
<NEWS>**A Status Update of Bonobos in
the DCR. Threatening Effects
of Logging Concessions and the
Bush Meat Trade.**

Karl Amman

The following material was sent by Swiss wildlife photographer Karl Amman to the editors of Pan Africa News concerning a recent visit he made with some other concerned conservationists to the Mentole logging concession on the left bank of the Congo River in the DRC. The purpose of his visit was to establish the conservation status of bonobos in these parts and the role logging plays in it.

Mr. Amman noted that the results were "less than encouraging". He spent two weeks traveling large sections of the Lopor, Yekokora and Lotondo river. There he and colleagues interviewed "dozens" of villagers, village chiefs, former and present employees of the logging company SIFORZAL (now SIFORCO), missionaries, logging company executives of a neighboring concession

and many hunters. The conclusion reached was that "SIFORZAL is in many ways directly or indirectly involved in the commercialization of the bush meat trade and the illegal hunting of the bonobo and other protected species." These were some of Mr. Amman's findings:

1. Most of the 12 gauge shotguns used in this area have been produced in the workshop/garage of this concession. Hunters order them [from company] workmen and delivery time is generally about two months. It is assumed that SIFORZAL tools and materials are used to produce these guns.
2. The SIFORZAL boats are used to supply practically all the cartridges used in the region. Independent traders travel on board with ammunition, but to a big extent the trade seems controlled by the boat captains and the Personnel manager (we were told that occasionally cartridges also arrive on the company aircraft). The cartridges are sold in shops at the SIFORZAL port, at the different market sites and from the residence of the Personnel Manager. (When we arrived old stock had run out due to the temporary closure of the MACC ammunition factory in Pointe Noire, Congo. The day we departed 50 boxes with 2 500 cartridges arrived which we estimated with the hunters, would result in another 50 - 100 bonobos being shot out of the trees).
3. When the cutting crews go out in the morning up to six hunters travel on the vehicle. Generally one or two company employees bring their own gun and cartridges and they are then excused from logging duty by the Team Chef and they spend the day hunting, returning on the same vehicle the same afternoon, sharing out part of their bounty. Besides these company employees professional hunters are also taken on board and they are deposited en route or at the road head where they follow the same routine.
4. As for the prospecting crews: They spend up to two weeks on survey work and they are supplied with one or two company employees as hunters and 50 cartridges.
5. In the past most of the meat so procured was eaten by the 200+ employees. Since about 2 years most is exported on the SIFORZAL boats and floats to Kinshasa. It would appear that at the time the company lifted the ban on passengers traveling on these timber floats and employees and their wives are now offered free passage.

As a result many wives of employees have become bush meat traders, buying up meat from hunters along the various rivers and the bi-monthly market of Bompindo and then transport this meat to the capital (we saw and filmed 7 smoked bonobo carcasses even though there was a serious shortage of cartridges.)

6. An invalid has on at least two occasions bought orphaned bonobo for NZ 800 000 at this same market and transported them on the SIFORZAL boat to Kinshasa.
7. In many villages and the market we found heavy steel cable, as used to tie the log floats together, for sale in standard 1.5 m pieces. These are then unwound to make snares and it was confirmed that all these cables come from or are stolen from SIFORZAL.

In talking to hunters having worked areas previously logged by SIFORZAL such as Issanzani, Beongo, Mentole and Lomoko, it was confirmed that once the base moves on, there is practically no game left, certainly no genetically viable populations of bonobo."

Amman comments that "[SIFORZAL] had agreed to cease logging in 'concessions' so WWF could turn the area into a bonobo sanctuary." The Beongo section of the concession ear marked for this sanctuary, however, Amman claims no longer has any bonobos. He suggests that "the way to go would obviously be to hand over part of the concession which has never been logged with assurances that it will not be touched. Like the proposed area between Lomako River and the Yekokora..."

This document has been edited with the permission of Mr. Amman and all concerned individuals are invited to directly contact Mr. Amman for further details and any update information he may have at:

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