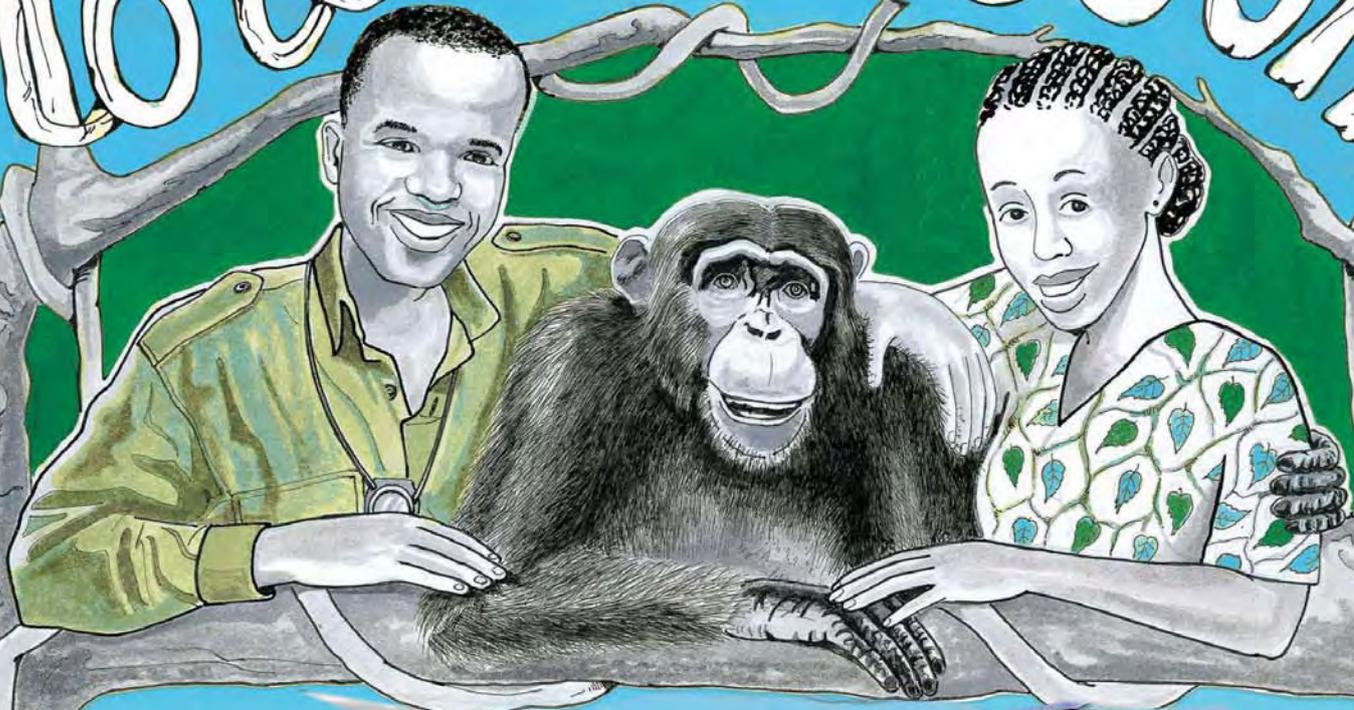


Forest Wisdom



Newsletter No. 3
Decembre 2004

... they're
too small,
these nuts...



FOREST WISDOM

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL OF YOU

Ymako Teatri with "Our cousins in the forest".

The road is not easy, but the wonderful performance of the children is the reward.

- Villagers living near a national park, and for
- Everyone who cares about the conservation of the forests and wildlife

FOREST WISDOM

- Tells the life of certain inhabitants of the forest: the chimpanzees
- Shows the problems and threats to the forest
- Supplies information
- Answers your questions and invites you to contribute to this newsletter
- Invites you to protect the great forest, this national heritage which is also yours

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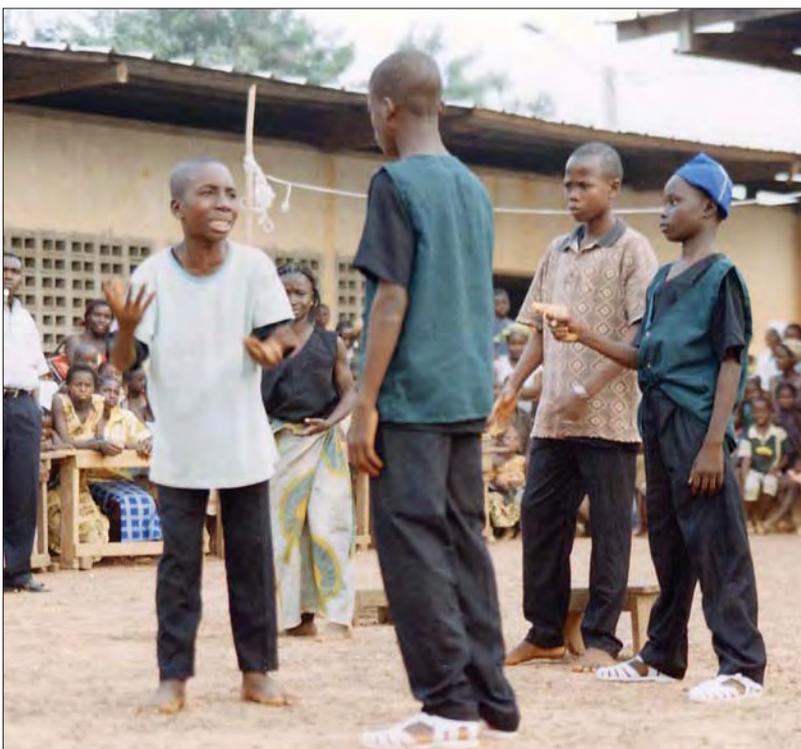


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Photo: Goné Bi Zoro Bertin



Photo: Ilka Herbinger





Hello and good health to you all!

In the last issue of this newsletter I told you about Margot and her twins, who had been killed in November 2002 by a poacher in the Taï National Park in Ivory Coast. Margot had not only two daughters Miriam and Makéba, but also a son, Mustapha, who was seven and a half years old, when his mother was killed. The orphan Mustapha was seriously affected by the disappearance of his mother and sisters, but as it often happens with the Taï chimpanzees, he was adopted by Zyon, the big dominant male and boss of the group. Zyon, a great expert of the forest and the social life, protected him from the other chimpanzees who could have annoyed him during this critical period of mourning. In addition to the protection, Mustapha found with his adoptive father another young orphan, Taboo, who had been adopted two years before. The two little ones became merry playmates, regained appetite for life and could continue to grow up very well. Unfortunately, the poachers came back once more, in June 2004, and since then Mustapha has not been seen anymore.

I find it hard to imagine that someone can eat the meat of chimpanzees. All of my friends in the region of Taï know, even without having to be told, that the meat of chimpanzees and monkeys is a totem for me. Because – like a young member of the audience of the theatre play “Our cousins in the forest” of “Ymako

Teatri” said – the chimpanzees are that close to us humans that eating them is like cannibalism.

But apart from that moral aspect, there is an even more dangerous problem associated with the consumption of bushmeat: it can be lethal for us. When the chimpanzees are close to humans because of their intelligence and their social life, they are also very close to humans concerning their biology, including their diseases. The chimpanzees can get deadly diseases, which are as dangerous for us humans as for them. It is, for example, well known, that people in Gabon ate the meat of chimpanzees who were carrying the Ebola* virus. Thus, hundreds of these persons were infected with the virus and could not be saved – they died of it. Another example – just as alarming – comes from the Taï forest. There, we discovered that some chimpanzees had died of anthrax**. If a poacher would kill a chimpanzee carrying this disease, the consumption of its meat would be a deadly risk. We must be aware of the fact that the more an animal is biologically close to us – like the chimpanzee – the more it is a risk to eat its meat. The precautions to take are simple: Avoid every risk! Refrain from eating chimpanzee or monkey meat – and you will have one big problem less.

See you soon,
Christophe Boesch

* Ebola is a disease which is transmitted by a virus, for example by eating the meat of an infected animal. This disease is fatal in 7 out of 10 cases and at present, there is no medication to fight it.

** Anthrax is caused by a very resistant bacterium. Just like Ebola, humans can get it mainly by consuming the meat of an infected animal, often sheep or cattle. For the chimpanzees, this disease is just as fatal.



THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ANCESTORS

Hedwige Boesch and Henri Téré

The plant we present today is called in Latin *Manniophyton fulvum* Muell. Arg. and belongs to the family of the *Euphorbiaceae*. Its indigenous names are Frafrabié (Agni), Dobouii (Bété), Topoué (Kroumen), Séhé-kla (Oubi) and Zoochè (Guéré).

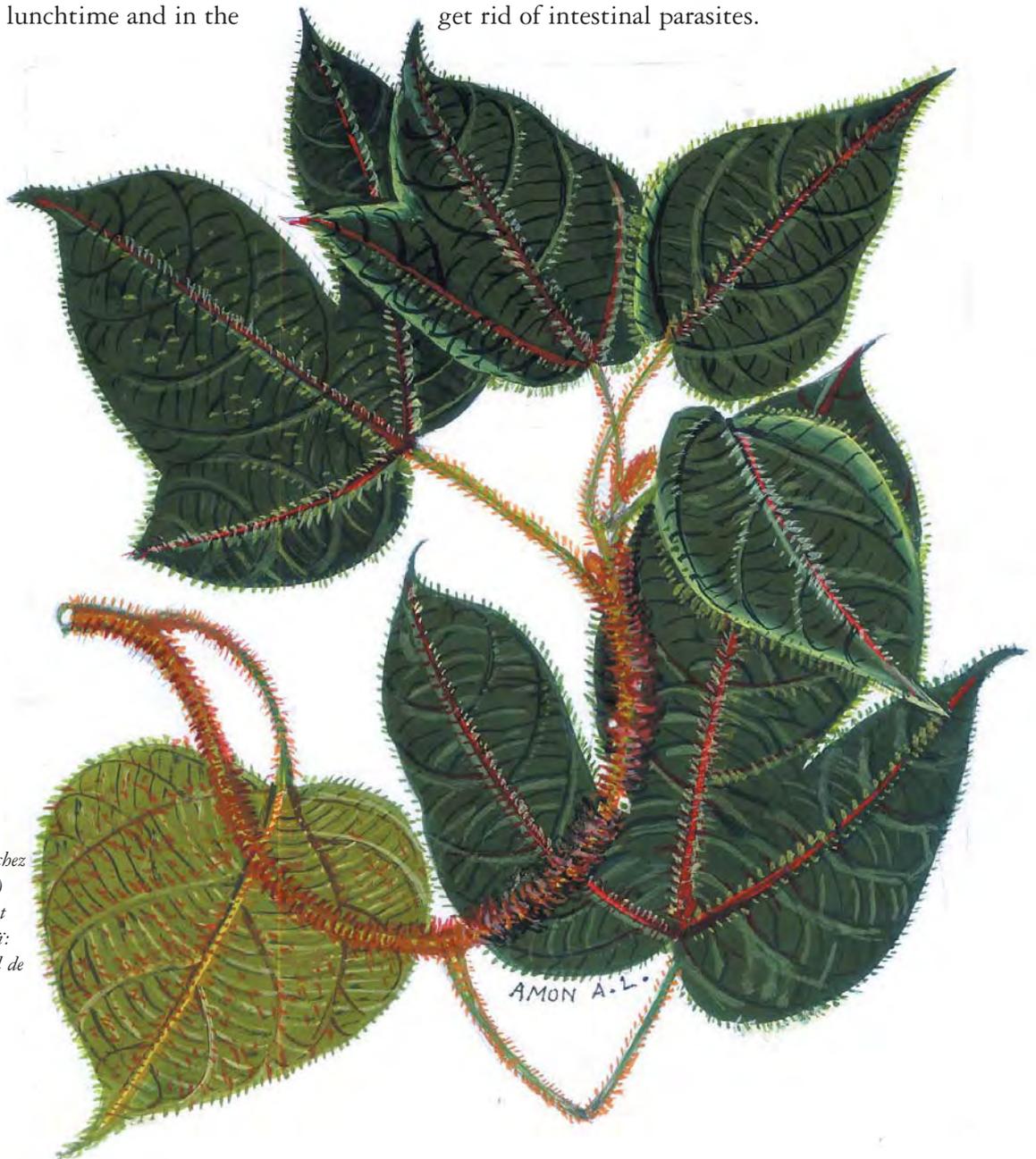
Manniophyton fulvum is a climbing liana which can be found on treetops in primary forests just as well as in secondary forests. From the very hairy bark one can obtain fibres which are used for the fabrication of fishing nets. The leaves are about 26 cm long, 25 cm wide and hairy on both surfaces. When the stalk is cut, a vivid red sap comes out just like blood.

Here the different known applications of the leaves in the traditional pharmacopoeia:

1) For the cough: pound the fresh leaf in order to get a paste. Make a decoction of the paste with a bit of chilli pepper and salt and drink a liquor glass of it in the mornings, at lunchtime and in the evenings.

2) For the treatment of boils and abscesses: cut the fresh leaves into the shape of a compress, put it on the spot to be treated and leave it there for a whole night.
3) To fight diarrhoea: squash the young leaves or buds to get a paste. Then, chew or eat this paste together with cola nut.

This plant also seems to be of special interest to the chimpanzees of Taï because they consume the leaves in an absolutely unique way. With their teeth, they cut the leaves into strips, roll them in their mouths and swallow them without chewing. And they only eat them very early in the mornings, before 8 o'clock. A similar consumption of leaves by chimpanzees was observed in Tanzania. When analysing the faeces of these animals, one found parasitic worms clinging to these hairy strips. This might be a way for them to get rid of intestinal parasites.



Sources:

– Henri Gnésio Téré :
“Sempervira” N° 7

Signification des noms
vernaculaire des plantes chez
les Guérés (Côte d'Ivoire)

– Cellule d'Aménagement
du Parc National de Taï:
“Flore du Parc National de
Taï (Côte d'Ivoire)”

Drawing:

Amon Aya Lazare

THE LIFE OF GREGOIRE NOHON

Hedwige Boesch

“The life of Grégoire ...”

Here we recount the history of Grégoire. As a child, he was often accompanying his father on the hunt. He was sad seeing all these animals slaughtered and wondered about his future and the future of the forest, watching the big logging trucks passing on the track, loaded with tons of wonderful tree trunks. When he got the chance to work for an European couple, whose passion was to observe wild chimpanzees, he did not hesitate...

(see Newsletter No. 1 and 2)

Grégoire loves his work in the camp of the Boesch family. He does not regret having left the village (unlike his friend Pierre who is helping him, but who, after some months, will return to the village to work in the fields again). The two of them see to everything, but above all, they are supposed to keep an eye on Lukas all the time. We are in the middle of the forest, which is not without danger for a little child who is touching everything and loves to venture a little everywhere. Above all, he must not leave the clearing with the hut by himself – he would get lost immediately... In addition, we also know that the chimpanzees are dreadful hunters who catch and devour monkeys of little Lukas' size without any difficulties.



Fortunately, Lukas' parents can fully trust Grégoire and Pierre who look after their child. Reassured, they leave every morning in search of the chimpanzees.

Towards the end of the morning, the young men and Lukas go to the river to do the laundry. They prepare their rice with sauce, repair the huts and draw water. Lukas is enthusiastically assisting in all these occupations. Above all, he loves the river and is plunging into it every day. He also loves to make fire and he asks Grégoire loads of questions, because he knows many things the Europeans don't know.

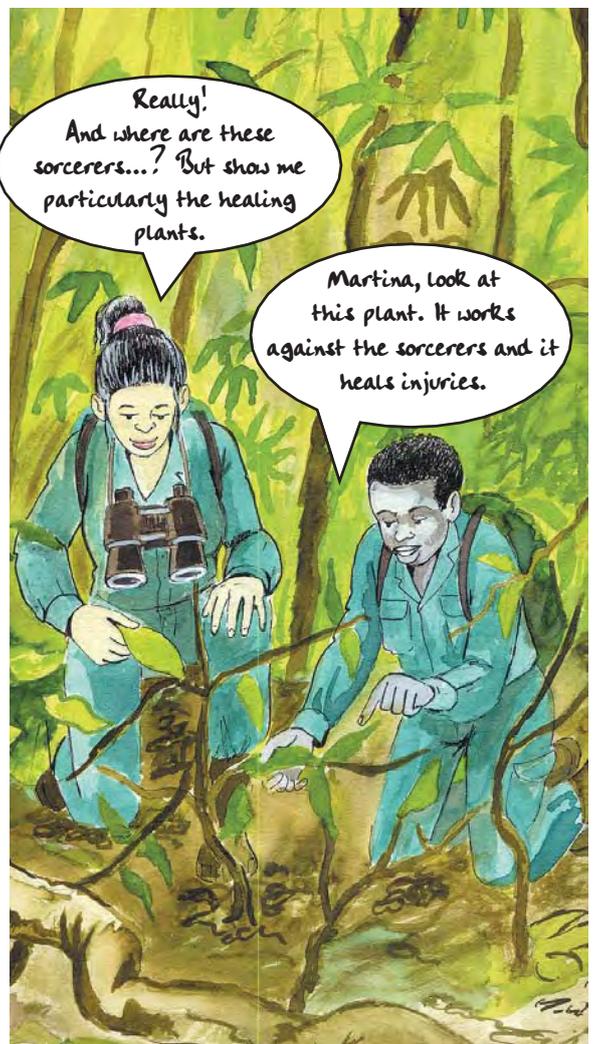


... THE LIFE OF GREGOIRE NOHON

One day, Hedwige has stayed in the camp to write, while Grégoire is working on the clearing. Suddenly, the two of them stop in the middle of their occupations. There are hoarse and powerful calls coming out of the forest – from very close and for quite some time. Hedwige has never heard such calls and is looking at Grégoire who just says: That's the leopard! The leopard is a reality in the Taï forest. He is rarely to be seen, but his traces are everywhere.



In the evenings, it is Grégoire who asks questions of Lukas' parents. More and more, he is fascinated by that work which consists in observing wild chimpanzees, living near them – within their territory –, and knowing everything about their life. He absolutely wants to do this work! The opportunity comes up when the Boesch family decides to go on holiday to Switzerland for some months. Martina, a young student, arrives to take their place with the chimpanzees. But first, she will learn the essentials about the observation work with Christophe and Hedwige. Then, when Lukas will be gone on holiday, it will be Grégoire's turn to start an apprenticeship with her.



The two of them learn simultaneously. She shows him everything she knows about using the compass and the binoculars, how to take notes and how to follow the chimpanzees without frightening them. Grégoire teaches her everything about the plants, the traces, the watercourses, the hunters...

Martina went back to Switzerland and Grégoire became the first African assistant of the Tai Chimpanzee Project in 1988.

THE WCF AND THE SCHOOLS

Hedwige Boesch



For already one year the WCF together with the Columbus Zoo

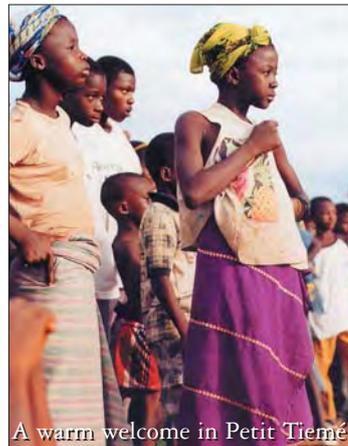
(USA) is financing teachers in 3 villages near the Taï National Park that didn't have enough teachers. Parents and children really appreciate the possibility that is thereby offered to them. Apart from the basic lessons, it is one priority to get the children to know and to respect the nature around them. Very popular are drawing contests and play activities.

School children and teachers from Paulé-oula
Two drawings from the contest



WCF/Ymako Teatri and the schools Theatre group of the Municipal College of Taï

This year, the theatre group "Ymako Teatri" went on two tours in Ivory Coast, first in April to 20 villages in the southwest and southeast of the Taï National Park and then to 12 villages near the Marahoué National Park. The tremendous success of the performances in Mai 2002 was repeated with these two tours. The Ivorians are clearly very attracted by the theatre and take the message seriously the play wants to convey for the survival of the chimpanzees. With the help of "Ymako Teatri", we founded two school theatre groups to increase the positive effect coming from the theatre. One group was set up in the west of the National Park, in Taï, with the students of the municipal college, the other one in Wonséaly (see below) in the east of the Park with the schoolkids of the public primary school V2. The two school groups have already performed their play in 20 villages in the region of the Taï National Park. Well done!



Ymako Teatri



A warm welcome in Petit Tiémé



Reading "Forest Wisdom"



Theatre group of the Public Primary School Wonséaly (V2)

TOSCA AND HER FAMILY (SEE NEWSLETTER NO. 1 AND 2)



Hedwige Boesch

August 1986: Tina, Tosca's daughter, put her hand into a wire snare. By chance, the wire falls off after a long and very painful time and bit by bit, the little one starts using her hand again. In January 1989 Tosca disappears and Tarzan and Tina become orphans. Tarzan is successfully adopted by Brutus, the dominant male of the group. The elder Tina always stays near the group of males, but not too close because she is a bit afraid...unfortunately.

In the early morning of the 3rd of March 1989 Grégoire arrives out of breath in the camp. He tells us that, while following Macho and 3 females, he has all of a sudden heard very loud calls. Running as fast as possible into the direction of the calls, he finds Brutus standing erect with a little chimpanzee lying on its back without moving, the stomach torn open, the intestines visible and a terrible injury on the neck.

We all run to the place of the drama. Brutus, Macho, Ulysse, Kendo, Darwin and Rousseau are now sitting very quietly near the body. At least twenty chimpanzees are a bit further away, in the shrubs or on the ground. All of them are silent, no one moves, no one eats. We approach very carefully and see that it's indeed Tina who has probably been killed by a leopard. During the next 6 hours we witness very touching scenes in a completely silent atmosphere, even though there are at least 30 chimpanzees very close to Tina's body. Ulysse, Brutus and Macho remain seated next to Tina. The back rounded, the head lowered. From time to time they touch her, take her foot in their hand and shake it gently while making a little play face as if telling her "come on, wake up". They also groom her, something they usually don't do with such a young female. They let the dominant females come but get up to prevent all the other females coming closer as well as all the young ones who might start to play or make noise. The only exception is Tarzan, Tina's little brother, who takes her hand and shakes it tenderly while he is looking at her face as if waiting to see if he manages to cause a reaction. Only 6 hours later we hear the first calls of chimpanzees who start to leave, accepting the fact that Tina won't go with them anymore.

The next day, the group comes back to the place of the drama and stays 3 hours to keep guard over Tina's body before leaving again...

The next day, the same thing happens again and then – one morning, after a week – the corpse has disappeared. Probably the leopard has finally succeeded in eating its prey.

THE PREDATOR OF THE CHIMPANZEES

Unfortunately, Tina was a good target for a predator. She was a bit slow with her two disabled hands, orphan for a month, always following the group of males around her little brother Tarzan from a certain distance. With her 9 years of age, Tina was still quite little. The leopard is a hunter that waits in ambush to take its prey by surprise. It is easy for it to follow a pretty noisy group of chimpanzees from a distance, hidden in the undergrowth. It must have seen little Tina, who kept a distance of 30 m from the others. In a quick and violent attack it killed her with a bite in the neck and ran away quickly to avoid the horde of chimpanzees. When they attack to defend one of theirs, they are very impressive. In the Taï forest there is, apart from the humans with their guns, only the leopard who is capable to kill that quickly and brutally a prey of this size. And it is compelled to act like this to avoid every risk of getting injuries, because an injured leopard cannot hunt anymore...

After the departure of the chimpanzees, we have also inspected the body just to find out that the leopard has in fact killed her by means of biting her in the neck – it has virtually crushed one of the cervical vertebrae, and immobilising her, has opened her stomach with its claws.

DO THE CHIMPANZEES HAVE A NOTION OF DEATH?

"No doubt", an old Guéré of the Taï region has told us "the opposite would be surprising". There are many anecdotes telling us about the close relationship of chimpanzees and humans, the chimpanzee's intelligence and his ability to use tools. The notion of death is no exception. We heard about a man who had killed a chimpanzee on his cocoa field. Later, when he came back from the village, he found himself face to face with an erect chimpanzee looking him straight into his eyes – at his feet the corpse covered with a cloth... This is a legend but how do we explain the scene of Tina's death we have just described? Can we really assume that Brutus, Ulysse, Macho and the others did not know that Tina was dead? And what do we say about Brutus who, when his preferred female Ondine died, covered the body with branches?



TOSCA AND HER FAMILY

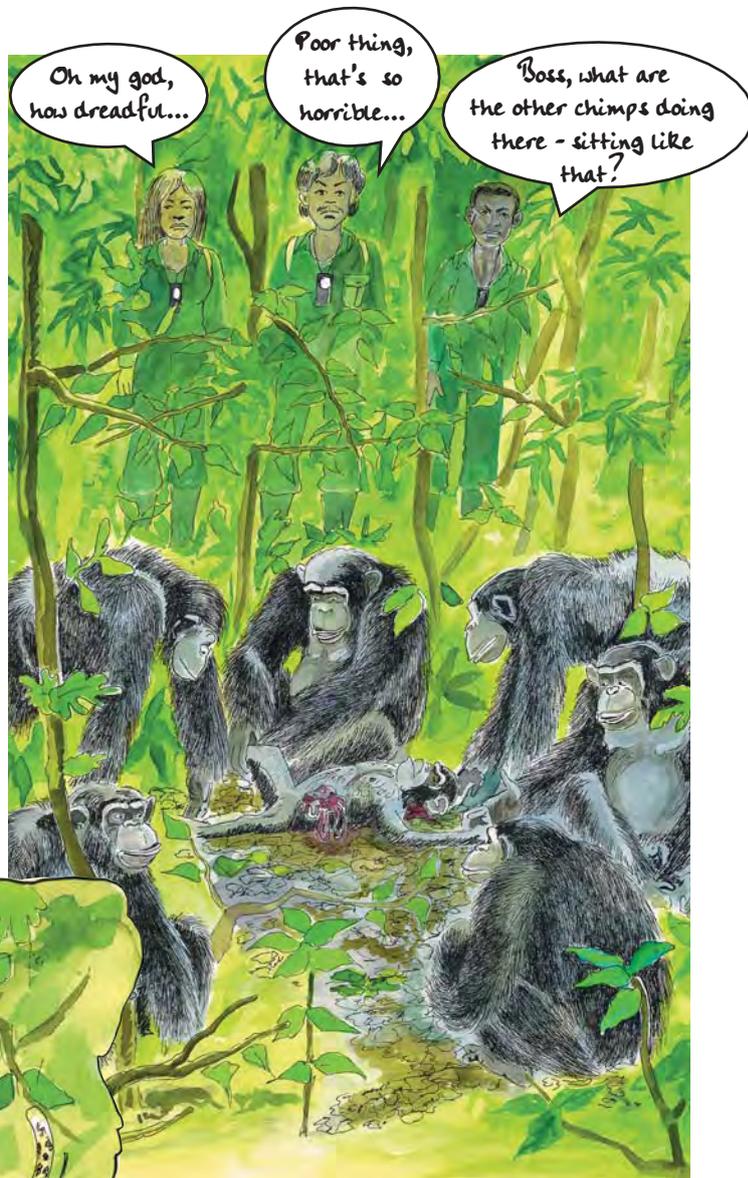
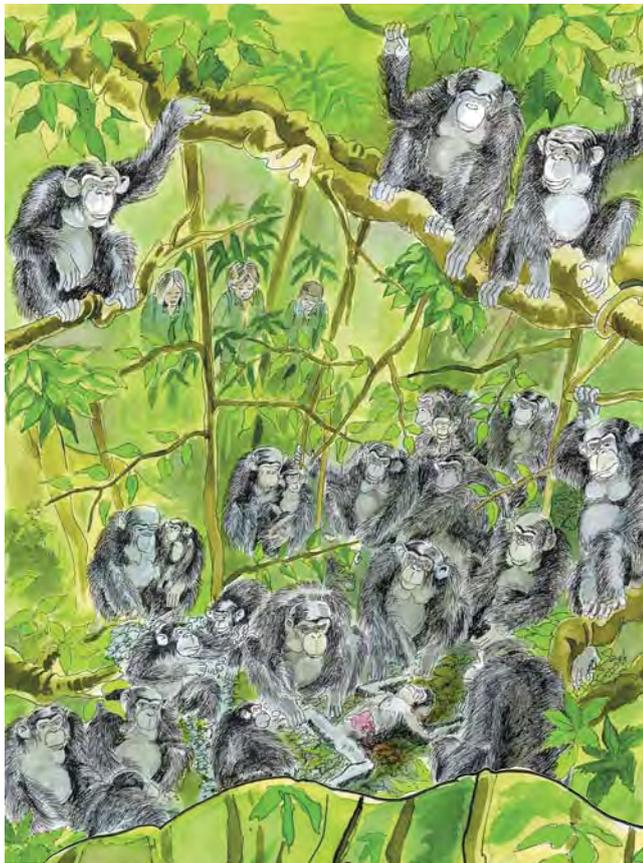


Tina has been killed. It's dreadful - her stomach is ripped - she's not moving anymore - all the chimps have screamed frighteningly ... was it the leopard?



Visibly devastated, Grégoire recounts what he has seen in the forest...





Oh my god, how dreadful...

Poor thing, that's so horrible...

Boss, what are the other chimps doing there - sitting like that?



Only the leopard is capable to kill that quickly and brutally a prey of that size.

And in particular the poor thing was handicapped. It was difficult for her to escape this beast.



In my opinion, Tina has really been attacked by a leopard - the broken vertebra at neck level is a typical sign...

Quickly the three of them return to the place of drama and find a very moving scene...

In a silent atmosphere, the chimpanzees guard Tina's body. From time to time they touch her as if they want to tell her to wake up and others are grooming her. The big males stop the young ones from coming closer, except Tarzan, Tina's brother, who is touching her and looking at her a long time from close up...

In the evening, the drama is discussed in the camp ...

THE TAMTAM ...

THE MISSING

Violetta and Vanille have disappeared
Predators or men, both are feared
Nil the response, we cannot be exact
With them we have lost all contact.

For Venus, the mother, there is no consolation
Little Volta lives now in complete isolation
Even if Mystère would become her ally
Would such pain ever pass one by?

We all were hoping to see them again,
But there was no reunion, we were hoping
in vain
They have not come back, as we hoped
they could
They must, now, be truly gone for good.

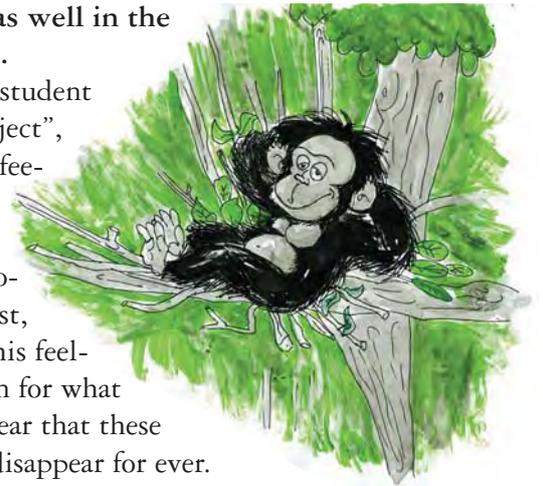
The whole group felt the loss of this blow
We counted on you and miss you so
Wounded at heart and tears in our eyes
We now say to you, goodbye.

Antoine N'Guessan

Translated by Astrid Eckstein und Jennifer McClung

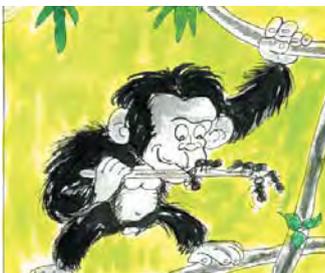
The poets are among us, as well in the
Taï forest in Ivory Coast...

Antoine N'Guessan, a PhD student
in the "Taï Chimpanzee Project",
specifically investigates the feed-
ing behavior of the chim-
panzees. Following the ani-
mals in their habitat, the tropi-
cal rainforest in Ivory Coast,
he was inspired to commit his feel-
ings to paper, his admiration for what
he was seeing, but also his fear that these
admirable creatures might disappear for ever.

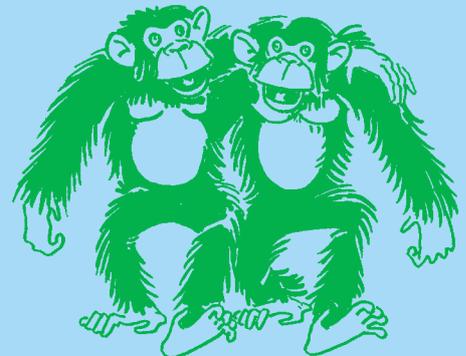


The financing of the projects is unfortunately a permanent concern... We found a partner who is interested in our activities – the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) Germany with its project "Roots and Shoots", and we hope that in the future we can combine our efforts. Currently, the JGI Germany is organising a reforestation project including schoolchildren and students in Benin, and another one in Cameroon proposing to replace bushmeat by the breeding of domestic animals.

Red ant fishing



Coming soon ...



- The tours with "Ymako Teatri" in Ivory Coast continue...
- The projects in the schools continue...
- Exchanges with a German school class are planned...
- At the outset of the year 2005 the WCF would also like to export the theatre, the video show and the newsletter into the Fouta Djallon in Guinea
- And we will also make contacts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Mali... the chimpanzees of the whole region will be happy!