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A NATIONAL BONOBO CONSERVATION STRATEGY: ARE WE READY FOR SOME SPATIAL MODELLING?

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This symposium brings together bonobo conservationists, spatial modelers and conservation planners to examine our current knowledge of bonobo distribution and densities and evaluate the extent spatial modeling may be applicable to bonobo conservation planning. Estimated bonobo numbers vary widely: between 5,400 and 100,000 individuals may exist across a 200,000km² range in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (<http://pin.primate.wisc.edu/factsheets/entry/bonobo>). Ongoing research programs and recent field surveys are improving our understanding of factors that influence bonobo distribution and densities. Survey observations and insights contribute to spatial models designed to predict habitat suitability in areas not yet surveyed. In addition to informing species conservation strategies, the confirmed and predicted bonobo areas serve as critical inputs to conservation planning models that can be used to generate cost-effective reserve design scenarios. These scenarios could be crucial to shaping the DRC's land use planning initiative. This symposium starts with an introduction to spatial modeling and conservation planning software as potential tools for bonobo conservation. We will present current knowledge of bonobo distribution and densities as well as the initial findings of the impact of various human activities on these. Models will be presented for predicting bonobo abundance and nest habitat based on auxiliary ecological data and information gathered from satellite images. Our final presentation will evaluate what available information allows us to achieve with spatial modeling, and the gaps needed to be addressed in order to optimize the use of spatial modeling as a planning tool for bonobo conservation.

Keywords: bonobo, conservation planning, spatial modelling