

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF VILLAGE CHIMPANZEES (*PAN TROGLODYTES SCHWEINFURTHII*) AT BULINDI, UGANDA: MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS.

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Across Africa expanding human populations and forest clearance for agriculture has meant that great ape populations are coming into ever-closer contact with farming communities. Accordingly, strategies are needed to facilitate coexistence between great apes and people in human-dominated landscapes. However, little attention has been devoted to understanding the experiences and opinions of local people who live alongside these large mammals. This survey was undertaken as part of an 18-month study of chimpanzee ecology and human–ape interactions at a new site at Bulindi, a fragmented farm–forest mosaic in Western Uganda where chimpanzees and people live in exceptionally close proximity. Beginning several years prior to the study, the small unprotected forests were rapidly being cleared for agriculture and logged of all marketable timber. During May–August 2007 134 interviews were conducted with adult residents of 12 villages at Bulindi. Survey results revealed ambivalence in local attitudes towards living with these animals. Chimpanzee behaviour was widely perceived to have undergone recent negative changes. Common reasons given were that chimpanzees increasingly entered village areas for food and were aggressive towards people, particularly children (through chasing, attacking). 73% of interviewees feared chimpanzees. The apes reportedly consumed cultivars from 53% of interviewees' gardens, notably sugarcane, papaya, mango and banana. Nevertheless, 70% of interviewees saw benefits in having chimpanzees, most commonly because they reportedly chase or displace baboons and monkeys which, unlike chimpanzees, damage important food crops (e.g. maize and cassava). The findings have important implications for chimpanzee management and conflict mitigation in agricultural landscapes.

Keywords: chimpanzee, conservation, human–wildlife interactions, human-dominated landscapes