

## DRCongo/Lukuru Trip Report August-October 2001

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As you can see, I have now returned to my office after another adventure in the Congo. I am sending this message to a mass mailing because I have received so many inquiries, messages of interest, notes of concern, and requests for a trip report. It is easier to respond to everyone in unison. My mailing master-list for the Congo/Lukuru interest group is now nearly 350 addressees of different groups, organizations, and individuals from around the world. So, with regard for time and space I will limit this report to only the highlights of my most recent foray and hope that some of you can benefit from my experiences. In preparing this report I have made every effort to ensure credibility, however in the unrecognized event of errors or omissions within, I take full responsibility. It is noteworthy to mention that this undertaking marks **the first return of an outsider (a western researcher) to a long-term field site within the bonobo range of occupation ... a real victory for conservation!** This mission was achieved through funding from the Columbus Zoo, Conservation International, and the Lukuru Wildlife Research Project (LWRP).

I thought I would lead off this report by restating the circumstances under which I began the journey and providing some context. The Lukuru (LWRP area) is Zone Dekese, Province Kasai Occidental, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It lies at the very center of the country and is the site of my fieldwork studying wild bonobos since 1992. 20 percent of Parc Nationale de la Salonga (PNS) falls within the scope of the Lukuru project area; the greater portion of Secteur Sud (SS, the south block) is incorporated as the northern locality of the LWRP. Through the years, LWRP efforts have focused on the region south of latitude 2 degrees within the bonobo range.

The system of recognized national parks and protected areas are the stronghold for critical species survival and key habitat preservation. Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) is responsible for the management of all national parks and protected areas in the DRC. Interrupted by insecurity and occupation from armed groups in 1997-1998, the task for ICCN in PNS-SS became impossible. As a result, important wildlife populations have been decimated. Nationally, the highly at-risk populations of Bonobos (in the center of the country) and Grauer's Gorillas (in the east) face the most severe threat.

PNS (established 30 November 1970 by Ordinance 70-318; inscribed on the UNESCO World Natural Heritage List in 1984 and List of World Heritage Sites in Danger in 1999) is the largest rain forest national park in the **world** and the only federally protected reserve within bonobo habitat. It represents the largest potential area of protection for bonobos. The bonobos very confined occupancy range between the Congo and Kasai/Sankuru Rivers has been bisected by the frontline separating adversarial occupied zones of conflict. The Lukuru is suffering from the burden of invasion by armed opposition movements, occupying forces, and insurgent groups. Since the year prior to the outbreak of war in August 1998, no outsider (other than myself) has entered into the Lukuru region, including no journalists. So, the story had not yet been told.

In April 1998 use of domestic airspace was restricted to government flights only, requiring me to flee from the Lukuru that June overland via waterways. In the interim, through the DRC Parks Relief Mission I have been able to respond at the grassroots level. The Relief Mission has functioned to address the needs on-the-ground of Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega (since January 2000) and deliver materials (equipment and supplies) to some of the Katanga Province protected areas including the Pande Post at the Mufufya River Game Reserve and the Parcs Nationaux Upemba and Kundelungu in August 2000. On 24 March 2001 the Foreign Affairs Minister announced that the DRC government had lifted the restriction against the use of domestic airspace permitting the free movement of people and goods throughout the country. Since that date, flights have successfully reached Ipope/Mimia area, west of Salonga National Park, in territory under government authority. But no one has ventured into the LWRP area, the western perimeter of rebel-held territory. The lifting of restricted travel did not address inter-occupied-territorial travel.

The human population of Lukuru has been without commerce or access to goods for more than three years. The ICCN PNS-SS staff and families have had no support. As the wildlife management authority, ICCN officials in Kinshasa and the international community have had no communications from the staff of PNS-SS regarding wildlife status since the Anga headquarters HF radiophonie broke nearly two years ago. Many of the PNS-SS personnel fled to Kinshasa over the course of this war and remain there today. The management capacities for PNS-SS have been destroyed. During these critical years the ICCN personnel responsible for PNS-SS have been unable to monitor or control the park. There has been a complete breakdown resulting in the disarticulation of the only protection mechanism for PNS-SS.

The whole of “bonoboland” is partitioned. Lomako falls within the jurisdiction of Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba’s Gbadolite-based Ugandan-backed Mouvement pour la Liberation du Congo (MLC); Wamba lies entirely in the territory of the Bunia-based factionalised Ugandan-backed Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie - Mouvement de Liberation (RCD-ML); and Lukuru is under the authority of the Goma-based Rwandan-backed Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD). Recent field excursions (since year 2000) to Ipope/Mimia and the northern post of PNS Secteur Nord (NS, the north block) at Watshi-Kengo are the most accessible bonobo sites because they fall under the Kinshasa government authority. In addition, PNS-NS access is attainable through the cooperation of regular MONUC flights to Boende and numerous locations of MONUC military liaison deployment sites (including Boende, Bokungu, Ikela) ensure relative stability and security.

The LWRP is the only non-government organization (NGO) to collaborate with PNS-SS to date. As the organizer of the DRC Parks Relief Mission it has always been my personal intention to restore function of ICCN, procure effective equipment for park guards, and promote the continued safeguarding of wildlife communities within the PNS-SS area<sup>1</sup>. This was to be achieved by organizing a humanitarian aid delivery. Because

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the impressive group of organizations and individuals who actively support the DRC Parks Relief Mission efforts, with special reference to maintaining PNS-SS I would like to acknowledge the ongoing involvement of the administrators and keepers of Columbus Zoo, Cincinnati Zoo, Fort Worth Zoo, and Jacksonville Zoo ... North American zoological facilities that house captive bonobos. Their work on behalf of insitu conservation is noteworthy.

PNS has been exposed to decades of large scale syndicate poaching, materials to contribute to the struggle of anti-poaching activities and serve as an incentive for all Agents of PNS-SS were included in the stockpile. Through the extraordinary backing of numerous groups, organizations<sup>2</sup>, and individuals, I assembled humanitarian aid and supplies for the people of PNS-SS Headquarters (Anga Post), patrol stations, and the Lukuru. The extensive list of materials includes: basic medicines of Amodiaquine (Malaridose Zenufa – a relatively new malaria cure treatment 3-pill protocol), Chloramphenicol Collyre (pink-eye drops), Amoxicillin capsules, Multivit tablets (multivitamins), Paracetamol tablets, Fortified Procaine Penicillin - Injectable Benzyl penicillin vials, Sachets of Oral Rehydrations Salts, Quinine Sulfate, Aspirin tablets, Indomethac Indocide (muscle relaxant), Mebendazole tablets (worm cure medicine), Metronidazole anti-helminthic and antiamebic), Erythromycine, and Liquid cough suppressant for children; woman's clothe pagne's; 1,300 lbs of mixed clothing for men, women, and children; donated Zoo uniforms from Columbus Zoo and Jacksonville Zoo; 25 kilo sacks of rock salt; household goods including large spoons, table knives, cups, bowls, buckets, matches, razor blades, lock & key sets, mosquito netting for beds, thread, safety pins, sachets of 10 litre bidons, powdered milk, sugar; anti-poaching equipment including 25 Coleman Nevada 2-person tents, 50 Lafuma rain ponchos, 50 Bergamo backpacks, machetes (24" and 16"), shovels, hoes (to clear patrol routes), wildlife conservation education materials including posters, pencils, stickers, cahiers, magazines, brochures, and tee shirts; communications equipment of 20 walkie-talkies and the repaired HF radiophonie; administrative supplies including bics, reams of paper, boxes of envelopes; school supplies donated by the Columbus Zoo including construction paper, pencils, bics, blackboards, chalk, scissors, glue, posters, water color paints, paint brushes, cahiers, and balls; 100 2-meter-sized industrial sacks to transport cash crops to market; 50 cartons of soap; mapapa (flip flop sandals); tea (they have locally grown coffee); blankets; and more. I have continued communication with Max-Planck-Institute (Germany) to coordinate communication and equipment for patrol route clearance between PNS-SS posts at Anga and Mundja. I believe that providing a few emergency humanitarian aid resources and motivational support will launch a tangible and meaningful conservation effort. Indeed, conservation is about people!

In preparation for this expedition, the plan was to make three "legs" delivering goods (equipment, supplies, humanitarian assistance, and medicines for the Park and LWRP staffs and the local populations) from Kinshasa to the villages of Dekese/Bolonga, Anga, and Yasa/Bokomo and surrounding settlements. An 'air operation' was required because the Lukuru is only accessible via water routes (the main transport arteries are the Lukenie and Sankuru Rivers) or by foot. Overland inter-territorial (crossing the frontline between government-held and rebel-held territory) movement was not feasible and would be prohibitive due to excessive armed checkpoints and human obstructions. My Cessna

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<sup>2</sup> The organizations providing financial support include: Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe, Germany; Born Free Foundation, United Kingdom; Chester Zoo, United Kingdom; Cincinnati Zoo Conservation Fund, Ohio; Columbus Zoo CCMC Sulatalu Fund, Ohio; Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund-Europe; Disney's Animal Kingdom Conservation Fund; Fort Worth Zoo AAZK Chapter, Texas; Friends of Washoe; Fund for Animals; Gorilla Haven; International Fund for Animal Welfare; International Primate Protection League; Los Angeles Zoo AAZK Chapter, California; Lukuru Wildlife Research Project; Oakland Zoo AAZK Chapter, California; Primate Conservation, Incorporated; Southern Missouri State University Anthropology Club; Tulsa Zoo AAZK Chapter, Oklahoma; and WildZe Foundation.

chartered airplane required two pilots because of the distances. As agreed in August 2000, our team was to include the President-Delegue General (PDG-ICCN), Directeur Technique (DT-ICCN), Mr. Ilonga Djema Willy (LWRP worker who sought refuge in Kinshasa in November 2000), and myself (Director, LWRP). Our principal goals were to restore the conservation capacity to protect bonobos, continue our efforts in the region, strengthen our relationship with the local people, determine feasibility and open channels to resume long-term research and conservation efforts in the Lukuru (including promote a conservation ethic to the rebel party and insurgent groups in our area), deliver equipment and supplies to PNS-SS headquarters Anga post, patrol stations, and the Lukuru base camp (near the villages of Yasa and Bokomo) personnel and local populations, determine the current status of bonobos in PNS-SS and the LWRP main study group (the Bososandja bonobo community) and recommit the efforts of the traditional Yasa/Bokomo village council (the same group to whom I had petitioned in 1997 and from whom in 1998 I purchased the 3,400 hectares conservation concession known as the Bososandja Faunal Refuge which corresponds to the range of my primary study group).

Before returning to the DRC, I had been informed that the rebels still occupy the Lukuru and they were making no progress towards pulling out. This turned out to be an understatement. DRC is a country fragmented by the presence of occupying forces and insurgent groups. After long-term negotiation, I had agreed to act as patron for a BBC Natural History Unit team to accompany me. As the departure date approached, the Head of the Unit became reluctant to send a crew unless I could confirm that the rebels were out of the area and that we would see bonobos. I could only guarantee that we would see rebels. So, our plans were deferred for a later trip. I was reminded that this would be the first time ANYONE entered the region since prior to 1998. So, I left home very animated and carrying 11 pieces of excess baggage.

During this mission, the Lukuru Wildlife Research Project financed my participation in the IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group (OSG) workshop titled, "African otters - How to increase knowledge of biology, distribution and threats to survival." The workshop convened in Sun City, South Africa and was co-moderated by Mr. Claus Reuther, Chairman IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group, and Prof. Jan Nel, Coordinator for the IUCN/SSC Africa Otter Specialist Group. I have written a synopsis from my workshop notes and can make it available upon request.

Upon arriving at Ndjili International Airport on the northern outskirts of Kinshasa, the customary search of my baggage resulted in confiscation of the 20 walkie-talkies. On the spot, the customs inspector agreed to allow passage of the walkie-talkies if I would pay \$1,400 USD. Mindful of the trip to Katanga last year and the process to clear equipment exonerated through customs, I felt confident that ICCN could retrieve the walkie-talkies without problem. However, that wasn't the case. I was required to have a donation letter transmitted from the USA (telephone lines would not permit a weeks worth of attempts to send a fax, the scanned document attached as an email file failed multiple times over a period of days, and finally FedEx took two weeks to deliver the letter). Over the proceeding weeks I was offered the option of solutions including payment of a \$1,100 USD OFIDA fee or accepting the "formalities with inspectors" (i.e., they would lower the official required payment if I would make an arrangement with them). This was a challenge. ICCN has Agence Nationale de Renseignements (ANR) authorization for equipment exoneration through customs. Even with the relentless

efforts of Mr. Lubuta (ICCN Chef de service Ressources Matérielles), we still struggled. The 20 walkie-talkies are now stored in the ICCN-PDG office until my return.

Once in Kinshasa, I visited the headquarters office of MONUC (the French acronym for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo), as recommended by several UN Security Council members when I lead the LWRP/ICCN conservation initiative to the UN-New York City in April of this year. After educating MONUC about the Lukuru and identifying the location of Zone Dekese, I inquired as to their intelligence about the current security and situation in the Lukuru, informed them of my mission and the group invited to participate, and asked their opinion about my plans to return to my field site. It was explained to me that, although Zone Dekese/Lukuru is located in proximity to the current line of disengagement, it was not on the radar screen for any concern. The closest MONUC deployment site is now Kole (Zone Lodja, Province Kasai Oriental, east of the Lukuru), a military observer team-site established in August 2001. Because the Lukuru area is so remote, isolated, and has been a volatile region cut off from the outside, nobody had paid any attention to the zone. There is no permanent MONUC deployment or presence in the Lukuru area and it has been largely ignored. However, to foster our mission MONUC offered to assign a political officer to travel with me and to send an “advance team” or sortie to meet us on the ground and secure the situation for our arrival and first 24 hours of activity.

In the recent year several of the Lukuru workers have fled to Kinshasa. I was reunited with them there. They told harrowing stories of beatings, torture (including being buried alive), intimidation, imprisonment, and hardships throughout the past years of the conflict. They reminded me that Chef Siki (chief of the village where the Lukuru base has been associated) had been enclosed in a 55gallon drum and the drum was beat on until the noise burst Siki’s eardrums and blood flowed from both ears. At a later date Siki was publicly executed (shot dead). Willy had endured personal horrors as he fled from his home in the village of Dekese a year ago. He traveled with his family for two weeks on foot forging through forest and swamps, avoiding roads and waterways. They were forced to leave their small children behind. They had no water, no food, and took only what they could carry. Shortly before their escape, Willy had a double hernia operation. The incision was still open when he finally reached Kinshasa. And there were other stories. It was a tearful and emotional reunion.

Many of you know that work in Kinshasa involves tolerating unlimited challenges such as ants eating through the phone lines, the complete dysfunction of the overland telephone system more often than not, general “atmosphere interference,” localized or city-wide electricity blackouts, intermittent water shortages (sometimes for several days), civil employee work strikes (when salaries aren’t paid), and unforeseen transportation issues. These all occurred and more.

During the first week of August, two Kinshasa based newspapers ran a scathing article detailing a story about the Wamba-Yokose community rising up against foreigners who had worked in their area. The articles stated that the westerner researchers (Japanese teams and an American) are receiving strong opposition from the local human population because the resident people believe that the outsiders’ work is putting into peril the local wildlife and leading to the “extermination of the local bonobos” as a result of conflicts between neighboring localities. On behalf of the Wamba population, the articles solicited the government's pressure against the researchers. This was a blow to bonobo

conservation. I have communicated with the concerned individuals separately from this message and hope to generate action in defense of the pioneering work done by Japanese researchers in the Wamba-Yokose area.

On 8 August President Joseph Kabila dismissed 52 managers of public sector firms and state-owned enterprises as part of his ongoing efforts to restructure the economy in order to attract international investments. This included the PDG and DT of ICCN. (N.B. You may recall that President Kabila made significant changes to his Cabinet the day prior to our team departing from Kinshasa for the April 2001 LWRP/ICCN/United Nations mission.) Throughout the lengthy selection process (involving application, written testing, and interviews for 4,000 candidates), the government has appointed an interim team called the Committee of Temporary Management. For ICCN this team is comprised of Madame Eulalie BASHIGE Baliruhya as PDG, Madame Bakinahe Ntirivamunda as DT, and Buangi Muanda in the capacity of Finance Director. I found them to be very cooperative and supportive of the Lukuru efforts.

Once I presented myself at the ICCN offices, I was informed that many of the PNS-SS personnel were available, having fled the rebel occupation of the area. I took this unique opportunity to organize a meeting about bonobos, held on Tuesday 28 August 2001. The convention was for the benefit of constructive exchange between PNS-SS personnel, the ICCN Scientific Division, LWRP associates, and les Amis des Animaux au Congo (AAC) staff. The nearly four hours training workshop and general assembly was held at the Bonobo Sanctuary of Congo on the grounds of The American School Of Kinshasa (TASOK). Most of the participants had never seen a bonobo and had never been exposed to their unique behaviours, vocalizations, and natural history. 37 people attended including the environment journalist and a cameraman from Radio Television Nationale Congolaise (RTNC). PNS-SS personnel included Conservateur Kavanyi from Mundja Post, PNS Conservateur Principal Tshobo from Anga Post, Officer de Garde Kabanda from Anga, Garde Betshi-Longoma from Anga, Garde Bedji from Anga, Garde Booko Ntedanga from Anga, Bosombo from Lokako village, Jean NLamba from Epulu, and others. Seated in front of the large enclosure where the bonobo orphans were being fed, we began with an introduction by Madame Claudine Andre-Minesi, AAC President. She led discussion about the government-backed initiatives on behalf of bonobo conservation and then opened the forum for general discussion. Claudine informed the group that the seven most recent bonobo infants to arrive at the Sanctuary/Orphanage have come from the southern area. Every one of them had been exposed to a sorcerer working in the village of MUSHIE (at the confluence of the Lukenie and Kasai/Sankuru Rivers). They all exhibited evidence of witchcraft practices such as cutting off fingers, hair, pieces of ears, and pulling teeth of the bonobo infants. Also, it was reported to me by contacts in Kinshasa that a man was planning to travel upcountry to acquire a baby bonobo from the Lukuru. This he wanted to do in order to sell the infant bonobo to gain dowry money for his daughter. His daughter had married a Batetela man. The Batetela ethnic group is well known for their practice of eating bonobo meat. I spoke to the man and dissuaded him from pursuing this avenue.

As Director of the LWRP, I expressed my wishes to value the South Block of Salonga National Park. Statements were entered into the agenda from CP-PNS Tshobo and Conservateur Kayanyi. PDG Bashige raised the pointed issue of the role of ICCN in

national work outside protected areas and the need for integration. This healthy discussion was followed by a presentation about bonobos conducted by Mr. Crispin Mahamba, Bonobo Sanctuary Biologist. AAC educational materials were distributed to the group. The workshop group then moved through the night-cage facilities, viewed the transit tunnels, and reconvened in the conference classroom where a series of display panels and posters were explained and videos were shown. The workshop concluded with refreshments provided by AAC and a group picture. Separately, I was interviewed about bonobos for an environmental TV program (in fact, the immigration control officer at Ndjili who stamped my passport as I departed Kinshasa recognized me from the TV program that aired on national distribution).

I believe that communication exchange is imperative for conservation. So, one of my personal preferences is to provide communications equipment to the Parc Garde. PDG Bashige informed me that the broken HF radio-phonie from Anga was in Kinshasa. It was taken to a repair shop and I provided the finances from a private donation.

Most of you know that in November 2000 the LWRP was recognized as an active NGO partner in the World Natural Heritage Sites UNESCO/UNF/DRC project and the LWRP campaign to uniform the ICCN Garde was established. The LWRP is producing complete uniforms for all of the ICCN Garde across DRC. A grant from US Fish and Wildlife was awarded to manufacture 1,200 uniforms at UtexAfrica. Production at UtexAfrica had been shut down. This work order provides a boost to the urban economy of Kinshasa, an excellent example of economic development partnering with conservation. During meetings with UtexAfrica executives, we determined a memorandum of understanding to contract delivery of 200 uniforms (shirts, trousers, hats) each month. Payment will be dispersed upon delivery. By stretching the production across six months, we will spread out the economic benefits of employment. In addition, I have arranged for a couple women's groups to sew on the patches. They will better be able to handle the endeavor and produce better quality craftsmanship over the extended time period. Models of the uniforms were provided to the Environment Department, Defense Department, and Agence Nationale de Renseignements (ANR) where they will be displayed to assure that there is no confusion about the wearer. This project is a very exciting and positive, nonpolitical way to unite the fragmented country. Particularly during these days, no one can dispute the power of a national symbol such as a flag or insignia patch. To celebrate this campaign, a press release and media statement were prepared by the Minister of Environment and ICCN.

The "Outfit A Ranger" campaign incorporates production of 1,600 sets-of-four insignia patches (one on the hat, one on the breast pocket, and the two on the left sleeve), manufactured in Texas and transported in my excess baggage. During my travels in DRC, I have noticed that there has been no standard insignia, each locale creating their own emblem. This will be rectified through our national campaign. Samples of the patch insignia were provided to the Minister of Environment, ICCN office, President Joseph Kabila, and US Ambassador Aubrey Hooks. This summer I was informed that the Epulu site (Okapi Faunal Reserve) had purchased first-uniforms and Garamba National Park second-uniforms from Nairobi. The "Outfit a Ranger" campaign did not cover second outfitting of uniforms or the purchase of first uniforms from UNESCO/UNF funds (Garamba=250, Kahuzi-Biega=100, and Watshi-Kengo PNS-N=50). Our contract is for

1,200 uniforms and 1,600 sets of ICCN insignia patches (to include the Garamba, Kahuzi-Biega, Watshi-Kengo, and Epulu uniforms).

With delivery of the uniforms to PNS-SS, LWRP will provide daily Ranger-based Monitoring (RBM) data sheets. This will enable ICCN-Garde to systematically collect data on and uniformly report the status of significant species (bonobos, elephants, otters, monkeys, leopards, etcetera.). The RBM data sheets were developed by Dr. Jose Kalpers and are currently in effect at the Mikeno sector of Virunga, Garamba and Kahuzi-Biega National Parks. This first-of-its-kind national data collection system promotes recording of the general progress of the patrols, weather conditions, human activity observed (such as evidence of fire and presence of traps by type and number, livestock, poachers, and wood cutters), direct or indirect details about specific faunal species' activities and locations, and the presence and disturbance of identified flora.

Also while I was in Kinshasa, I spent a day with the Assistant-Chef of the Laboratoire de Cartographie Numerique at the ERAIFT (Ecole Regionale Post-Universitaire d'Aménagement et de Gestion Integres des Forets Tropicales) office on the grounds of Kinshasa University. I was introduced to the mapping project of Dr. Nadine Laporte. She has produced Landsat Image-5 Version-1 map (#543-RGB) of Salonga National Park (24 August 2001) based on data from January 1990 and February 2000. This is a project that benefits the LWRP, Société Salonga, Max-Planck-Institute, WCS, GTZ-EU, ZSM, ECOFAC, UNESCO/UNF, BCI, and the CITES management plan called M.I.K.E. (Monitoring of the Illegal Killing of Elephants). Separate from this report, I have communicated this project to interested parties and encouraged collaboration.

In August PDG Bashige proposed that the LWRP undertake improving the ICCN Bibliotheque (library) and development of a reading room. Last month she presented a formal statement and budget. As many of you know, in an effort to strengthen the ICCN Bibliotheque resources I have been donating books, publications (scientific and popular), and reprints, including: the Katanga trip report in September 2000, three United Nations publications about wildlife management in April 2001, and bonobo article reprints in August 2001. In June 2001 I met with the Director and the President of The African Environmental Film Foundation (AEFF). Based on the LWRP efforts to enhance the ICCN Bibliotheque and support the development of a reading room, I agreed to serve as a conduit to get AEFF films donated to ICCN. AEFF has produced educational films about environmental and wildlife issues in Africa, for the African people. They have made available films in French and we discussed the potential for Lingala versions in the future. Their current available films cover topics such as Water, Elephants, and the Rhino. They have established projects to produce new films. Continuing cooperation between ICCN and LWRP, we will be providing the required multi-system 220V VCR video equipment (which supports videos from all systems, including European and American), books, and publications. For any of you readers who would like to donate videos, training programmes, books (French or English), or publications, I encourage you to personally present them to ICCN when you travel to Kinshasa or please contact me.

The point of this trip to DRC was to get into the Lukuru. This process took weeks. In addition to working with MONUC, official permission had to be obtained. From the Kinshasa-authority side permission to conduct the mission was granted by the:

- Minister of Environment,
- Minister of Defense,

- Agence Nationale de Renseignements Department of Security,
- Minister of Education, Recherche Scientific and Technology,
- Minister of Interior, and
- ICCN.

From the Goma-authority side, permission to conduct the mission was granted by the:

- Departement des Relations Exterieures et de la Cooperation,
- TRANSCOM or the Executive Committee of Transport and Communication,
- ADMITER,
- RVA,
- Executive Committee of Security and Intelligence
- Secretaire General du RCD, and
- Prof. Adolphe Onusumba, President du RCD.

I think it is clear that we had the proper written authorization for the mission and assurances given by all concerned. Then, once our travel date was confirmed we had to file an official flight plan through both authorities. There was delay due to the changing flight restrictions issued from the Goma authority requiring that all flights must originate from Goma. This would have translated into a trip from Kinshasa (on the western boundary) to Goma (on the eastern boundary) to the Lukuru (in the center) ... transnational. We had to work around that.

Once we negotiated the political posturing and reluctant “cooperation,” my attentions necessarily turned towards ways to communicate with people on the ground at Dekese, Anga, and Yasa. It was essential that our arrival was prepared for on-the-ground, especially with regard to maintenance of landing strips at each site. I was aware that the most recent attempt to land at Anga (in 1990) had failed due to surface conditions and the people (who had not been informed) wouldn’t get out of the way. This was a critical variable in our ability to reach each distribution site. The Catholic Relief Service has a presence in Lodja and Kole, upriver from the Lukuru. I was able to radio a message through CRS-Kinshasa that was then transported by bicycle to Dekese and Yasa.

The month of September brought heightened tensions between the Kinshasa and Goma authorities. Several incidents occurred of escalated fighting in RCD-Goma territory and student protests ended with the killing of a local teenager when rebel security forces opened fire on the demonstration. PDG Bashige and I met with Mr. Banamuhere, Minister of Forest Affairs, Environment, and Tourism. Madame Bashige was sincere in her commitment to participate in our mission. However, Mr. Minister wisely expressed concerns about the safety and security of Kinshasa government officials traveling to the rebel-held territory (Salonga National Park-South Sector Headquarters at Anga). He concluded that no representative of the Kinshasa government could share in the experience. This was a difficult decision to make because the engagement of the PDG (and DT) to PNS-SS would be an historic event. In the life of Salonga National Park, no official from ICCN has ever visited the South Block. Mr. Minister further constrained the mission to limit distribution of obvious Garde materials (uniforms, radio phonie, or walkie-talkies) until the next trip opportunity.

Getting the conservation message across is crucial. The DRC Parks Relief Mission has printed three issues of “le Gorille” (most recently issue #4 funded by IPPL) and conservation education is a priority. For the trip to PNS-SS, Columbus Zoo had donated many forms of bonobo and wildlife conservation information. In Kinshasa, Nick

Hobgood provided 500 of the USAID version of bonobo conservation foldout leaflets for the Lukuru. Nick informed me that, these brochures had been distributed throughout the Eglise du Christe au Congo (ECC) network to Protestant primary and secondary school localities along the Congo River in northern Bandundu and southwestern Equateur provinces. A number of bonobo conservation education brochures/cahiers have been developed (by Delfi Messinger and Kizito Muanda) in Kinshasa since 1994 including 10,000 funded by Telecel, 10,000 funded by SSP institutions, and most recently 40,000 funded by ZSM and the Larry Weiss Foundation. None of these important productions have been distributed with field researchers to their bonobo study sites. So, I was able to provide an avenue to get these materials from USAID disseminated in the Lukuru.

As we gained information about the Lukuru before and after my trip in, MONUC discovered that the rebels were not pulling out but digging in. I was warned that I must contend with land mines buried throughout the Lukuru project area, that “everyone” has weapons, that there are periodic bandit raids, and that a new local warlord had taken over the village of Yasa. MONUC informed me that Dekese is now considered a New Defensive Position (NDP) for RCD-Goma.

So, the long awaited and highly anticipated date arrived ... our reunion with the Lukuru was assured. Willy and I were up early and ready to go. This was Willy’s first flight in an aircraft. He clutched his paper sack (in case he felt the need to vomit), put on his newly purchased (and only) suit, and squeezed into the van with me between the 700 kilos of materials for “leg” 1 of our mission. At the last minute MONUC informed me that the Political Officer assigned to accompany me had been called to a meeting in Kampala. After some discussion, my pilots agreed to continue the plan to take us to the Lukuru with the caveat that we have visual contact with the MONUC helicopter on the ground at Dekese before we landed ... otherwise, they planned to abort the “high-risk” mission and return us to Kinshasa. I agreed.

Our processing through immigration at the Ndjili airport created quite a stir. There were startled reactions, private consultations, and lots of scurrying around at the thought of us going to Dekese. Nobody had attempted this since before the outbreak of war. It took 45 minutes to get our document stamped.

As we approached the landing strip at Bolonga (the settlement where the landing strip is actually located, 3 km away from Dekese), we circled three times ... visually scanning the area. We saw no MONUC vehicle. The pilots generously (or maybe I should say reluctantly) asked me what I wanted to do. Without hesitating, I signaled a thumbs-up and said, "Let's land!" The two pilots consulted each other and agreed to make a low pass over the landing strip, watching for human reaction. By that time, the local population and rebel soldiers were well aware of us and had collected at the landing strip. As we did the low pass, we noticed several soldiers stationed around the grassy clearing and a large group of the local population gathered together. Nobody acted alarmed ... so we circled back around and landed. Once we were on the ground the plane was immediately surrounded by armed soldiers. The local people atypically remained very quiet and controlled, off to one side. The atmosphere was electric. The pilots disembarked first, then Willy, then me. As Willy came around from behind the plane and into view of the crowd, the local population hailed his return! Then I appeared from behind the plane and there was a resounding uproar ... people chanting my local name (Mama Tofuku) and cheering!!

Shortly, the Bolonga rebel commander came running up, profusely dripping with sweat from physical training, to check our authorization. The soldiers wanted to "put us in bondage" (lock us up or tie us up) because they believed our mission to be illegal. I did not consider this an act of aggression, just posturing. In fact, throughout the course of events we were reminded that the commander could have us tied up at any time (I was thinking of worse things that could be done to us). We were eventually informed that the MONUC - MILOB team had indeed arrived by helicopter earlier that morning from Kananga, had gone up to the Dekese infirmary/hospital, had mentioned that a "Red Cross" humanitarian flight would be coming in, and then had taken position "near the village" where they stayed overnight as instructed. Since our return, MONUC has been profusely apologetic. They have yet to explain the actions of the MILOB team but they have acknowledged that - with the benefit of hindsight - this was not the most logical thing to do. The fact remains that we were entirely on our own.

I assume that the soldiers did not respond with alarm when we circled and low-passed because they thought we were the Red Cross flight. Our plane is white and the visible MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) emblem is red, easily mistaken for a Red Cross plane. Well, there was no Red Cross flight scheduled ... it was actually our flight! The information provided by the MONUC team had been incorrect.

We were escorted over to the Bolonga commanders' office (a pailote in front of his house). The Chef d'Etat-Major General, Armee National Congo (Chief of General Headquarters) was notified in Dekese and immediately came to investigate. The Chef was quite an imposing man. He stood over 6'5" tall and weighed nearly 400 lbs. His sheer physical presence was awesome and admittedly intimidating! Because he was truly a giant guerilla and projected the image of an immense beast holding us all in a grip of deadly fear on this figurative-island that most of the world forgot, we nicknamed him "Kong." Kong is a Congolese rebel, coming from his natal village near Lac Mai-Ndombe. Regrettably, in response to my query to take his picture, he informed me that there is a regulation prohibiting photographs, which would be forcibly imposed if need be. So, I didn't get his picture ... this time.

Although the local people all confirmed that they had known me (and the Lukuru Wildlife Research Project) for many years, the Chef didn't understand who we were. They hassled Willy about deserting Dekese. He assured them that he had fled because the noise from bombs, gunfire, and explosions had frightened him ... that he had not fled from the occupation by rebels, otherwise why would he have come back with me at this time. They wanted to know why the local people responded so enthusiastically towards us ... just who were we! When they announced our mission to the crowd and identified us, the people repeatedly shouted, "We know her!" The soldiers commented that this wasn't how the people responded to them. Duh!

The Chef had not been notified by RCD-Kananga, copied our authorization document, or been correctly informed by the MONUC team. He decided to try to contact Goma via the phonie network. So, we were held while the commander tried repeatedly to get radio confirmation from Goma or Kananga that my documentation was authentic. With ample time, I presented a box of medicines, bonobo conservation materials, and supplies that I had prepared as a cadeau (gift) for the Zone officials. I took the opportunity to conduct a conservation education exchange and give testimony about the local conservation efforts in the Lukuru. The cadeau included medicines, administrative

supplies (bics, paper, and envelopes), the USAID fold-out leaflets, and materials promoting conservation of the local wildlife community designed and donated by the Columbus Zoo, including tee shirts (with a conservation message in French, Lingala, and English), LWRP stickers, pencils (embossed with the image of bonobos and the name of bonobos in the local Ikolombe language, “Tofuku”), wildlife magazines, and LWRP posters (with a conservation message in French and English).

We were only permitted to be at this one location, but I was able to draw some conclusions from my limited observations and our lengthy conversation (interrogation). The soldiers get regular supplies from Goma via the water route from Lodja. The rebels have an extensive communication network across the Zone through radio phonies and walkie-talkies that keep constant links between and within each of the occupied villages. The local people get NOTHING! Considering the social context of conservation, the Lukuru people need urgent intervention. They do not even have currency to exchange for materials, supplies, or medicines. Willy was able to make unguarded inquiry about the status of friends and family when he took leave to use the latrine.

The local people are dying from malnutrition ... literally starving to death and lacking basic necessities. They are a vulnerable population ... defenseless against the ravaging morbidity and mortality of malaria, measles, tuberculosis and other respiratory tract infections, cholera and other diarrhoeal disease (acute or chronic diarrhea can result in death from severe dehydration), bacterial meningococcal meningitis, common preventable and treatable conditions, and epidemic and immunizable diseases. The consequences are potentially horrendous and conducive to rapid spread of disease. They all looked emaciated and scruffy ... wasted by the conditions of war. Their need is tremendous! Control of the population is tight. Even transporting letters across the “border” or line of occupation (between Kinshasa to Lukuru) posed a danger. We were able to “smuggle” in one letter to the Catholic Priest who has stayed in Dekese through the entire war, his motorcycle is the only mechanized transport in the Zone. A few notes were written by local people, however each one had to be read by the rebel commander before it was released to us for delivery to Kinshasa. The closing of free trade routes for open commerce between the Kinshasa-Goma sides and the absence of essential health services are symptoms of oppressive tyranny.

We were informed that the piste (road) to Anga was no longer passable. Even in 1997-1998 when I traveled overland between Dekese and Anga, the road was just a footpath much of the way. Apparently the jungle has reclaimed the road. It was not possible to get word to Anga to ensure that the landing strip (which is in a natural savanna clearing) was functional. The local people of Lukuru are internally displaced: many of the Anga residents have relocated to Dekese and many of the Yasa residents have relocated to Bolonga.

We became quite concerned about the passage of time. As you know, planes are not permitted airspace after sunset and we did not want to be stranded at the rebel headquarters overnight. After quite some time and no success reaching Goma or Kananga, we were escorted back to the landing strip and the plane was boarded by soldiers. A few of our bags were opened and scrutinized. We were asked to unload and leave the items at Dekese. I politely declined. The Chef requested that I pay \$500 USD for use of the landing strip. Again, I declined. After brief consultation with his officers, the Chef said we were free to **leave the Zone**. We accepted their suggestion and made a

hasty departure. I had a huge lump in my throat as we winged our way to cruising altitude. I asked if we could make a quick fly over of the Lukuru base camp and forest range of my main study group, but time was against me and we had to hurry back to Kinshasa.

In reflection, our return to the Lukuru was characterized by nearly 5 hours in "detention" at the rebel headquarters. Even though I had all the appropriate authorization papers, the local rebel leaders still refused to let us carry on with our program. However, I feel strongly that it was a significant accomplishment. We were able to 'break the ice' and succeeded in crossing the frontline. The occupying forces in the Lukuru now know me and they know the LWRP. Our return will be more straightforward. Dekese is now a projected MONUC deployment site. MONUC can provide the necessary transport vehicle and route to ship the completed Garde-de-Parc uniforms to the east. I have been further assured that the issue of my trip has been raised with the authorities in Goma.

I plan to return to DRC in February through May 2002 to try again. I have over 2 tons of humanitarian aid to deliver. Today, when decision-makers look at the map of DRC, they see the Lukuru! I believe more strongly than ever that we must act boldly to disseminate the conservation message and to implement and enforce conservation policies.

Since my return from the Lukuru, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a statement encouraging aid for the DRC and requesting help to strengthen grassroots organizations enabling them to rehabilitate basic social infrastructures. He discouraged the "wait-and-see attitude" being maintained by most groups. At the same time, the RCD-Goma announced that it had agreed to let MONUC humanitarian barges navigate freely in rivers under RCD-Goma control and cross inter-territory water routes. I assume this includes the Lukenie and Sankuru Rivers! In tandem with this decision came the assurance that inter-territorial commercial traffic could resume after the conclusion of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, once modalities are determined. I am definitely encouraged!

Many of you readers have asked for information about the bonobos in Kinshasa. On behalf of the Columbus Zoo, I was able to deliver to the AAC Bonobo Sanctuary/Orphanage a supply of Trimethoprim sulfa, Metronidazole tablets, Sulfatrim Pediatric Suspension, and sweets of cake icing and jam samples to help induce oral acceptance of bitter tasting medicines. ChilsonRoth<sub>LLC</sub> donated three "Snuggimals" (an orange tabby kitty, a grey tiger kitty, and a Dalmation puppy) for the orphaned bonobos. Snuggle Puppies and Snuggle Kitties ([www.snuggleme.com](http://www.snuggleme.com)) are the creation of Julee Roth. They were designed to ease the transition into a new environment encountering new people, places, and smells. They are a "cuddly security blanket" which offer warmth (from heating packs) and comfort (from the award winning 'real feel' heart which emits a rhythmic sound and beat) ... the "virtual mother."

Claudine generously introduced me to each of the orphan infants and provided some of their histories. She currently maintains 20 young bonobos. But her responsibilities are growing. She is now planning for the acquisition of eight additional bonobos. In the coming months she anticipates the arrivals of Makali-male, Keza-male, Tshilomba-female, and Etumbe-female (if memory serves me correctly) from the INRB Animalerie; Max-male, Tex-male, and Mixa-male, the second international collaborative effort orchestrated by Claudine to repatriate bonobos from Congo-Brazzaville; and Mimi from

a private home in Kinshasa. Makali and Keza are very special to me personally. Many of you know Max (or know of him) who was confiscated by Mark Attwater from a Zairian (back then DRC was Zaire) trader in Brazzaville on 5 June 1989 and weighed only 3 kilos. Mimi (to be renamed Mimia) has been held in captivity for the past 12 years. She was approximately three years of age when taken from the wild (circa 1989). So her grouping with Max, at a similar age, will be interesting to witness and document. This will bring the total of bonobos at the AAC Bonobo Sanctuary/Orphanage to 28 and does not include the anticipated influx of bonobos who have survived upcountry beyond the inter-territorial blocked portion of the river as intra-national movement resumes.

For your information, below please find a table (reproduced from a display in the AAC office) identifying every bonobo managed under the AAC Bonobo Orphanage/Sanctuary as of 29 August 2001.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE RECEIVED (day-month-year)</b>	<b>GENDER</b>
Michael	9-12-94	Male
Maya	15-08-95	Female
Bukavu	20-04-96	Male
Boende	20-04-96	Male
Tshikapa	24-01-97 (d=14-03-01)	Female
Oshwe	26-02-97	Female
Manono	05-09-97	Male
Tatango	07-11-97	Male
Opala	22-12-97	Male
Inongo	17-03-98	Male
Kalina	23-10-99	Female
Semendwa	11-11-99	Female
Bandundu	11-11-99	Female
Isiro	23-01-00	Female
Salonga	17-03-00*	Female
Beni	17-03-00*	Male
Kikwit	21-04-00	Male
Nioko	15-05-00	Female
Ruzizi	02-06-00 (d=04-06-00)	Female
Bonbo	09-01-01	Male
Kisantu	06-04-01	Female
Matadi	02-05-01	Male
Lipopo	05-07-01	Female

- Individuals repatriated from Congo-Brazzaville.  
d = Date died.

It must be stated that the international traffic (contra-CITES) of infant bonobos to Congo-Brazzaville is certainly not a recent phenomenon. I can remember back in April 1989 when Ian Redmond (while reporting on gorilla trade in Congo-Brazzaville) identified the first two bonobos taken into organized care (under Mme. Yvette Leroy) on

19 September 1987 ... and rumors he had heard hinting that an isolated population of bonobos might occur at Ouessou (this was never confirmed and it remains probable that Congo-Brazzaville was not the actual origin ... the infants most likely were part of the active international traffic from Zaire/DRC). Ian further reported about two infants arriving at the Brazzaville Gorilla Orphanage in late November 1989 and shared with me information from Mme. Leroy about the arrival of another confiscated infant during the week of 22 June 1990. This blatantly illegal traffic has continued.

After my return to the states I learned of another situation that relates to bonobos and the state of the nation/world. On 11 September the United States of America was called upon to remind the world of what she stands for. I came home to a different America. The events of that tragic day also effected bonobos. Don Winstel (Columbus Zoo Assistant Director) recounted this story in the October 2001 issue of the *Docent Newsletter* Vol. XXXI, No. 6. (I have loosely reproduced this information without permission. My apologies to Don.)

A shipment of two female bonobos (Kosana, a 19 year old wild caught female owned by the Leipzig Zoo, and Unga, a nine year old born at Antwerp's Planckendael Zoo) traveling from Planckendael Zoo, Belgium accompanied by caretakers from both the Planckendael and Columbus zoos was over the Atlantic when the attacks occurred. The plane was diverted to Gander, Newfoundland for several days where the bonobos were well cared for around the clock and kept as comfortable as possible under the circumstances of their shipping containers. Eventually, they flew to Chicago and were transported by van to their destination ... the Columbus Zoo, Ohio. This collaboration between the EEP (Europe) and SSP (North America) institutions marked the first time that the worldwide population of bonobos (outside Africa) has been managed as a single cooperative. The timing of this transatlantic collaboration was a result of the onset of Unga's sexual cycling, what would have been the critical trigger for her to emigrate from her natal group in the wild. Today Kosana and Unga are safely in quarantine at the Columbus Zoo.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that this week the official Inter-Congolese Dialogue for peace and reconciliation began on 15 October in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For those interested, you can follow the process through a bilingual (French/English) website dedicated to channeling information about the progress of this pivotal peace initiative for DRC. The website is <http://www.drcpeace.org>. According to the office of former Botswana President Masire and facilitator of the dialogue, the site will contain the most recent information about the DRC, a directory of updates, and publications and reports that can be downloaded.

In preparing this report I have made every effort to ensure credibility, however in the event of erroneous errors or omissions within, I take full responsibility.

God Bless America!