



## Bonobo Conservation Initiative

**Our Mission is to protect bonobos (*Pan paniscus*), preserve their tropical rainforest habitat, and empower local communities in the Congo Basin.** With our partners in the Congo, the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) is leading efforts to safeguard bonobos and the vital rainforest in which they live. Through cooperative conservation and sustainable community development programs, we are creating solutions that benefit bonobos and people alike.

# The Challenges

- The bonobo, one of humankind's closest great ape relatives, 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.



## Bonobos OUR CLOSEST PRIMATE COUSINS



Bonobos are one of humankind's closest living primate relatives, sharing more than 98% of our DNA, 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.

Of all the great apes, bonobos most closely resemble humans. They walk upright more easily and more often, and their slender bodies have more human proportions.

However, 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. 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. Among bonobos, harmonious coexistence is the norm.

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

The greatest threats to bonobos are hunting and habitat destruction. Recent surveys have confirmed bonobos in several regions, though the remoteness of their habitat makes it difficult to obtain reliable population numbers. **Estimates range from 10,000 to 20,000 bonobos left in the wild—but what is clear is that the population, small to begin with, is fragmented and decreasing.**

**Left:** BCI President Sally Cox rallies reporters after rescuing an orphan bonobo whose mother was killed by poachers.

**Top:** The future of bonobos is brighter, thanks to the establishment of the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve. Harboring more than 1,800 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 contains the second largest rainforest on Earth. More than half of Africa's wild plant and animal species live in the Congo forest.

The rainforest sequesters carbon, produces oxygen, and regulates rainfall and weather patterns. It also benefits people around the world by providing a wide variety of foods, products, and life-saving medicines.

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



**1:** Bonobos only have offspring every four to five years. A safe and stable forest protects the bonobos' fragile population.

**2:** Renowned herpetologist Arne Schiøtz, journalist Paul Raffaele, and BCI Executive Director Michael Hurley rescue a rare dwarf crocodile on the Maringa River.

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

**4:** 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.

- Preserving rainforest habitat
- Protecting bonobos and biodiversity
- Empowering the Congolese people

# Our Work



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## Saving Rainforest, Protecting Habitat

Bonobos inhabit the heart of the Congo Basin rainforest, an area of critical importance to all life on Earth.

BCI has successfully motivated communities and the DRC national government to preserve vital tracts of rainforest. Working together, we have established eleven active conservation sites so far, leading to the creation of two official protected areas:

**Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve:** The keystone for the Bonobo Peace Forest, this innovative community-managed reserve covers 1,847 square miles (4,875 km<sup>2</sup>) and harbors more than 1,800 bonobos. Kokolopori is one of the only sites where bonobos are habituated to human presence, and can be viewed

and studied daily. Initiated and managed by local partner Vie Sauvage, the reserve benefits the community with sustainable development programs, educational opportunities, and health care.

**Sankuru Nature Reserve:** Encompassing 11,803 square miles (30,570 km<sup>2</sup>) of rainforest, this reserve is a boon for bonobos and for the planet's well-being. Larger than the state of Massachusetts or the country of Belgium, it is the world's biggest continuous protected area for great apes—and the first large-scale community managed protected area in the DRC.

BCI has forged partnerships and initiated conservation programs throughout a large

portion of the bonobo habitat. Leaders from each Peace Forest site have joined together to form the Coalition for Community Conservation of Bonobos (CCCB). This dynamic coalition provides a network for information sharing, collaboration, and improving local governance, while giving indigenous Congolese leaders a voice in policy matters.

In addition, BCI works to protect habitat by converting unexploited logging concessions to conservation concessions, and by reforesting degraded areas.

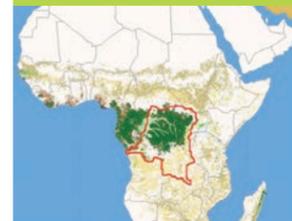
**Top:** A bonobo gazes thoughtfully while relaxing on a tree in the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve.



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## Our Vision THE BONOBO PEACE FOREST

Our guiding vision is the Bonobo Peace Forest (BPF): a connected network of community-based reserves and conservation concessions, supported by sustainable development. The Peace Forest provides protection for bonobos and other species in the Congo rainforest, while at the same time ensuring a better life for the people who share this precious land. This project is endorsed by communities in the bonobo range, the government of the DRC, UNESCO, and others. We named this network the Bonobo Peace Forest in honor of the peaceful, cooperative society of bonobos. DRC 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.



Today, the BPF contains 11 active sites and covers nearly 19,000 square miles (50,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of land. We are well on our way to making this vision a reality.



Not only is the Bonobo Peace Forest growing, it's self-replicating! Several communities, inspired by Kokolopori, have elected to protect bonobos and start their own nature reserves.

## Protecting Bonobos & Biodiversity

With local conservation partners and leading scientists of the Congolese Center for Research in Ecology and Forestry, BCI has:

- Discovered or confirmed the existence of bonobos in 14 strategic regions
- Rescued more than 20 orphan bonobos whose mothers were killed by poachers
- Implemented more than 25 research expeditions
- Gained local agreements to protect bonobos at key sites, leading to the creation of two legally protected nature reserves to date, spanning 13,650 square miles (35,435 km<sup>2</sup>)—an area larger than the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined!
- Trained and equipped 15 bonobo monitoring teams to date
- Habituated bonobo groups at several sites, providing opportunities for research and ecotourism



Although some ethnic groups have traditionally protected bonobos, hunting for the commercial bushmeat trade is an omnipresent danger. BCI works to thwart illegal hunting by promoting law enforcement and by providing communities with alternative livelihood opportunities.

Raising awareness about bonobos is another key component to ensuring their protection. One of our most successful efforts is the production of radio spots and songs with popular Congolese musicians. These have had a far-reaching and resounding impact. We are now in the process of expanding these efforts with a new range-wide, collaborative awareness campaign.

BCI also works to protect all biodiversity in the bonobo habitat, including other endangered species. We are supporting the first field studies of the rare Salongo monkey and our surveys in the Kasai province were the first to discover okapi living south of the Congo River.

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

# Building Capacity, Empowering Communities



The people who share the rainforest are the bonobos' best protectors. Working together with indigenous communities, we are finding cost-effective and sustainable ways to enable sound local stewardship of the Congo's precious natural resources.

- BCI trains Congolese scientists, eco-guards, and conservationists in survey methods, participatory mapping techniques, information technology, and monitoring protocols.
- BCI provides scholarships for students to study conservation biology and protected area management, so that they can become skilled leaders and educate others in turn.
- Along with Congolese partner Vie Sauvage, BCI founded the Djolu Technical College for Conservation and Rural Development. The only institute of higher learning within a 40,000 square mile radius, the college offers bright, motivated people in this remote region the opportunity to take the lead in local conservation. The college received official accreditation in 2012.
- 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 economic alternatives to the destructive bushmeat trade. BCI's livelihood initiatives include:
  - ▶ micro-credit programs, particularly for women
  - ▶ conservation enterprise, working with local cooperatives
  - ▶ sustainable agriculture, which improves yields and reduces impact on the forest
  - ▶ establishment of medical clinics to serve local communities
  - ▶ infrastructure support (communications, transport, and tools)
  - ▶ education and awareness campaigns
  - ▶ pilot eco-tourism programs



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

2: Our Bonobo Health Clinic provides vital health care for the 25 villages in Kokolopori, delivering lifesaving services to the residents of this impoverished region.

3: Vie Sauvage founder Albert Lokasola proudly displays Djolu Technical College's new facility.

4: In partnership, we are building a brighter future for the next generation of Congolese leaders.

# The Bonobo's Neighbors

## THE PEOPLE OF THE CONGO BASIN RAINFOREST

For centuries, the people of the 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 demolishing the already fragile infrastructure for transportation, communication, healthcare, and education. 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.



## Rescuing Bonobos

One of the most heartbreaking consequences of the illegal bushmeat trade is the orphans. Too small to be killed for meat, they are put on the black market for sale as pets or they are left to die alone. The orphans lucky enough to survive are often in need of serious medical care; severe dehydration, malnourishment, and grievous injuries from hunters' snares are common. BCI and our Congolese partners have rescued many orphans and ensured their safe delivery to Lola Ya Bonobo, the bonobo sanctuary in Kinshasa. We are hopeful that as our conservation, education, and enforcement programs expand, there will be fewer orphans to rescue.



1: After being rescued by BCI, orphan bonobo Lili reaches out to a new friend. Lili is now living happily with other bonobos, safe at the sanctuary near Kinshasa.

2: Baby Waola lost her right hand in a hunter's snare. BCI trackers and eco-guards work daily to remove traps and make the forest safer for bonobos.

3: Orphan Iboko serves as a bonobo ambassador to the police force of Equateur province. The police are now working with BCI to actively enforce laws against hunting bonobos and other endangered species.

# 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). Dedicated to the protection 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 Center

for Research in Ecology and Forestry (CREF), Vie Sauvage (VS) and others, BCI has achieved outstanding results with limited resources. BCI supports over 200 Congolese conservation workers and has provided training, equipment, and funding to over a dozen Congolese non-profit organizations 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 website at [www.bonobo.org](http://www.bonobo.org).

**Thank you sincerely for your support.**



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

