

located west of the Nimba Mountains, the only World Natural Heritage site (UNESCO/MAB) in Guinea. French and Dutch scholars had carried out early studies of the fauna and flora — including chimpanzees — of this area<sup>1</sup>. In 1976, Yukimaru Sugiyama launched a long running field study of the Bossou chimpanzees<sup>2</sup>. Since then, many researchers from the Primate Research Institute of Kyoto University (KUPRI) have made contributions to a joint effort to study the chimpanzees and to promote the conservation of their habitat<sup>3</sup>. Bossou chimpanzees are well known to use a variety of different tools, including the use of a stone hammer and stone anvil for cracking open oil-palm nuts<sup>4</sup>. Other unique examples of tool use in the repertoire include pestle pounding<sup>5</sup>, and ant-dipping<sup>6</sup>.

KUPRI organized an international symposium celebrating the 30th anniversary of chimpanzee research at Bossou in association with two Guinean public institutions, DNRST (Direction Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique) and IREB (Institut de Recherche Environnementale de Bossou), the official counterparts of the scientific collaboration between KUPRI and Guinea that began 30 years ago. The international team of researchers called KUPRI-International is carrying out long running studies of Bossou-Nimba chimpanzees based on a formal convention with the two Guinean authorities. The symposium was entitled “Research and Conservation of the African Great Apes: The 30th Anniversary of the Bossou-Nimba Project”. The symposium was held from 27 to 29 November, 2006, in Conakry, the capital of Guinea. The first two days, during which oral presentations were delivered, were held at the Hotel Riviera Palace, while the third day consisted of a film festival at the Franco-Guinean Cultural Center. The official language was French throughout the entire period. The symposium was opened by an address from the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, followed by a speech by the Japanese ambassador, Mr. Rinzo Kataoka. Dr. Tamba Tagbino, vice director of the DNRST, presented a summary of the collaboration between the two countries, Japan and Guinea, in terms of the scientific research of chimpanzees at Bossou, Nimba, and the surrounding areas.

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## **Bossou 30 Years**

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This article provides a report on an international symposium held in Guinea in 2006 and will briefly summarize the current situation of a small group of chimpanzees living near Bossou in Guinea, West Africa. Bossou is a village



Apes Planet: the Chimpanzees of Bossou” by TF1/WLP/Ushuaia, and “Le Pacte de Bossou” by France3/Gaia-Video-Concept documenting the unique coexistence of humans and chimpanzees at Bossou. All films were shown with French narration, and after each presentation Tatyana Humle answered questions posed by the audience.

After the symposium in Conakry, some of the participants traveled to Bossou, 1,050 km from the capital. A ceremony was held on site, on the 3rd of December, to commemorate the project's 30th anniversary. The Manon people of Bossou village acted as the hosts of the ceremony, joined by the Guinean and foreign researchers and their local assistants. The Manon has a religious belief that their ancestors are the chimpanzees that inhabit the sacred forest of Mont Gban behind the village. The chimpanzee is one of the totems of the Manon family that founded Bossou village. The ceremony of Mont Gban incorporated performances by three masked men and traditional dancing accompanied by drumming.

Bossou chimpanzees are very unique: they are not afraid of humans and coexist peacefully with them (Fig. 2). This is in part due to the attitude of the local Manon people and partly to the long-running habituation by the researchers. Bossou is home to about 2,500 villagers. The chimpanzees live in the secondary forests of the hills surrounding the village, so that they have to cross roads to move from one part of the forest to another<sup>7</sup>. Over the past 30 years, the number of chimpanzees in the Bossou community has been stable at around 19 individuals on average (range: 16–22). However, there was a flu-like epidemic in November 2003 and we lost five chimpanzees within a short time<sup>8</sup>. The number of Bossou chimpanzees is now 12, stable over the past three years. We have been applying strict rules to protect this precious community: we always keep our distance from the chimpanzees, limit the number of tourists, wear masks during



Fig.2. Chimpanzees at Bossou cracking nuts with stone tool  
(Photo by E. Nogami)

observation, and so forth. Bossou is located only 4 km from the border to Liberia and 8 km from the border of Cote d'Ivoire. The two neighboring countries were recently shaken by civil war and many refugees fled into the Bossou area. Bossou chimpanzees also occasionally range into Liberia. The KUPRI-International researchers, in collaboration with IREB, the villagers, and local NGOs, initiated a reforestation program called the Green Corridor Project (Projet Corridor Vert) in 1997<sup>9</sup>. This project has the aim of planting trees to enlarge the forests of Bossou and create a corridor over the savanna that separates the hills of Bossou from the Nimba Mountains. In Nimba, there is another community of chimpanzees, with the unique culture of making ground-nests<sup>10</sup>. The green corridor aims to connect the fragmented forests of Bossou to the large primary forest in Nimba in order to secure the exchange of individuals with adjacent communities. Bossou chimpanzees have been utilizing the forests of the Nimba mountains more and more frequently. The KUPRI-International team, in collaboration with the Guinean authorities DNRST and IREB, will make continuous efforts to monitor the Bossou chimpanzees and to promote conservation efforts in the area. Please visit the following web site for further information:<http://www.greenpassage.org>.

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