

BONOBO



FACTS

Bonobos and chimpanzees look very similar and both share 98.7% of their DNA with humans—making the two species our closest living relatives. Bonobos are usually a bit smaller, leaner and darker than chimpanzees. Their society is also different—bonobo groups tend to be more peaceful and are led by females. They also maintain relationships and settle conflicts through sex. However, bonobo life isn't entirely violence free; if two groups of bonobos come together, they may engage in serious fighting.

Wild bonobos can only be found in forests south of the Congo River in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Sometimes known as the pygmy chimpanzee, bonobos weren't recognized as a separate species until 1929. As the last great ape to be scientifically described, much remains unknown about the bonobo—including the extent of its geographic range. Efforts to survey the species over the past two decades have been hampered by the remote nature of its habitat, the patchiness of their distribution and years of civil unrest within the DRC.

Civil unrest and increasing poverty in the area around the bonobos' forests have contributed to bonobo poaching and deforestation. Though the size of the bonobo population is largely unknown, it has likely been declining for the last 30 years. Scientists believe that the decline will continue for the next 45 to 55 years due to the bonobo's low reproductive rate and growing threats.

WHY THEY MATTER

Bonobos share 98.7% of their genetic code with humans, making them, along with chimpanzees, our closest living relatives. As the last great ape to be scientifically discovered, much still remains unknown about the bonobo.

THREATS

Civil unrest in the region around the bonobo's home territory has led to many bonobo deaths, as gangs of poachers have been free to invade Salonga National Park, one of few protected areas for bonobos. In addition, unrest has made modern weaponry and ammunition more available, enabling hunting, and the military has at times sanctioned the hunting and killing of bonobos.

PROTECTION

To combat the rampant problem of poaching, WWF has provided training, improved transportation, and communication and other field equipment for antipoaching units in Salonga National Park and helps the Congolese Wildlife Authority (ICCN) to establish sustainable funding for antipoaching activities in the park.

All information comes directly from the World Wildlife Fund Website

