

Research Activity Report
Supported by “Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science”
 (Please be sure to submit this report after the trip that supported by PWS.)

	2019. 09, 26
Affiliation/Position	Wildlife Research Center/M1
Name	James Brooks

1. Country/location of visit
Mbali/Malebo, DRC
2. Research project
Study on wild bonobos living in forest-savannah mosaic environment
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2019. 08. 19 – 2019. 09. 13 (25 days)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Dr. Shinya Yamamoto, Associate Professor at Kyoto University Institute for Advanced Study, Kyoto University
5. Progress and results of your research/activity (You can attach extra pages if needed)
Please insert one or more pictures (to be publicly released). Below each picture, please provide a brief description.
<p>During this visit, I was able to visit the unique bonobo sanctuary Lola ya Bonobo and learn about captive care, conservation and rerelease efforts, look into the possibility of studying wild bonobos living in a unique savannah-forest mosaic environment at Mbali/Malebo, and learn about arranging of logistics and negotiations with local collaborators in Kinshasa. . I used this opportunity to greatly improve my knowledge of wild bonobo behavior and ecology as well as continue to develop field skills.</p> <p>We started our trip at Lola ya Bonobo, from August 20-22, where I could learn about reintroduction and captive welfare efforts and even meet with other leading bonobo researchers and conservationists such as Frans de Waal, Zanna Clay, and Claudine Andre, as well as observe infant bonobos and large groups in a sanctuary setting. The tolerance and cohesiveness of the groups was striking, especially during feeding times, where food distribution was uneven but there were almost no direct agonistic interactions. We observed the infants getting their daily baths from human mothers and could see very clearly how strong the bond was developed and the importance of reassurance to young bonobos, who frequently ran back to their mothers when interactions became tense. From discussions with other researchers I learned about many current research interests, especially reconciliation, as well as methods for observing bonobos in captive settings, and tips on quickly recognizing large numbers of individuals.</p> <p>We next went to Kinshasa from August 22-28, where I helped translate between English and French in discussions and negotiations with our local collaborator, Mbou-Mon-Tour, and through that learned a great deal about both the opportunities for collaboration and challenges in establishing and maintaining a field site for scientific research, as well as the important relations between research, conservation, and community development. I also learned the necessary preparations for trips to more isolated field stations and strategies for navigating the city.</p> <p>We then went to the field site of Mbali/Malebo until August 12, where I could get a view of life along the Congo river and the varied nature surrounding it. In the field, I was able to record videos daily of several interesting social behaviours, including food sharing (where an infant took bites from a large fruit held by her mother Dambo while in a large tree near the forest edge at around noon), adult male-male sexual behavior (between an adult male, Gon, and subadult male, Essiana, which was followed by an extended grooming session in a fruiting tree in the early morning), many vocalizations (including communication between fissioned subgroups and food-related vocalizations), and even a few instances of bonobos traveling through the savannah (though visibility was low and we could only see them passing), in which no papers about their behavior have yet been published. I was inspired with many ideas about possible studies such as locomotion patterns of apes in different environments, fissioning frequency in such seasonal environment, and especially how tolerance and group cohesion is affected by relatively dry environments. I also noticed interesting differences with what I have read about chimpanzees and even bonobos in different environments, such as frequent male-male sexual contact, possible opportunities for tool use, and navigation through wide open areas. Through this experience I was able to get much more experience trekking through both forest and savannah and learn</p>

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about local plants and bonobo diets, and about relations with the local trackers and the villages nearby bonobo habitats who welcomed us kindly and are involved and supportive of conservation efforts. I was also able to get a glimpse of surrounding environments through the boat trip up the Congo river to the field site and the flight back where I could see an aerial view of the forest-savannah mosaic.

Overall it was an incredible experience to be able to see bonobos in their natural habitat, especially in such a unique environment, learn about the complex relations involved in their research and conservation, and continue to get insights from experts as I observed and throughout the journey.



Forest as seen from ground in typical day following bonobos



Aerial shot of forest-savanna mosaic as seen from air on our way back to Kinshasa



Meeting with local chief at Nkala village the end of our time in the field



Feeding time at Lola ya Bonobo, where bonobos happily wade through water to get fruit



Picture with trackers on our last day of field work
(From left: me, Maurice, Luambo, Eddy, and Professor Yamamoto)



A young male (Essiana) resting on a branch

***Please have your mentor check your report before submitting it to [report@wildlife-science.org].**

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6. Others

Thank you very much to Professors Yamamoto, Idani, and Shintaku for all their support and arrangements throughout the trip, all of whom were absolutely vital to the trip’s success and were great people to be with in the field. Thank you also to all the trackers for their continued support and efforts. Thank you to Mbou Mon Tour, WWF, and the people of Nkala and surrounding villages for their dedication to bonobo conservation and protection.