

BONOBOS FACT SHEET

What are bonobos?

- Bonobos officially became a species in 1933
- Bonobos look a lot like gorillas and chimpanzees¹
- Bonobos share 98.7% of their genetic makeup with humans
- Bonobos are about two-thirds the size of humans and are covered with dark hair
- Bonobos have black faces, red lips, two or three web toes, a tail tuft, and parted long hair²

Where do bonobos live?

- Bonobos live in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- Many Bonobos live on wildlife reserves; a reserve is a place where scientist can study and protect specific animals

How do bonobos behave?

- They use human-like gestures when communicating without sound (for example, bonobos beg by stretching out an open hand or they whimper if they fail at something)
- Bonobos walk on their feet and their knuckles; they also use their arms to suspend themselves from trees
- Bonobos live together in communities, ranging from 30-80 individuals
- During the day, bonobos spend their time in smaller groups to forage for food
- At night, Bonobos make beds from branches and trees³

What do bonobos eat?

- Bonobos' favorite food is fruit
- Bonobos also eat leaves, flowers, seeds, bark, fungus, and honey⁴

What challenges do bonobos face?

- Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the 1990's
 - In 1991 riots broke out in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and people who lived in the city began to flee to rural areas
 - By 1996, the country was officially in a civil war and researchers had to leave the wildlife reserves
 - During the war, bonobos were killed for food and their habitat was destroyed
- Logging and industrial agriculture is destroying the bonobo habitats and causing a decline in the population⁵

¹ Toshisada Nishida, "Bonobo," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., February 12, 2020), www.britannica.com/animal/bonobo

² "Bonobo." (African Wildlife Foundation, January 21, 2020), www.awf.org/wildlife-conservation/bonobo

³ "Bonobo." (African Wildlife Foundation, January 21, 2020), www.awf.org/wildlife-conservation/bonobo

⁴ "Bonobo." (African Wildlife Foundation, January 21, 2020), www.awf.org/wildlife-conservation/bonobo

⁵ Rachel Nuwer, "The Surprising Way Civil War Took Its Toll on Congo's Great Apes," Smithsonian.com (Smithsonian Institution, March 7, 2016), www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/surprising-way-civil-war-took-its-toll-congos-great-apes-180958298

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