

# Bonobos

Bonobos are the closest you can get to being human without being human. Bonobos look more like humans than other apes, and act like us as well. Bonobos and people share more than 98% of the same genetic make-up (DNA). Bonobos and their cousins the chimpanzees are more closely related to people than they are to gorillas! Like gorillas, they dwell only in the forests of central Africa.

Bonobos are great apes, along with chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas and gibbons. The people who have lived with and among bonobos in the Congo forest have many legends about how bonobos and man were brothers in the distant past. They tell stories about how bonobos showed people what foods to eat in the forest, how a bonobo saved a man who needed help how bonobos themselves are trying to become human.

We know that their numbers have been dropped a lot during the war. Urgent help is needed.

## A Different Kind of Ape

Bonobos walk bipedally, which means on they walk on two feet, far easier and for a longer time than the other apes. They are highly intelligent. Some bonobos in captivity have even learned to use human language!

### Peaceful and powered by females

... In contrast to the competitive, male-dominated culture of their close relative the chimpanzee, bonobo society is peaceful and matriarchal (girls run the show). Bonobos live in large groups. While in many ways, males and females have "separate but equal" roles, females carry the highest rank, and the sons of ranking females are the leaders among males. Females form close bonds which is another way they keep their power among males, who are larger and stronger.

Like chimps, bonobo females migrate to other groups.

## "Make Love, Not War"

Bonobos seem to believe in the 1960s hippie saying, "make love, not war".

## Swinging' in the Trees ... Singing' in the Breeze

You'd better look up! Bonobos spend a lot of time high in the rainforest canopy. These apes move through the trees swiftly and gracefully. They also travel on the ground, often single file along their own sort of trail system. They tend to like swampy areas, where sometimes they dig for grubs or small crustaceans. Bonobos keep a map of the forest in their minds. The way they communicate, we do not understand yet.

Bonobos live in groups of up to 100, breaking up into foraging (looking for food) groups by day and gathering to nest at night. When bonobos gather in the trees to make their night nests, they call out like chimpanzees.

Bonobos eat a variety of foods, including fruits, nuts, seeds, sprouts, leaves, and mushrooms. They eat various parts of plants, including the leaves, flowers, bark, stems, and roots. They also eat small mammals, insect larvae, earthworms, honey, eggs, and soil. Unlike chimpanzees that form hunting

parties to capture monkeys, bonobos do not hunt mammals. On rare occasions, they have been observed to eat duikers (small antelope) or flying squirrels, but this seems to be more of an accidental encounter.

Bonobos do forage for "mbindjos," or caterpillars of various butterflies. Mbindjos are also collected and eaten by local villagers who share the forest with bonobos. In fact, people of the Congo and bonobos eat many of the same foods.

