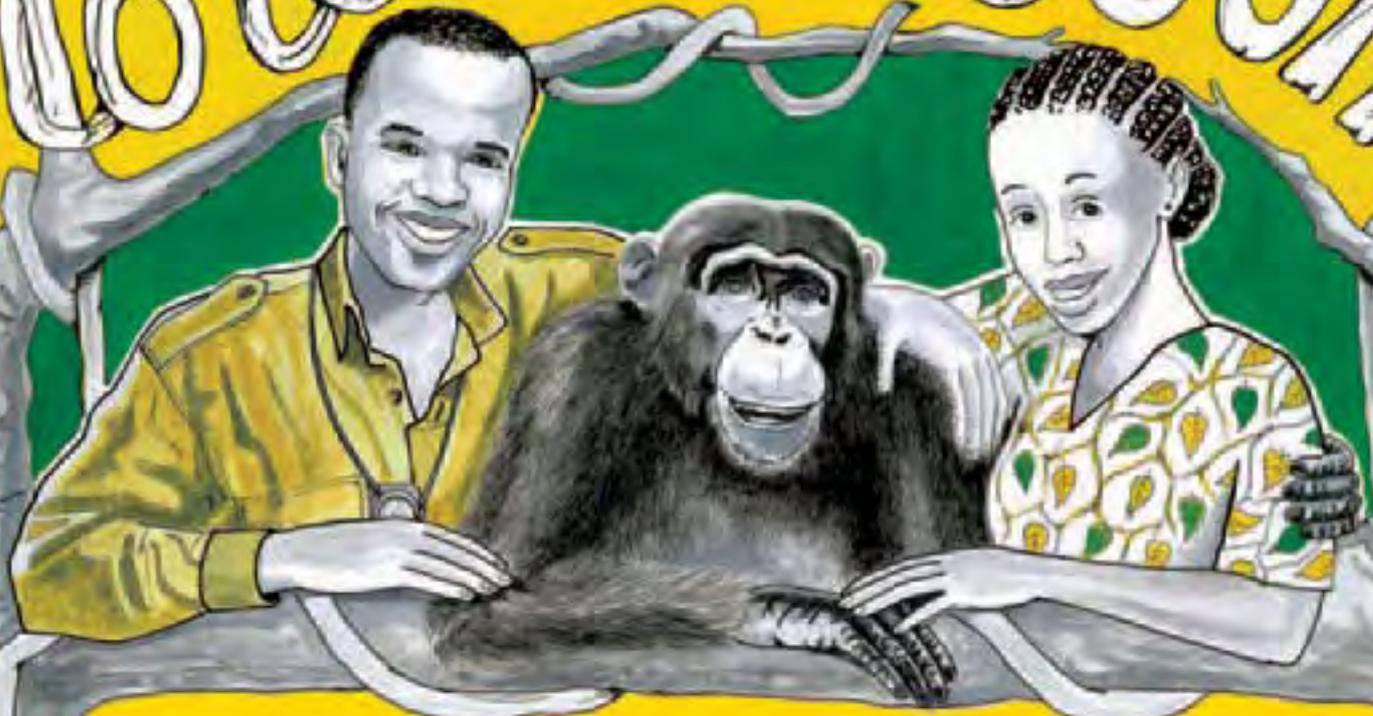


Forest Wins down



Journal No. 4
August 2005

... there's a
solution for
every
problem ...



-BEN-

FOREST WISDOM

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL OF YOU:

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

Performances of the theatre group “Compagnie Taïbou” in the Fouta Djallon were very successful.



FOREST WISDOM

- Tells the life story of special forest inhabitants: 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

CONTENTS

In this edition:

- Editorial
- Knowledge of our ancestors
- The life of Grégoire Nohon
- WCF – theater – schools
- The life of our chimpanzees: Ella – a family history (1)
- The tamtam...

Editorial committee: Hedwige Boesch, Christophe Boesch, Ilka Herbinger, Zoro Bertin Goné Bi

Comics, Text: Dao N'Daw Koumba

Drawings: Désiré Koffi, Ben Amara Sylla

“Forest Wisdom” is published and distributed by the **Wild chimpanzee Foundation (WCF)*** with financial support from



The theatre and school activities are conducted with additional financial support from



*WCF – Europe c/o Max-Planck-Institut für evolutionäre Anthropologie, Deutscher Platz 6, 04103 Leipzig, Germany
WCF – Africa c/o CSRS, 01 BP 1303, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire



Hello and good health to you all!

“Chimpanzees are human beings.” That’s what the old people in the Taï region in Ivory Coast say. One old villager told me an especially astonishing anecdote: chimpanzees kill red colobus monkeys in order to get their skin and then use this skin as a backpack to transport nuts, which they crack with stones. As a proof of that story the old man put forward that sometimes one can find big pieces of monkey fur that had been abandoned on the forest ground by the chimpanzees who did not need them anymore. Young scientist that I was, I found this story exciting and started wondering a lot about the behaviour of chimpanzees.

After years of work and hundreds of hours of chimpanzee observations we can confirm that the chimpanzees in fact hunt colobus monkeys. To be successful, they hunt in groups that are organised a bit like football teams: there are chasers, other individuals who block the prey and finally the ambusher who closes the trap on the cornered prey. And yes, sometimes, one finds big pieces of monkey fur in the forest, but these are only the remains of a very well-liked meal of monkey meat and are not used as bags. Like us humans, chimpanzees like meat, hunt in groups to capture colobus monkeys and share the meat with females and children.

It is fascinating for us that the knowledge of the old people, who talk with admiration about the intelligence of chimpanzees, is confirmed and enlarged by the observations we made in the forest. Chimpanzees do not only hunt to get meat, they also use a lot of tools. One could even say that they work with tools to feed themselves. They use tools all year

long, but for a period of 3 months they use hammers – big stones or branches – to crack nuts, sometimes more than 2 hours per day. I observed one little 5-year old male chimpanzee who was devoting himself to this activity for 5 hours! Would a human child have so much patience? They also break twigs and make little sticks out of them to scrape the remains out of nutshells or to get to other delicacies like insects, honey or bone marrow.

Of all the animals in the world the practical intelligence of chimpanzees is exceeded only by humans. What’s more, at the social level, the intelligence of chimpanzee is unique in the animal world. They understand what happens in the heads of other chimpanzees and what the others were able to see and they use this knowledge to predict the behaviour of the others. Their intelligence is so impressive that in Europe it is now forbidden to conduct certain types of medical experiments using chimpanzees. One could say that the knowledge of the old people from your villages has been taken up by modern science. The chimpanzees are highly developed animals and we owe them respect.

Let’s rest on the knowledge of the old people, who tell us with regret about the lost harmony between the humans and their cousins in the forest. Let’s make sure that our children can also see these witnesses of our history who represent a unique treasure of the African forest!

See you soon,
Christophe Boesch



THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ANCESTORS

Henri Téré and Hedwige Boesch

The tree pictured here is abundant in the Taï forest in Ivory Coast and is also found from Sierra Leone to Gaboon. It is called African Walnut, in Latin *Coula edulis*. Its indigenous names are Bogüe (in Agni), Atsan (in Atié), Akiouhia (in Ebrié), Ouatou (in Kroumen), Howôtu (in Oubi) and Séatou or Sratou (in Guéré). Its nuts are delicious and greatly appreciated by humans as well as by chimpanzees. Later in this newsletter, Grégoire will tell us in detail about the astonishing way that chimpanzees use tools to process these nuts.

Coula edulis is a medium-sized tree with a straight trunk that can reach a height of 25 to 30m. Its bark is of a grey-green colour, the blossoms are yellowish. Its wood is used a lot in traditional construction as it resists termites and certain rodents.

According to the customs of the ancients, the use of the Coula tree by the inhabitants of a village could lastingly protect the members of a family. For this, the old sages of the village or the family heads used the young stem of the Coula plant, added oil palm seeds, salt and chilli pepper and said the following incantation: "Nobody recognizes you, young walnut sprout in the forest, and you, oilseed, you never die as long as you are not wounded at heart – we invoke you for the protection of this family. Only the one who has never eaten salt or chilli pepper, who has never seen the sky or walked on earth could revoke what we set up for the lifelong protection of that family."

In the traditional pharmacopoeia the bark of the Coula plant is used in the form of a decoction for rinses or enemas in the case of loin pains or kidney problems.



Sources: – Henri Gnésio Téré : « *Sempervira* » N°. 7 Signification des noms vernaculaire des plantes chez les Guérés (Côte d'Ivoire)

– « *Flore du Parc National de Taï (Côte d'Ivoire)* » Cellule d'Aménagement du Parc National de Taï

Drawing: Amon Aya Lazare (see above)

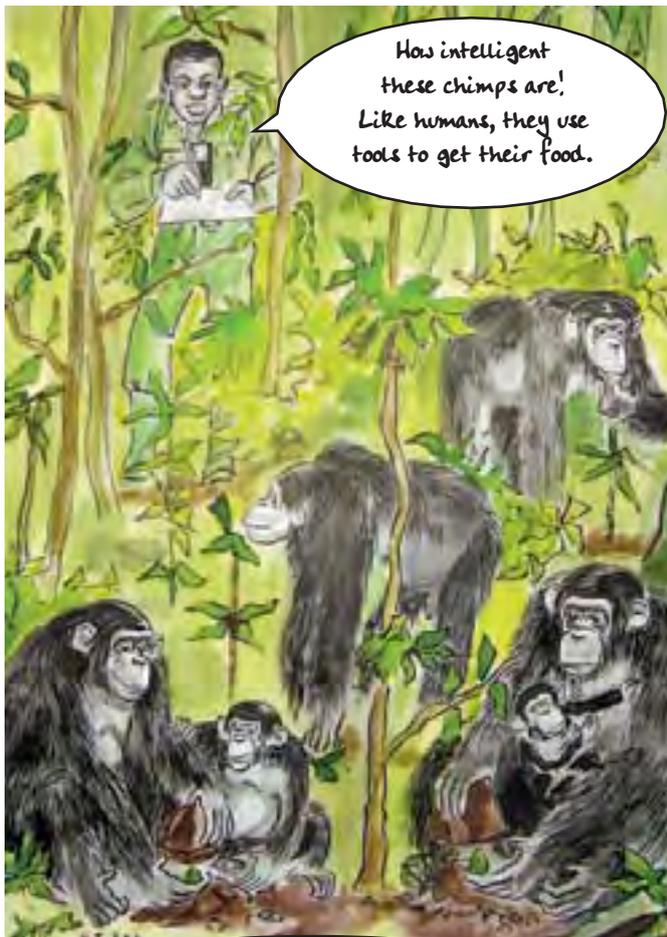


THE LIFE OF GRÉGOIRE NOHON

His discussions with the villagers about nut cracking.

Hedwige Boesch

“The life of Grégoire...”...In 1988, Grégoire Nohon became the first African assistant of the Tai Chimpanzee Project in Ivory Coast. Bit by bit, he learned to recognize all the chimpanzees of the study community, to follow them through the forest and to observe them. Astonished and more and more respectful, he witnessed with his own eyes how they used tools to crack the nuts. Every evening, he came back to the camp, his head full of pictures of these creatures, to exchange the impressions of the day with his bosses Christophe and Hewige and to write down his observations in research notebooks.



How intelligent these chimps are! Like humans, they use tools to get their food.

The use of tools

Chimpanzees are excellent tool users. In Tai, they use 26 tool types for different purposes, mainly pieces of wood, rocks and sticks. To crack the very hard Panda oleosa, one of the 4 nut species consumed by the chimpanzees, a rock is indispensable. A root emerging from the base of a tree serves as an anvil to crack nuts on. Females are especially talented and efficient nut crackers. With fewer hits they crack more nuts per minute than the males. And it's mainly females one sees cracking nuts directly in the trees and transporting rocks over long distances between trees. When they have the choice, they prefer to carry a lighter stone over a longer distance rather than carry a very heavy stone over a short distance. We, the observers, passed long months weighing and marking rocks, looking for Panda oleosa trees and then measuring the distances between the different trees to verify all this. The study of nut cracking by Tai chimpanzees suggests that in prehistory, women probably played an important role in tool fabrication and use.



Boss, that's unbelievable. Today, I watched the chimps cracking nuts just like our parents, with hammers they made on their own.

You haven't seen anything yet, Grégoire. Humans should learn to get to know them rather than to kill them.

On that point, I completely agree with you. These animals could teach us a lot.



Tell us, Grégoire, what have you seen?

I always thought that all animals were the same. Now I see that some are more intelligent than others.

Hmm! That's not possible.

What I have discovered today, Lukas, is, that these chimpanzee families are very, very similar to humans.

... THE LIFE OF GRÉGOIRE NOHON

In the beginning, the villagers are suspicious and do not believe what Grégoire is telling them, but in the end they really want to know the truth about what is going on in the forest. Above all, Grégoire implores them not to kill and eat chimpanzees because the risk of transmitting fatal diseases is high. Also, in captivity, forced to live in villager's huts, chimpanzees are only shadows of themselves, suffering martyrdom, just like humans in prison.

So, the chimps are humans.

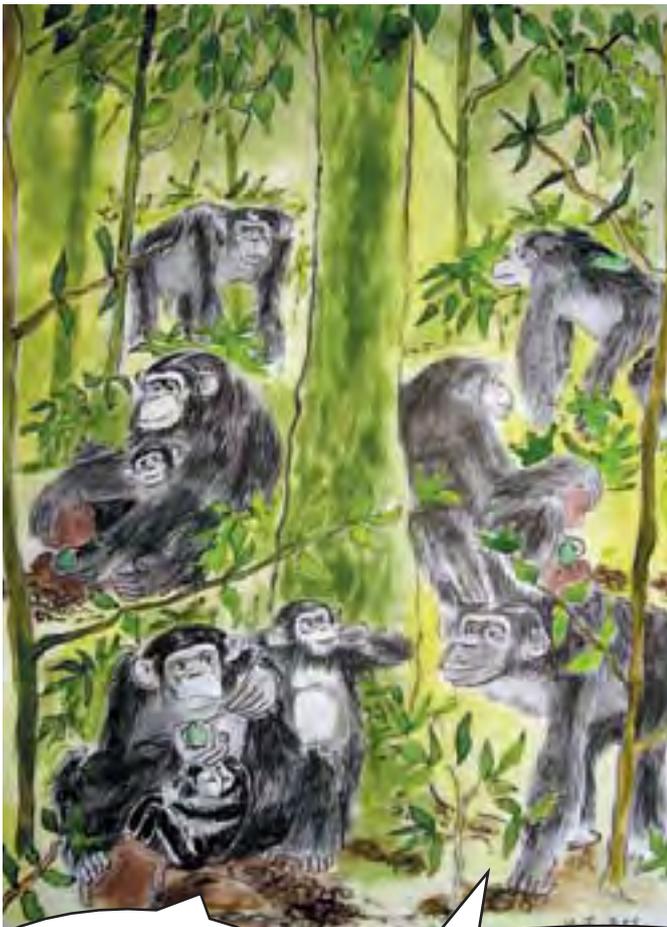
No, they're just LIKE humans... Don't kill them and don't eat them - they're too close to us and can transmit diseases to us..



Hey, Grégoire, you think you know everything - but do you know that there are unknown tribes in the deep forest who forge iron.



That's wrong - it's much simpler and even more interesting. These smiths you're talking about are chimpanzees who pound on nuts. They have gourmet appetites just like us.... And it's also completely wrong that the chimps transport hammers on their heads...



Why do you have to look at me like that...you're old enough to manage yourself, lazybones!

Hey, hang on. When you need me to protect you, then I'm there, aren't I? And I also give you quite a lot of meat after a hunt...

Grégoire explains to them how nut cracking works, it includes

- collecting the walnuts (Sratou in Guéré or Hôtou in Oubi - see also page 4),
- making and transporting the wooden and stone hammers
- opening the nuts
- making sticks to get the remains out of the nutshells
- and also sharing with the little ones, who are not yet able to manage with the tools. At the age of 3 or 4 years they manage to open the African Walnuts, but only when they are about 10 years old, they are able to open the very hard Panda nuts.

This behaviour of the chimpanzees of the Tai forest became well-known everywhere in the world by means of films and books.



The chimpanzees do not wait until the walnuts fall down... Females in particular crack nuts directly in the trees, at a height of 20m.

- They fill hands, feet and mouth, pressing a hammer against their body with one arm, with a baby clinging to their belly.
- Then they sit down on a horizontal branch and open nuts one after the other, without dropping the nuts or the hammer. While pounding with the hammer, they hold the nuts in place with a finger. To eat, they move the uncracked nuts from their mouths into one hand and hold the hammer with their foot. It goes on like that for 2 or 3 hours, sometimes even longer. And all that with 2, sometimes 3 little ones around them...



To open *Panda oleosa* nuts (Djilahè in Guéré or Gohôtu in Oubi) they need a big stone – and stones are rare in the forest.

- Females are usually the ones who remember where these tools are and transport them from one Panda tree to the next.
- They have a map of their forest in their head, just like the Abidjan taxi driver, who knows the best way between two places.
- They also break fine twigs and shorten them with their teeth to form a little stick to extract the remains of nuts from their shells!

The female chimpanzees are more talented at nut cracking than the males. But hey, gentlemen, don't worry about that, the males are not more stupid than the females, it's just that their priorities are somewhere else... like in humans! More about this in the next newsletter...

THE WCF AND THE THEATRE

Ilka Herbinger



WCF theatre tours organized by Ilka Herbinger and Zoro Bertin Goné Bi

The WCF continues to initiate and to intensify its education projects based on the very successful theatre play “Our cousins in the forest” with theatre professionals as well as with youth and school theatre groups. The various adaptations of the play concern the conflicts between humans and chimpanzees and the necessity and urgency of protecting chimpanzees and the forest. Since 2002, the play was performed 107 times in Ivory Coast, in front of an estimated total of 71,000 persons.



Chimpanzees mourn for one of their own

The theatre tour of the “Company Taïbou” and of WCF in collaboration with the local NGO “Guinée Ecologie” in the Fouta Djallon in Guinea

In May/April 2005, eleven actors and musicians directed by Mrs. Fatoumata Taïbou Diallo went on a first tour of the Fouta Djallon region, performing the theatre play “Ballall Déemou” (translated from the local language, the Poular, this means “SOS Chimpanzees”). They visited 20 villages and 9000 persons honoured the theatre company with their presence. The animated and passionate discussions of the spectators not only testified to the artistic quality of the company and to the fact that the people got the message, but also showed that the villagers are willing to and interested in actively taking part in the protection of chimpanzees. The theatre play was “interactive”, meaning that at the end of the spectacle, it’s up to the spectator to decide about the fate of the poacher who killed a chimpanzee and, in addition, wants to use the baby chimpanzee as a remedy to heal his sick child. The encouraging conclusion: By a large majority, the villagers opted for the protection of the chimpanzee and therefore against the use of chimpanzees as medications. A big THANK YOU to all the participants and SEE YOU SOON!



The WCF team answers questions after the theatre

The WCF, “Ymako Teatri” and the “Club Zangué” from Bazi afla on tour around the Marahoué National Park in Ivory Coast

From the 18th to 22nd July 2005, the fourth time since August 2004, we went on a new tour near the Marahoué. In this region, the WCF, with help of “Ymako Teatri”, encouraged and coached the local theatre company “Club Zangué” to perform a theatre play based on the message “Let’s protect the chimpanzees of the forest”! This message has been conveyed in total to almost 28,000 persons in 38 villages around the Marahoué National Park. In spite of a difficult situation due to the large number of illegal camps and plantations in the park, the people pronounced a very clear judgement at the end of the theatre play when the spectators were asked to make a statement on the lot of the chimpanzee who was killed by a poacher. The majority preferred that the corpse would be buried by a family worshipping the chimpanzee as a totem, rather than given to a family that would cook him for a big feast. There was a time when the Marahoué Park contained the most chimpanzees per square kilometre in Ivory Coast. With the support of the local population it could again become a haven of happiness for chimpanzees and other animals.



Braconnier regarde le chimpanzé « enterré »

Schoolprojects see page 12

ELLA – A FAMILY HISTORY (I)



Hedwige Boesch

In 1983, we identified ELLA, a mother one cannot ignore. Tall, well-built, very dark fur and face. Thanks to two white spots next to the nose we can recognize her. Ella is accompanied by her two sons: the baby Gérald and Fitz, a youngster of 7–8 years old, full of life, robust and ready to roam around with the adult males, as long as his mother is there to defend him.



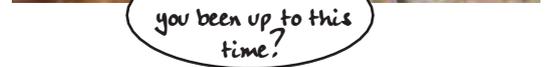
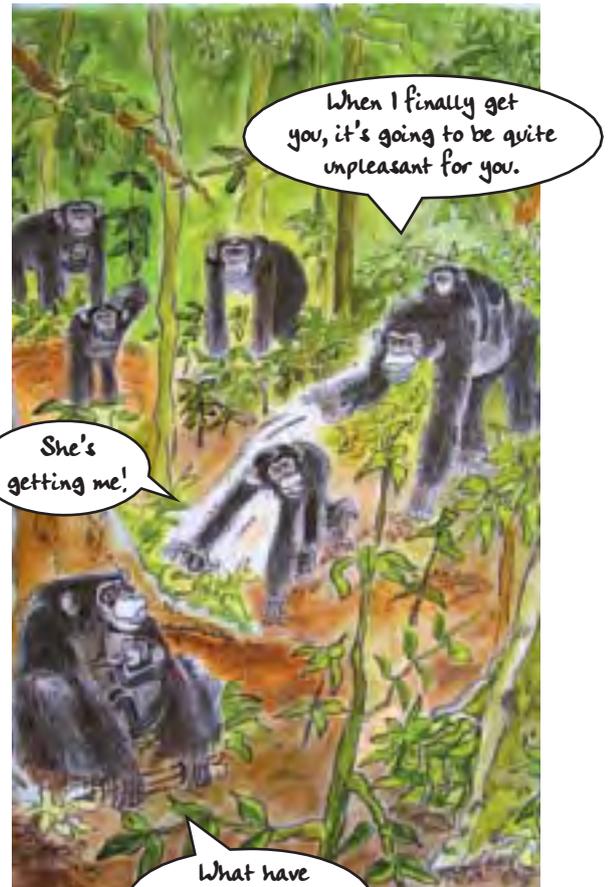
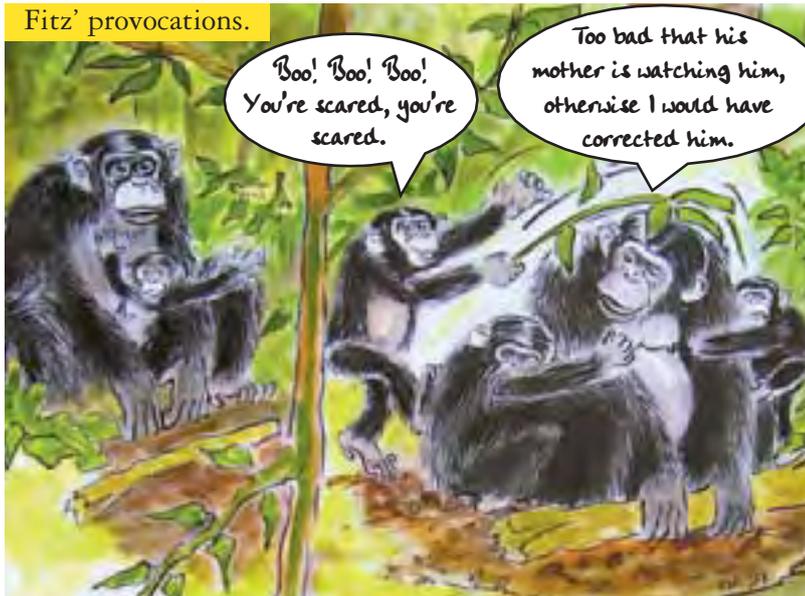
There is also Kendo, a tall adult male of a robust figure and with a beautiful round head who is well integrated into the group of males. He is strong and takes part in the hunts and the patrols along the territory.

One day, Kendo is eating a big breadfruit (*Treculia Africana* – Youroutou in Guéré, Hyroutou in Oubi). Without hesitating, Ella approaches him, the baby Gérald clinging to her belly, Fitz cheerfully running after her. The big males watch her passing ... She does not show any sign of fear and makes directly for Kendo.



Without hesitation, she helps herself with a big piece of breadfruit directly from Kendo's hands who does not make any gesture of refusal... She is clearly his mother to be allowed to act like that! Ella has 3 and not 2 sons as we thought! And we can be certain about the family connections of an adult male.

As a good son, Kendo lets his mother help herself.

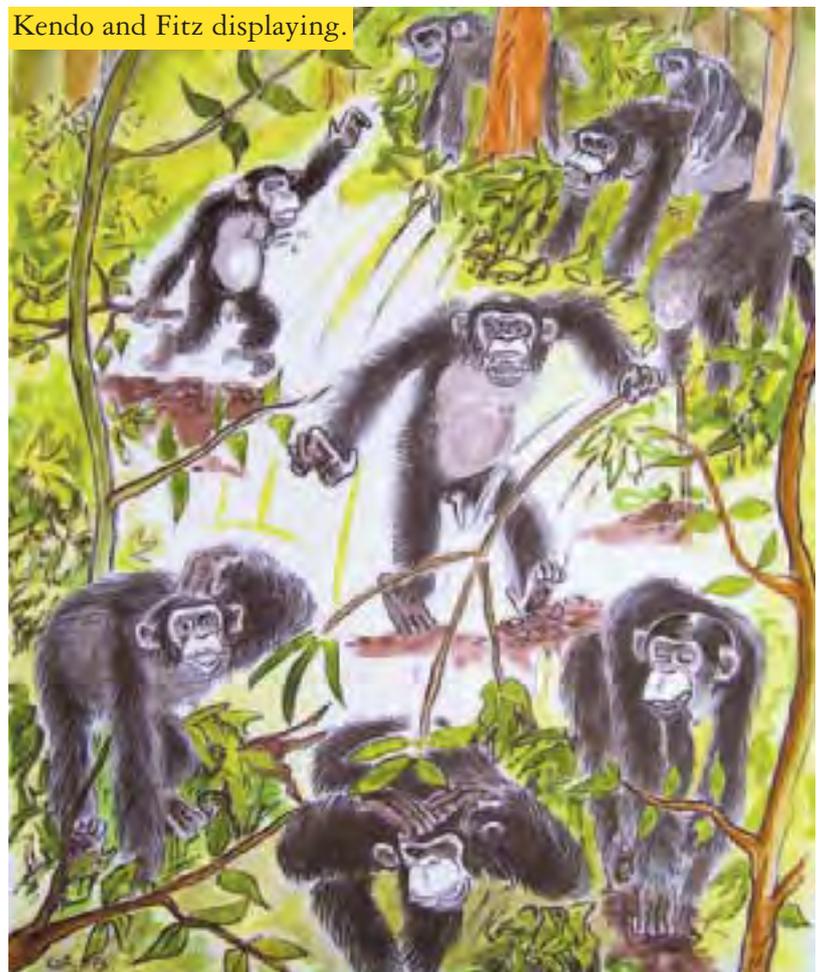
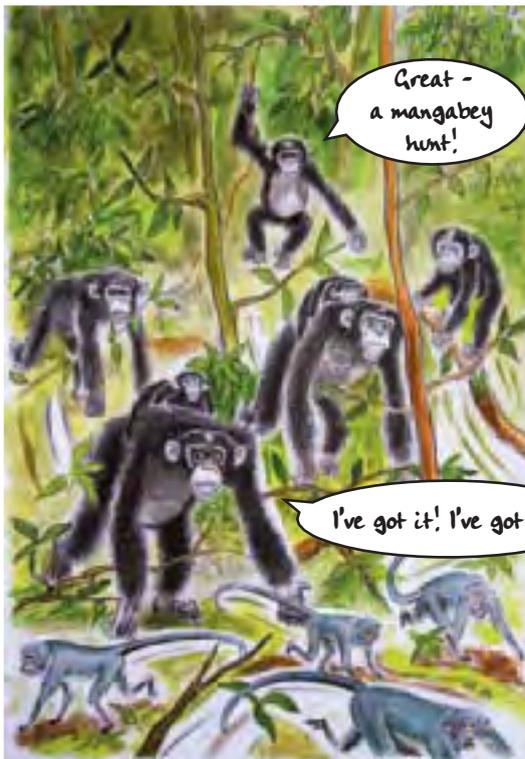


Fitz can count on his mother and his older brother. Both are ready to fight for him. And therefore he takes a lot of liberties in the group of adults.

He annoys Ricci, a tall female with two little ones, tapping her with a shrub. And with a branch he annoys the timid Momo and her baby during their siesta – a true pain in the neck! They don't dare to punish him because they can see that Ella is ready to defend him.

Fitz gains confidence and is systematically looking for trouble with all the females – a good exercise for the future, when he will have to match himself against other males! His little brother Gérald thinks that all this is very amusing and his little eyes flash with joy.

Ella gives everything for her sons! One day, she comes across a group of mangabeys, these pretty grey monkeys that move on the ground, pounces on them at full speed and catches a baby – a very small prey of only half a kilogram, a delicacy she nevertheless shares with her sons.



Who is the father?

When we speak of a chimpanzee family, we speak of a mother with her young children who are always seen together. The father is not as easy to distinguish, as there are always several males who could have copulated with a female. For some years now, scientists have been able to discern the father by collecting the excrement of known individuals. From these, they can extract DNA, this special substance containing the key to our genetic heritage in the form of so called chromosomes. This method is also used by the police to find criminals on the basis of traces, blood or hair. By comparing these “genetic identity cards” of all the individuals, the father of a child can be found. Surprise! When we looked at the genetic results and compared them with our observations from the forest, we discovered that the males play much more with their own children than with other youngsters.

Bit by bit, Fitz is leaving his mother and takes confidence in the group of males, but only when his older brother Kendo is there. The two brothers form a frightening couple: the young Fitz follows Kendo from a distance of 20 metres and is imitating him in everything he does. He drums on the same buttresses and displays in front of the same females. But when one of these females reacts and tries to attack him, Fitz is off like a flash seeking refuge with his mum!

Being the sons of such a mother, it's easy to imagine that they have a beautiful future ahead... provided they survive long enough...

THE TAMTAM ...

Project for cultural exchange between schools in Ivory Coast and Germany

Ilka Herbinge

Since 2004, WCF is working together with the "Cellule des Projets Environnementaux" (CPE), an association of teachers headed by Tanoh Koudio and his coordinator Hilaire Guiloahoux who introduced environmental education in nearly 200 schools east of the Taï National Park.

The Ivorian partner classes are in Soubré, Petit Tième and Wonséaly and the German ones at the high school of Werdau in Saxony. A first exchange of letters between the pupils of both countries has already taken place. In Ivory Coast the project started officially on the 25 March 2005 in Soubré. The pupils chose to deal with numerous subjects such as education, health, poverty, environment, art, culture, tourism, economy and the Taï National Park. In Germany the project started on the 28 April 2005 with, among other things, a theatre play about gorillas which was inspired by the theatre play of WCF and "Ymako Teatri" about chimpanzees. They also set up an exhibition about great apes and created a website dealing with different subjects (www.schulemachtzukunft2005-096.de). We wish all the participants a nice and prolific cultural exchange!



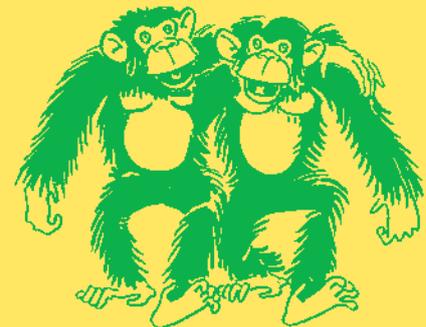
Les deux filles marraines de la cérémonie.

A GREAT AND PROMISING DEVELOPMENT IN THE TAI REGION!

Poachers on the right track west of the Taï National Park?... On initiative of young people in the Oubi canton, followed by other cantons north and south of Taï, it was decided that poaching, the selling of poached meat and other activities affecting the intactness of the park will not be supported or tolerated anymore. Numerous poachers met with members of WCF, the TCP (Taï Chimpanzee Project), the AVS (Action à Haute Valeur Symbolique) and SOS-Taï to discuss the problem and suggest solutions. We will follow this development closely to inform our readers.



Ongoing ...



- In Banco, near Abidjan: continuing projects with theatre and films, bio-monitoring (counting) of chimpanzees, creation of a museum
- Biomonitoring in the Taï and the Marahoué National Park
 - Theatre in Sierra Leone, planned for end of 2005, beginning of 2006
 - The "School exchange project" between Ivory Coast and Germany will continue
 - The school theatre in Wonséaly, Ivory Coast, together with the WCF and Ymako Teatri will continue
 - A tour with a film about the chimpanzees east of the Taï National Park in Ivory Coast



In 2005 Grégoire Nohon has received the Charles Southwick Conservation Education Commitment Award!

We are delighted that Grégoire Nohon, the first African assistant of the "Taï Chimpanzee Project" and the "Wild Chimpanzee Foundation" in Ivory Coast has received this award from an international primatological society for his commitment in conservation and education.

