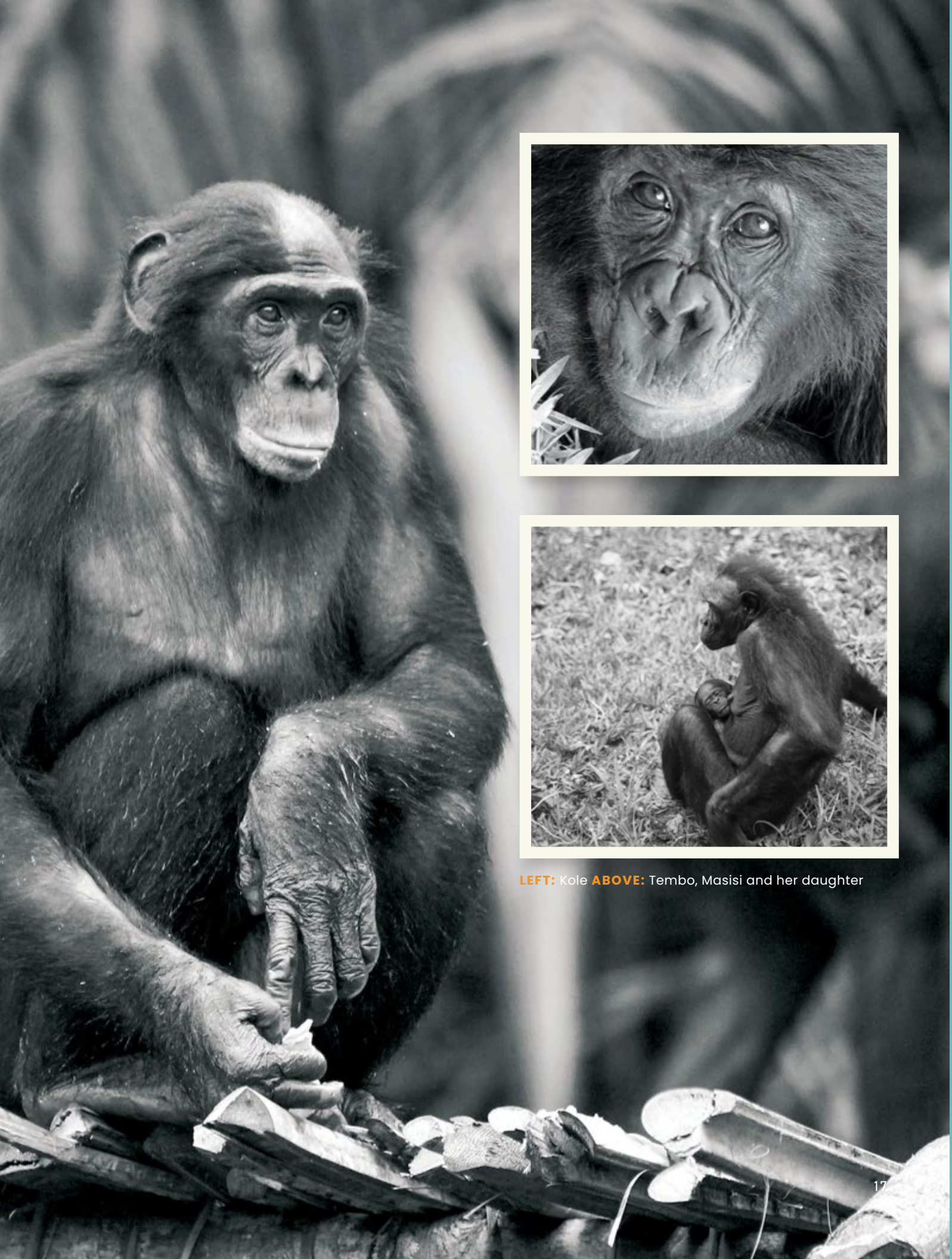
In memory of Kole and with renewed purpose, I look forward to playing a meaningful role in the vital work of Friends of Bonobos.”



Anne Rimoin, Ph.D.

Anne Rimoin, a professor of epidemiology at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, chairs the Friends of Bonobos Advisory Board. She has worked in the DRC since 2002, where she founded the UCLA-DRC Health Research and Training program to train U.S. and Congolese epidemiologists to conduct infectious disease research.





LEFT: Kile **ABOVE:** Tembo, Masisi and her daughter

You helped us **emerge stronger**

After the unprecedented wave of violence at Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve last summer, donor support has ensured continued progress during a very challenging time.

Your generosity has enabled us to reaffirm our commitment to community-based conservation and start rebuilding, ensuring Ekolo ya Bonobo remains a sanctuary for bonobos and a symbol of hope.

Because of you, we're rebuilding and getting stronger!

Your donations have allowed us to enhance the reserve's security and sustainability. You improved surveillance, increased staff and staff training, and began to strengthen community relations, all strategies to prevent future conflicts.



You upgraded security in the reserve. Because of you...

- We hired a dozen additional forest guards from local villages, bringing the total to 27.
- Four of the new guards are women. Local women frequently enter the forest for activities such as gathering caterpillars and female guards are able to communicate more effectively with them.
- Forest guards received extensive training in judicial processes and participatory conservation and can now make arrests.

Forest Patrols By the Numbers



10,008

Hours of patrol time



16

Persons encountered illegally in reserve



1,183

Miles covered



42

Hunting or poaching activities observed



You supported rebuilding

Our team in Congo has also begun rebuilding forest guard houses that were burned down, facilities at Elonda Camp (the staff, visitor, and research center), and bonobo platforms and structures on Totaka Island, where bonobos quarantine before moving to Ekolo to live fully wild.

ABOVE: Rebuilt structure at Elonda camp



OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP: New female guard, Alpha Wutedji with patrol team; Patrol team entering forest

ABOVE: LEFT TO RIGHT: Fanny Minesi & advisor Maitre Mukeng meeting with DRC Minister of the Environment Eve Bazaiba and a deputy; Forest guards at judicial training completion ceremony



You improved communication and grew environmental education

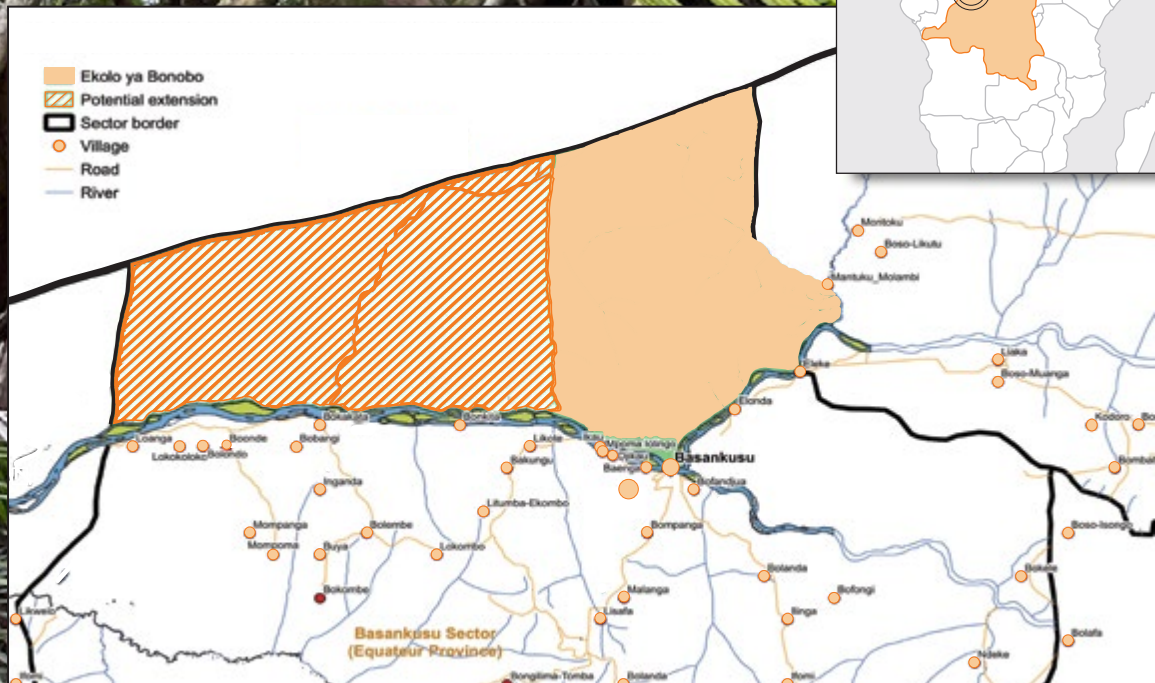
To prevent serious conflicts in the future, we needed to increase regular communication and raise awareness in the areas around Ekolo. You're making that happen!

- Thirty-one shows on the three local radio stations.
- On some shows, Baenga and Lisafa communities members discussed their role in the project.
- Other broadcasts covered how to avoid human-bonobo encounters, legal and illegal fishing techniques, and endangered species protections.
- Local communities, ABC staff, and provincial authorities held many meetings to air concerns and develop joint solutions.
- ABC had frequent dialogue with national environmental authorities and media in DR Congo.

Thanks to your understanding and support, we're optimistic about the future of Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve!

Because of you, Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve is poised to double in size!

Efforts to expand Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve made significant progress over the last year, thanks to leadership gifts from the Rainforest Trust and support from conservationists like you.



With your help, the 120,000-acre protected rainforest in Équateur Province is growing to 250,000+ acres—an area **17 times the size of Manhattan!**



Local communities with traditional rights of access to the forest and its resources are full participants in the expansion project. Through a lengthy process, Les Amis des Bonobos du Congo (ABC) is seeking their **full, prior, and informed consent** (FPIC) for the reserve expansion.

ABC held a series of meetings with more than 130 individuals in 29 villages to discuss the project's scope, the rationale behind it, and how forest uses may be restricted when additional acreage is set aside for the protection of wildlife and natural resources. ABC also sought to hear local residents' ideas for development projects that will benefit them in return for their conservation efforts.

Following these discussions, more than 100 Bokakata community members, along with the Basankusu Territorial Administrator, met to give initial approval to move forward. Leaders from each community signed the agreement, and preliminary maps of each community's forest boundaries were drawn.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Ekolo reserve expansion area shaded in orange; inset: location of Ekolo within DRC

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: A Bokakata community meeting; Chief of group Lilangi signs expansion consent form; Forest survey teams departing; debrief meeting of all five Bokakata communities at the Catholic Mission

You're enhancing our understanding of forest resources

Your support ensures that the needs of local people are part of the planning process. To learn how local people use the forest and how the reserve expansion may affect their livelihoods, ABC conducted several surveys, hiring 18 local residents to assist.

A socioeconomic survey and a study of non-timber forest products examined how people rely on the forest for their livelihoods. The surveys found gender, community, and age differences in local people's reliance on forest resources. For example, youth are more involved in timber and charcoal production; and both men and women fish but at different times of the year and using different methods. For all, the collection of forest products such as caterpillars is an important source of income and food.

The non-timber forest products study is being supported by the European Union and the Organization of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States through the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Program. The vital information being collected will guide future participatory management of the reserve.

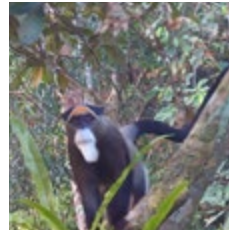
You Protect Bonobos and So Much More!

Biodiversity research in Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve is revealing exciting discoveries, ***all thanks to you!*** The findings attest to the reserve's great ecological value and strengthen our efforts to protect it.

One of the most exciting discoveries is the presence of two tree-dwelling pangolin species: the endangered white-bellied pangolin and the vulnerable black-bellied pangolin.

Wolf's monkey, a species classified as near threatened and declining, has also been spotted. Other more common species seen on camera were De Brazza's monkey, the African palm civet, Allen's swamp monkey, the Central African oyan, and numerous rodents, bats, and shrews.

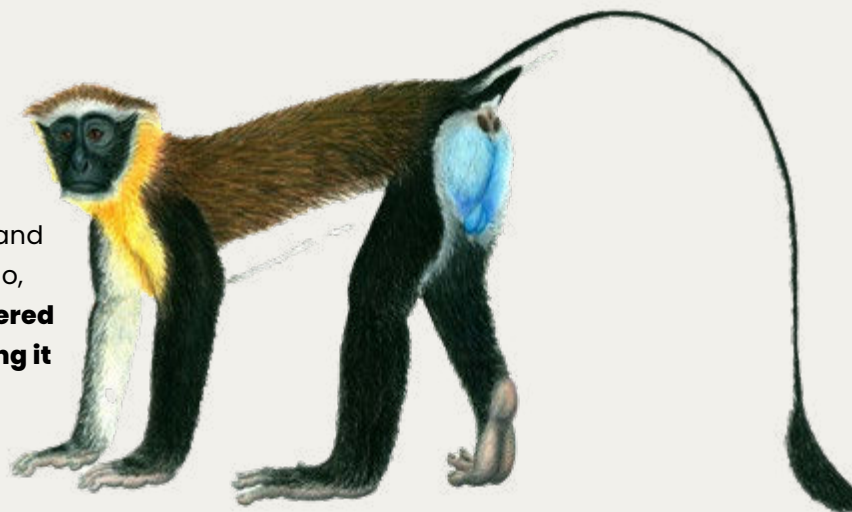
Although the study focuses on mammals, nearly 80 bird species have also been recorded! Notably, four species appear to be the first records for Équateur Province, and several—including hornbills, which are important seed dispersers—are declining throughout their range.



Seeking an Elusive Monkey

Daniel Alempijevic, Ph.D., hopes to learn if the **Dryas monkey** lives in the reserve. This colorful monkey has a vivid blue rump and white, brown, and yellow-orange fur. It has not yet been seen in Ekolo, but the habitat is right. **The range of this endangered Congo Basin primate is poorly known, and finding it in Ekolo would be a significant discovery!**

RIGHT: Sketch of Dryas monkey by Daniel Alempijevic





Hewitola hewitsonioides
lands on Jérémie Boteko

Citizen Science

We are also learning about the smaller inhabitants of Ekolo. The team created an online iNaturalist project — Fauna of the Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve — where frogs, lizards, insects, and other animals that the team encounters in the forest are posted publicly and can be identified by experts or citizen scientists.

So far, 51 species have been identified through this project, including the first-ever live record of the *Hewitola hewitsonioides* butterfly, shown here on ABC staff member Jérémie Boteko!

SCAN to explore the Ekolo I-Naturalist project!



CAMERA TRAP IMAGES ON OPPOSITE PAGE,
FROM TOP LEFT: De Brazza's monkey, wolf's
monkey, black-bellied pangolin, hornbill

You Supported the Research Team

Conservation scientist Daniel Alempijevic, Ph.D., is leading the study with lead funding from the Rainforest Trust and additional support from Re:wild and you, our incredible supporters!

A goal of community-based conservation is to ensure that local residents benefit from their commitment to conservation. Providing jobs is one way to do that.

You made it possible to hire local residents to support the field research.

The team installed 50 motion-activated camera traps in various areas of the reserve, with about half placed high in the tree canopy, and the remainder in dense undergrowth.

There is little firm ground in the swamp forest, making conducting research difficult. ABC trackers' and guards' climbing skills and specific knowledge of the reserve were key to the successful installation of the camera traps.

More than 2,000 videos were analyzed so far, revealing 17 identifiable mammals.

Because of your support, the team was able to place a second set of 64 camera traps in different areas of the reserve in 2024. These cameras may reveal even more species you are protecting at Ekolo!



Daniel Alempijevic with members of the ABC research team conducting Ekolo canopy research

Tusk AWARD

Fanny Minesi Wins Major Conservation Award

Fanny Minesi, general director of Les Amis des Bonobos du Congo (ABC), was selected for a prestigious honor in 2023—the Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa. The award recognizes her achievements and leadership in community-based bonobo conservation and her work to ensure a brighter future for the DRC’s wildlife and people.

Prince William, Royal Patron of Tusk Trust, presented conservation awards to Fanny and other recipients at a gala event in London in September. Fanny’s honor includes a three-year grant and ongoing support from the Tusk’s network of former award winners. Based in the UK, Tusk is dedicated to accelerating the impact of African-driven conservation. Since the award series began, Tusk has honored 55 conservation leaders from 20 countries.



Covered in *People Magazine*

Minesi’s award-winning work—fighting against bonobo poaching and extinction and for rainforest conservation and protection—was highlighted in a video shown at the gala event and was covered over 20 times by various media, including features in the *Daily Mail*, *The Independent*, and *People* magazine.

Prince William’s Instagram post about the Tusk Awards garnered over 60,000 likes, bringing significant attention to our cause.

“The Congo Basin forests are the second lung of the earth. They store billions of tons of carbon and are a linchpin in global climate stability,” Minesi told *People*.

“And bonobos are the ‘gardeners of the forest.’ They eat lots of fruits and vegetables, distribute the seeds, and help to generate new tree growth. The health of these forests is important to everyone, no matter where you live.”

LEFT TO RIGHT: Fanny talking with local residents near Ekolo; Fanny celebrating her award



Fanny Minesi, A Leader in Community-Based Conservation

In 2023, Fanny Minesi had the opportunity to present her approach to community-managed conservation during three significant events in Kinshasa, reaching broad audiences of conservation actors. At the request of the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN), part of the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, ABC organized a March 21 workshop on community reserves. This was an important recognition of ABC's pioneering role in establishing Ekolo ya Bonobo as a community-managed Protected Area, a model the ICCN is interested in replicating.

ICCN also invited Fanny to participate in a workshop on April 25 led by USAID and ICCN on the findings of their evaluation of Protected Area management in Central Africa. Fanny was able to promote her vision of community-based conservation that benefits both biodiversity and people.

Finally, Fanny was invited to present during a "national dialogue" about the role and rights of communities and Indigenous people in biodiversity protection. The DRC is exploring

multiple approaches to its goal of ensuring that at least 30% of its terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine areas are effectively conserved by 2030.

The event was sponsored by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), other international agencies, and the DRC Ministry of Environment. Following the conference, 17 IUCN participants visited Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary, further cementing the significance of ABC's work.



Education & AWARENESS



You improved awareness in areas plagued by poaching

Education is a cornerstone of our strategy to protect bonobos and their habitat — just as it has been for more than 25 years.

The bonobo's endangered and protected status is not widely known in many impoverished and remote provinces of the DRC, or even in the capital, Kinshasa.

Our educators presented programs at schools, churches, and village meetings in the communities around Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve in Équateur Province. They also traveled to

communities around Salonga and Lomami National Parks and Sankuru Nature Reserve (in Tshuapa and Sankuru provinces), all regions where bonobos are found.

Thanks to you, we reached more than 32,000 people with awareness programs near bonobo habitat last year!

Key activities

Anti-Poaching Workshops: Engaged local authorities, security forces, environmental protection officials, traditional and religious leaders, and other representatives of civil society.

School Sessions: Supported with visual materials, games, and songs to improve message retention. Topics included the four great apes, bonobos as an endemic species unique to the DRC, the forest and its inhabitants, and legal protections.

Community Outreach: Ongoing negotiations with the Bokakata community about expanding the reserve to include their traditional forest created an opportunity to conduct community awareness activities in these new villages. Residents showed great interest in learning more about bonobos, their behavior, and their habitat, as well as the laws that protect them.



LEFT: Arsène Mfuni leads a school tour at Lola

ABOVE: At the ABC education center in Basankusu, near the Ekolo reserve

Radio

A Key Awareness Tool



A radio program
about Ekolo in Basankusu

In remote areas of the DRC where TV and internet access is spotty or non-existent, local radio stations play a crucial role in circulating news and information.

You made 51 radio broadcasts possible!

Some topics covered in the broadcasts:

- How to avoid human-bonobo encounters
- Legal and illegal fishing techniques
- Protected species such as hippos that share Ekolo with bonobos
- Local community members (Baenga and Lisafa) discussing their partnership roles in Ekola ya Bonobo
- The inauguration of the new primary school wing that you helped make happen!
- Progress made by the Conflict Resolution Committee following last year's security issues

You Made So Much Happen!

Because of you, thousands of people received critical information about bonobos, Congo's wildlife, biodiversity conservation, and the penalties for poaching.

4,890

Villagers reached in
awareness sessions

5,076

Travelers reached around Ekolo ya Bonobo
Community Reserve by the Lokole team

77

Schools visited

90

Awareness sessions

502

Teachers reached

12,540

Students reached



Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary

A local & global environmental education center



Thanks to you, 12,000 people toured Lola ya Bonobo to see bonobos firsthand or took part in educational programs in Kinshasa last year!

Sanctuary visitors included schools who make Lola ya Bonobo a regular part of their curriculum and tourists from within the DRC, Europe, and beyond. Educators also go beyond the sanctuary grounds to reach DRC government officials and dignitaries from other nations.



More education highlights, all made possible by you!

Traditional chiefs: ABC invited leaders from several provinces to the sanctuary to strengthen the awareness-raising network in the interior of the country.

Science and Technology Week: Lola educators reached more than 875 students and their teachers from 21 Kinshasa schools during a multi-day science fair in Kinshasa.

World Tourism Day: At a conference in Kinshasa, ABC shared its experience in ecotourism and bonobo conservation with authorities and government officials in DRC's conservation and tourism sectors.

International delegations: High-profile visitors to Lola included European Union election observers, family members of former French President Sarkozy and ambassadors from Canada, Spain, and China. They learned about bonobos and our efforts to protect them, and the importance of the Congo rainforest to global climate stability.



TOP TO BOTTOM: Provincial chiefs visit Lola; Suzy Kwetuenda (red shirt) speaks at Science Week; Arsène Mfuni speaks at Science Week; EU election observation delegation visits Lola; Chinese Ambassador to the DRC and his wife with Marcel Mpalanga

Community DEVELOPMENT



You helped bonobos and Congolese people

Conservation isn't only about wildlife and wild spaces—it's also about the people who share the same habitat. Local communities are essential partners in our effort to develop lasting solutions to bonobo endangerment. We believe that when a community thrives, the environment and bonobos can too. That's why Ekolo ya Bonobo has been a community-based reserve from the very beginning.

The people living near Ekolo experience severe poverty. They struggle to feed their families, educate their children, and access medical care. In return for their commitment to conserving their traditional forestlands and protecting biodiversity, they need to see their own lives improve.



Your support makes a difference in the lives of local residents

DRC is among
the **five poorest
nations** in the
world.

About **74.6%** of
Congolese people
**live on less than
\$2.15 a day.**

Almost **half the
deaths** of children
under 5 are due to
malnutrition.

LEFT: Students in new wing of Baenga school built by ABC **ABOVE:** Patients wait for dental visit

You gave children a **new school wing**

For the Baenga community, an Ekolo Reserve partner, an important priority was to expand, repair, and upgrade their school.

You provided new buildings, classrooms, desks, and chalkboards for 200 children!

Construction began in 2022 and was completed in 2023. Six new classrooms were built from durable materials—bricks and vented metal roofs—rather than traditional thatch roofs that must be regularly replaced.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: A teacher and student in the Baenga School; the completed school wing; ABC staff speak with construction supervisor between old and new buildings; an earlier phase of construction

You provided health care

You gave exams, dental care tips, and, when needed, extractions and medications to 128 local people.

Even the most basic dental care is unavailable in the communities near Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve. Last year, you brought two dentists to provide consultations and care to local residents, most of whom have never seen a dentist.

You also provided solar panels to power lights and a refrigerator used to store vaccines for a health center (previously built by you—our amazing supporters!).

You supported livelihoods

With your support, local people were hired and trained for jobs in and around Ekolo ya Bonobo:

- **Forest guards and bonobo trackers**
- **Logistics support**
- **Conducting biodiversity surveys in the forest**
- **Conducting socio-economic surveys among villagers**

At Lola ya Bonobo, local residents fill almost every position at the sanctuary, from veterinarians to site maintenance workers, visitor liaisons, bonobo caretakers, and educators.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Dr. Pina Ponziani and Dr. Bruno Abehassera prepare the dental tools; Dr. Abehassera with patient; New trackers get training on field equipment; A patrol team on pirogue

A young male bonobo rests on a log, seemingly lost in thought. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green forest. The foreground shows a body of water with lily pads and a small, dark, pointed object (possibly a seed pod) floating on the surface.

Reflections

A young male bonobo rests on a log, seemingly lost in thought.

This powerful photo by Leon Haberkorn reminds us of our deep kinship with bonobos. Such images reveal bonobos' joy, kindness, athleticism, intelligence, and love. They delight us and inspire empathy and compassion.

We're grateful to the following photographers for sharing their work in this report: Arcus Foundation, Daniel Alempijevic, Guylain Balume Mahindo/ Tusk Foundation, Raphael Belais, Zanna Clay, Papy Ithambala, Suzy Kwetuenda, Justin Makangara, Jonas Mukamba, Lisa Murray, Franck Petit, Grain Media, and Lara Zanutto.



Friends of BONOBOS



You're Growing Bonobos' Presence Online

\$97,000

Google Ad Grant
(for search advertising)

1 million

Total YouTube views (all time)

176,000

Combined social media
audience (+26,668)

536

Online store items
sold (3x the
previous year)

2x

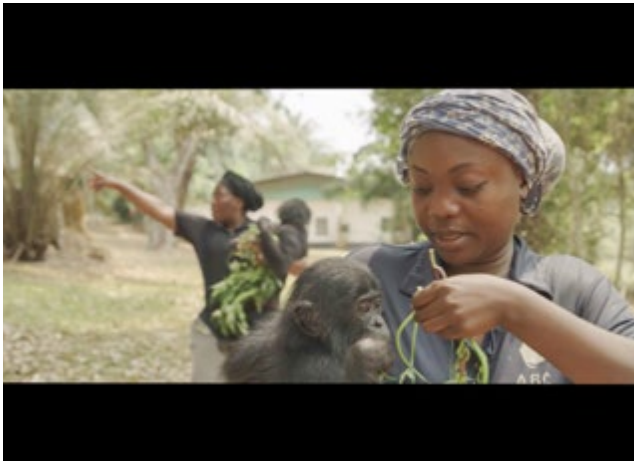
New email
subscribers
(vs. 2022)

10,291

New website
visitors
(+23%)

You're Raising the Profile of Bonobos Around the World

Because of your support, we continued to raise global awareness about bonobos in 2023 by engaging in high-profile media projects, expanding our digital communications, and forming impactful collaborations.



In-depth Documentary in Progress

We are excited about a film project that has been in the works and under wraps for almost two years!

Grain Media, an award-winning, London-based production company, is creating a feature-length observational documentary about bonobos and the heroic team at Lola ya Bonobo and Ekolo ya Bonobo. The documentary will explore the threats to bonobo survival and the comprehensive conservation efforts led by Les Amis des Bonobos du Congo (ABC).

Grain won an Emmy and an Academy Award nomination for *Virunga*, their documentary on the national park that protects Congo's gorillas. Their other Academy Award-winning films include *Learning to Skateboard in a War Zone* and *White Helmets*.

Grain produced a sizzle reel about ABC in late 2022, secured funding in 2023, and began filming at Lola and Ekolo in the summer of 2024. The film's release is anticipated in 2026.

Innovative Nature Series – *Queens*

An innovative natural history series on matriarchal animals titled *Queens* was partly filmed at Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary in 2022 for release in 2024. Narrated by award-winning actress Angela Bassett (*Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*), *Queens* aired on National Geographic, Disney+ and Hulu in March 2024.

One episode focuses on compelling behind-the-scenes stories: those of the groundbreaking women-led production team and the resilient women working to save these animals from extinction. **Lola ya Bonobo surrogate mother Peggy Kiadi and Suzy Kwetuenda, sanctuary visitor manager, were featured in the episode.**

German TV Show – *Galileo*

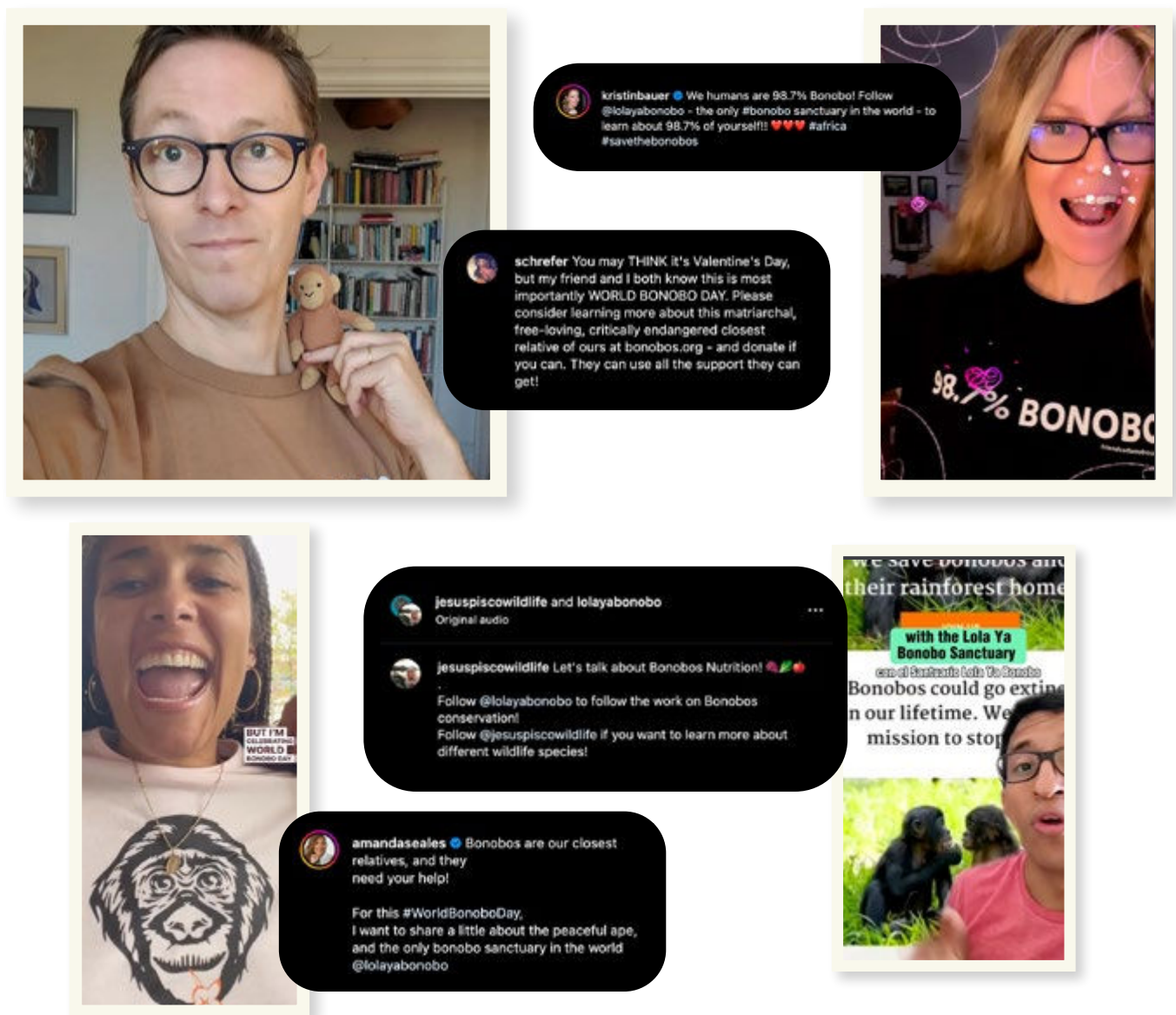
Lola ya Bonobo was featured on *Galileo*, a long-running German science and entertainment TV show with millions of viewers. The segment showcased Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary, with their reporter participating in bonobo food preparation and feeding.

LEFT: Production on *Galileo* **ABOVE:** A scene from the in-progress Grain Media documentary

Influencer Collaborations

For **World Bonobo Day** we collaborated with influencers such as comedian **Amanda Seales**, author **Eliot Shrefer**, actress **Kristin Bauer**, and **Celine Semaan** of Slow Factory. We also brought bonobos to a Spanish-speaking audience through an Instagram collaboration with Peruvian wildlife nutritionist, **Jesús Pisco**. These influencers' collective reach of over 3 million followers significantly boosted our bonobo awareness campaign.

Additionally, Friends of Bonobos was **featured in Slow Factory's "Planet Justice" textbook** as part of New York Live Arts' 2023 Live Ideas Festival. The textbook is a compilation of interviews, essays, and poems on the theme of the festival, Planet Justice. Our multi-page spread focused on bonobo matriarchy and the surrogate mothers of Lola Ya Bonobo.



Institutional Partners

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our 2023–2024 supporters, who include all the generous institutional partners shown here. You support the critical on-the-ground work of Les Amis des Bonobos du Congo (ABC), as well as the sister organizations that raise funds and awareness internationally about bonobos, their plight, and ABC’s critical efforts to save and protect them.

Friends of Bonobos (FOB) collaborates with Les Amis des Bonobos en Europe (ABE) and Les Amis des Bonobos en Belgique (ABB) to jointly support ABC’s work at Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary, Ekolo ya Bonobo Community Reserve, and across the Congo.

A Kinder World Foundation

Annenberg Foundation

Apenheul (ABE)

Arcus Foundation

Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation

Beauval Nature (ABE)

Biodiversity & Protected Areas Management
Programme (BIOPAMA) (ABC)

Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

Columbus Zoo & Aquarium

Fondation 30 Millions d’Amis (ABE)

Fondation Brigitte Bardot (ABE)

Generation Foundation

Humane Society International (HSI)

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens

King Baudouin Foundation (ABC)

Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation

Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA) (FOB/ABC)

Rainforest Trust (ABC)

Re:wild

Saola Shoes

Société d’Encouragement pour la Conservation
des Animaux Sauvages (SECAS) (ABE)

Société Nationale Pour la Défense des Animaux
(SNDA) (ABE)

Stiftung Mensch und Tier

Sunrise Foods LLC

The Perfect World Foundation

Tusk Trust

Twycross Zoo

Wilhelma Zoo & Botanical Garden

Wittcoff Foundation

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (ABC)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Eliot Schrefer, Kristin Bauer, Jesus Pisco, Amanda Seales

Friends of Bonobos

Profits and Loss (January–December)

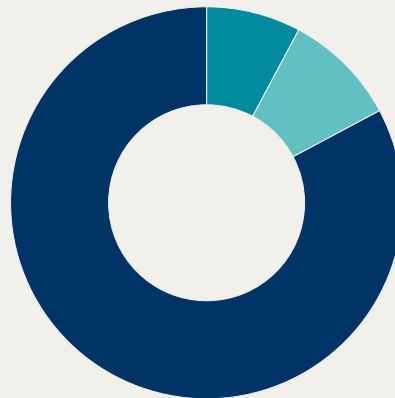
Expenses

83%

Programs

\$1,343,800

- Global Education & Awareness
\$292,500
- DRC Program: Grants made to ABC
\$952,000
- Technical Services (In-Kind)
\$99,300



8%

Admin

\$126,500

9%

Fundraising

\$152,700

Total: \$1,623,000

Income

56%

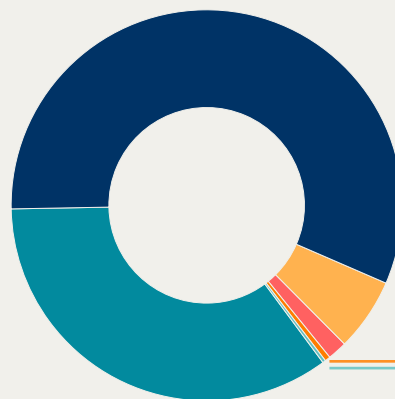
Individuals & Foundations

\$935,000

34%

Grants

\$573,600



6%

Donated Goods & Services (In-Kind)

\$99,300

2%

Corporate Contributions

\$26,600

1%

Gross Sales (Inventory)

\$7,400

1%

Other

\$4,100

Total: \$1,646,000

OPPOSITE PAGE: Ikoto with bottle





Outstanding Reputation

Friends of Bonobos received perfect scores on **Charity Navigator, Great Nonprofits, and Candid**. These accolades highlight our commitment to transparency, fiscal accountability, and impactful work in conserving bonobos and their habitat.



A perk for monthly donors

Ecoflix: Nonprofit Nature Streaming Channel

Thanks to the generosity of Ecoflix, Friends of Bonobos is now offering a special perk to members of The Fellowship, our community of monthly donors. Ecoflix is the first not-for-profit streaming channel with a mission to save wildlife and protect our planet. All monthly donors to Friends of Bonobos can choose to subscribe to the channel at no charge for one year.

With Ecoflix, you can enjoy engaging nature and wildlife content from around the world, including wildlife TV shows, documentaries, and podcasts while also contributing to the well-being of bonobos! Contact us at info@friendsofbonobos.org for more information.

Get Involved

Ways to Give

There are many ways to support Friends of Bonobos. To learn more or to make a donation, please visit [**bonobos.org/morewaystogive**](https://bonobos.org/morewaystogive)

Donate online at [**bonobos.org/donate**](https://bonobos.org/donate)

For wire transfers, please email us at [**info@friendsofbonobos.org**](mailto:info@friendsofbonobos.org)

Call or text us for help at **+1 919 717 9572**

By mail: **Friends of Bonobos**

P.O. Box 2652

Durham, NC 27715-2652

SCAN TO GIVE



Donations are tax-deductible. Friends of Bonobos also accepts gifts in the form of securities, including stock, bonds, and mutual funds.

We also accept direct donations of 80+ cryptocurrencies, including Bitcoin and Ethereum, through our secure donation portal powered by The Giving Block. To access our crypto donation page, go to [**bonobos.org/crypto**](https://bonobos.org/crypto)

Fundraise

Become a Bonobo Champ by starting your own fundraising campaign to support Friends of Bonobos. You can make a difference by running a race, donating your birthday, or hosting a dinner party—the options are endless! [**savebonobos.org/champs**](https://savebonobos.org/champs)

Join the Fellowship

Give monthly and become part of the Fellowship, a passionate community invested in saving bonobos for the long haul. [**bonobos.org/donate-monthly**](https://bonobos.org/donate-monthly)

Leave a Legacy

Help the next generation of bonobos with your IRA, retirement plan, life insurance policy, or annuity. Visit [**bonobos.org/morewaystogive**](https://bonobos.org/morewaystogive) for more information or contact our team at [**info@friendsofbonobos.org**](mailto:info@friendsofbonobos.org) to indicate that you have already included Friends of Bonobos in your estate plans.

Connect

Don't miss videos from the bonobo nursery! Sign up to receive our emails at [**bonobos.org/bonobos-email-signup**](https://bonobos.org/bonobos-email-signup)

Educate the Next Generation

Our interactive Kids page has fun, free content for all ages! Teach the next generation of leaders more about bonobos, watch videos, sign the pledge to become a bonobo friend, and download our coloring book at [**bonobos.org/kids**](https://bonobos.org/kids)

Join the Conversation



[**@lola_ya_bonobo**](https://twitter.com/lola_ya_bonobo)



[**@lolayabonobo**](https://www.instagram.com/lolayabonobo)



[**@lolayabonobo**](https://www.facebook.com/lolayabonobo)



[**@friendsofbonobos**](https://www.linkedin.com/company/friendsofbonobos)



[**@friendsofbonobos**](https://www.tiktok.com/@friendsofbonobos)

OPPOSITE PAGE: Ikoto **BACK COVER:** Opala



**FRIENDS OF
BONOBOS**

Friends of Bonobos

P.O. Box 2652
Durham, NC 27715
United States

+1 919 717 9572
info@friendsofbonobos.org
friendsofbonobos.org

Friends of Bonobos is a U.S. tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supporting the work of Les Amis des Bonobos du Congo (ABC). Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

EIN: 20-0347301

Thank you Miel Creative, a 1% for the Planet partner, for your in-kind work on our 2023 Annual Reports.