

FROM THE BONOBOS' FOREST TO THE CHIMPANZEES' WOODLAND

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Dr. Takayoshi Kano initiated in earnest the first field study of wild bonobos. He cycled around the Congo (former Zaire) and arrived in Wamba in 1973. He managed to keep the site operative for more than two decades, despite primitive conditions and political instability. Without his pioneering work, our knowledge of bonobos in their natural habitat would be extremely limited. Since then, many Japanese researchers conducted research seasonally until 1991, and developed much knowledge of the area. I joined those researches in 1984. However, the studies were interrupted by repeated political instability. We had to discontinue our research due to rioting in 1991. The research resumed in 1994, but we were forced to leave again due to two civil wars between 1996 and 2002. Although the situation has remained unpredictable since those wars, we resumed research intermittently just after the end of the war in 2002. The Wamba Forest significantly deteriorated between 1991 and 2002, and the number of groups and group sizes of bonobos in Wamba also dramatically decreased. I also began in parallel the ecological study on woodland-dwelling chimpanzees in the Ugalla area, Western Tanzania. Population density of chimpanzees at Ugalla is very low, and various human activities are threatening the survival of the chimpanzees in this area. We must push forward conservation activities for the co-existence of bonobos/chimpanzees and human beings. This talk introduces the history of bonobo research at Wamba and the fieldwork on woodland-dwelling chimpanzees in Ugalla.

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