

WHAT WE KNOW FROM NEST GROUPS OF BONOBO AT WAMBA: HABITAT USE, SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FEATURES, AND COMPARISONS WITH CHIMPANZEES

M.N. Mulavwa¹, K. Yangozene¹, M. Yamba-Yamba¹, B. Motema-Salo¹, N.N. Mwanza¹, T. Furuichi²

¹*Research Center for Ecology and Forestry, Mabali, Bikolo, Equateur, D.R. Congo,* ²*Kyoto University, Inuyama, Aichi, Japan*

Presenter's Email: mbanginorbert@yahoo.fr

We examined the location of nest groups, spatial distribution of nests within a nest group, and attributes of individual nests of wild bonobos at Wamba, D.R. Congo. We also examined the seasonal factors influencing nesting behavior, and compared the nest group size with the 1-hour party size during the daytime. Monthly rainfall or fruit abundance did not significantly influence the monthly mean nest group size. Nests were built in swamp forest for as many as 13% of observation days, which suggested the need for reevaluation of the use of swamp forest by bonobos. The use of swamp forest was influenced not by seasonal rainfall or fruit abundance, but by the fruiting of specific species. Significantly preferred tree species for building nests accounted for 19.8% of standing trees, which suggested that the selection of sleeping sites was not largely restricted by the distribution of specific species. The mean 1-hour party size was almost identical throughout the day and to the mean nest group size. Parties of bonobos sometimes split into smaller nest groups in the evening, especially when feeding on non-preferred fruits in the season of fruit scarcity. By contrast, when feeding on preferred fruits while ranging in large parties, they often aggregated to form even larger nest groups. When sleeping in small- or middle-sized nest groups, they tended to aggregate the next morning. These tendencies may reflect the gregarious nature of bonobos who prefer to range or sleep together as far as circumstances allow. We compare these results with those known for chimpanzees.

Keywords: bonobo, nest group size, party size, seasonal change in food items