

HOW CHIMPANZEES (*Pan troglodytes verus*) IN GUINEA-BISSAU RESPOND TO ANTHROPOGENIC CONTEXTS: A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

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Understanding local people's perspectives of non-human primates (hereafter primates) may improve long-term effectiveness of conservation initiatives, especially in areas of high anthropogenic disturbance, because attitudes and beliefs are thought to inform people's behavior. Guinea-Bissau in West Africa hosts 10 species of primates, including chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*), most of which inhabit mosaics of fragmented humid forests, savannahs, mangroves and agricultural fields. They share their habitat and resources with local human populations, often entering cultivated areas to crop-raid, resulting in high levels of human-primate contact. We discuss local people's complex relationship with primates in Guinea-Bissau, in particular what they know about these species biology, habitat and ability to adapt to human-influenced areas, whilst exploring social and cultural differences in perceptions and attitudes. Ethno-biological inquiries were conducted in order to collect quantitative information regarding people's zoological knowledge and their criteria for categorizing animals. In general, people demonstrated some knowledge about chimpanzee biology; chimpanzees were grouped together with other primates but grouped separately from other non-human animals. However, differences in local knowledge and perceptions of chimpanzees exist according to people's gender, age, ethnicity and religion. Local people acknowledged similarities between chimpanzees and humans that have resulted in a taboo against eating chimpanzee meat. In certain situations chimpanzees are however considered crop-pests and feared due to their large-body size, especially by women. Understanding perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards primate species at sites of high anthropogenic impact is not only of theoretical interest, it is vital for the long term sustainability of conservation initiatives.

Keywords: chimpanzees, Human-chimpanzees interaction, Ethnoprimateology, Anthropogenic Contexts