

**<NOTES>****Green Passage Plan  
(Tree-Planting Project) and  
Environmental Education Using  
Documentary Videos at Bossou:  
A Progress Report.**

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A group of chimpanzees at Bossou, Guinea, has been studied by Sugiyama and his colleagues since 1976. Research has been fruitful, with results focusing on behavior, ecology, and a variety of tool-using skills unique to this group. However, environmental conditions for the chimpanzees themselves are considerably less than favorable at Bossou. The area surrounding their habitat has been transformed into savanna as a result of cultivation. More than a thousand Liberian refugees have been streaming into the village of Bossou since 1990. Japanese researchers of the Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University, in cooperation with local villagers and supported by the Japanese government, the Guinean government and the Japanese embassy in Guinea, launched two projects aimed at protecting the chimpanzees.

**1. Green Passage Plan**

The chimpanzee population at Bossou is at present isolated from neighboring conspecific groups. In 1982, Sugiyama noted the arrival of a single immigrant male to Bossou, yet no comparable additions to the group have been observed since then. There once existed a number of chimpanzee communities in nearby areas, these, however, are inferred to have gone extinct over the course of the 1980s. The nearest group now lives in the Nimba Mountains, at a distance of approximately 10 km from the center of Bossou. Savanna vegetation extends along a radius of at least 4 km between Bossou and the Nimba Mountains, which makes migration between the two groups extremely difficult. The number of chimpanzees at Bossou has been fluctuating

around 20 over the 23 years. We can therefore infer the high likelihood of genetic problems arising if the situation does not change for the better. It is for these reasons that Japanese researchers are planning to create a "Green Passage" by planting trees in the savanna area along a 300 m wide 4 km long stretch of land extending between Bossou to Nimba, with the hope of enabling exchange between members of the two groups.

In 1997, with the first visit to Bossou of the ambassador Mr. Tsunekawa of the Japanese embassy, Matsuzawa and his colleagues embarked on a small botanical garden project (Projet Petite Jardin), as a pilot attempt at the Green Passage Plan. Several kinds of trees have been planted in this small garden, which is constructed and maintained under the initiative of local assistants. Hirata and Morimura examined the progress of the small botanical garden project during research at Bossou in July 1998. The garden had been constructed on 0.5 hectares in the peripheral savanna area of the chimpanzee habitat. Several local assistants cut the bush then selected and planted nursery trees from 28 species, all of which can be found in the core area of the chimpanzee habitat at Bossou. The number of trees planted was estimated at a total of about 250, approximately 50 % of which were alive when we made the inspection. The variety of tree species will be extended to cover all the main species inhabiting the core area of the chimpanzee habitat in the near future. The Green Passage Plan will then proceed based on results obtained from the small botanical garden project once the survival and growth of trees has been verified. The small botanical garden project is financially supported by "*Kusanone-Musho*", an overseas aid program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan, and the Green Passage Plan receives support from CCCC-Japan.

## 2. Environmental education using videos

Bossou provides a rare example of a site where wild chimpanzees and local people have been living together, sharing the resources of the same forest. Part of the reason behind this peaceful coexistence lies in the beliefs of the native villagers who consider the chimpanzee to

be their totem. In 1990, however, a large number of English-speaking Liberian refugees began to flow into the village of Bossou. The vast majority do not speak French, the official language of the area. Considering the special character of Bossou, that is, the coexistence of wild chimpanzees and local people, understanding and cooperation by all who live in the area are necessary to protect the chimpanzees. As the first step in the environmental education of local people, in 1993, Matsuzawa and his colleagues started to organize video screenings of documentaries to promote a better understanding of the chimpanzee. Since then, we have used the video materials for educational purposes every year. This year, the film we showed was a Japanese documentary, "*Ai: The intellectual chimp*". This film provides a summary of chimpanzee research at the Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University. Contents include the use of number, the use of symbols, the use of "money", and imitation, in addition to extensive footage of tool use in the wild. The latter focused on wild chimpanzees using a pair of stones to crack open oil-palm nuts at Bossou, while the rest of the film outlined research with captive chimpanzees. We organized two video screening sessions, on July 20 and 24, 1998, using a public house and a video equipment. Around 300 people (most of them children) gathered in the small house for the first showing. Local assistants and several other related people attended the second show. Both groups showed heightened interest in scenes depicting tool use by wild chimpanzees at Bossou. Overall, we have received positive feedback to providing local inhabitants with information about our research and the results we obtained through the showing of a documentary-style video. We believe this to be an effective way of educating people about the importance of chimpanzee conservation. As mentioned above, wild chimpanzees and local people live together at Bossou. In order for efforts to be successful, researchers and locals should go hand in hand to protect the chimpanzees. We therefore plan to continue our education program through the showing of videos. Another documentary on chimpanzee tool use at Bossou has been completed recently ("*A hard nut to crack*"). We hope to screen these new

documentaries during our next visit to Bossou over the coming winter. Financial support has been provided by CCCC-Japan and the Japan Environmental Corporation.

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