

# African Apes Initiative

Africa is home to four of the world's five great ape species, including the bonobo, chimpanzee and two species of gorilla, the eastern and western. Unfortunately, all four of these great ape species are either endangered or critically endangered.

Africa's great apes face a number of threats, including:

- Habitat destruction and fragmentation,
- Poaching,
- The risk of disease transfer from humans, and
- The pet trade.

Through the newly launched African Apes Initiative (AAI), the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is working through, and with, stakeholders throughout West and Central Africa to protect great apes and their habitat.

## How It Works

The African Apes Initiative leverages the funding strength and conservation expertise of AWF—including our decades of experience conserving mountain gorilla and bonobo populations—to create a holistic conservation program that effectively addresses the range of threats facing great apes.

The initiative identifies landscapes with the potential to sustain viable African ape populations over the long term, and then works with partners on the ground to conserve those ecosystems. By combining the expertise of AWF and local stakeholders, we can ensure that great ape populations—not to mention the other critical fauna and flora found in the landscape—stand a much better chance of survival.

How the initiative works:

- **AWF prioritizes those great ape habitats most in need of conservation intervention.** The objective of AAI is to work toward conserving at least one population of each of the nine subspecies of African apes. We select target populations based on this and other factors, such as the level of threats to their survival and the viability of working with certain partners on the ground.
- **We work with park authorities and other partners on the ground, such as local NGOs and researchers, to identify the gaps in local conservation support.** Discussions and field visits with local stakeholders help determine the conservation challenges being faced there and the potential role that AWF may play.
- **We provide seed grants and technical support for critical interventions.** Targeted intervention work can help stave off the most immediate of threats, while allowing AWF to determine what future efforts are necessary or viable.

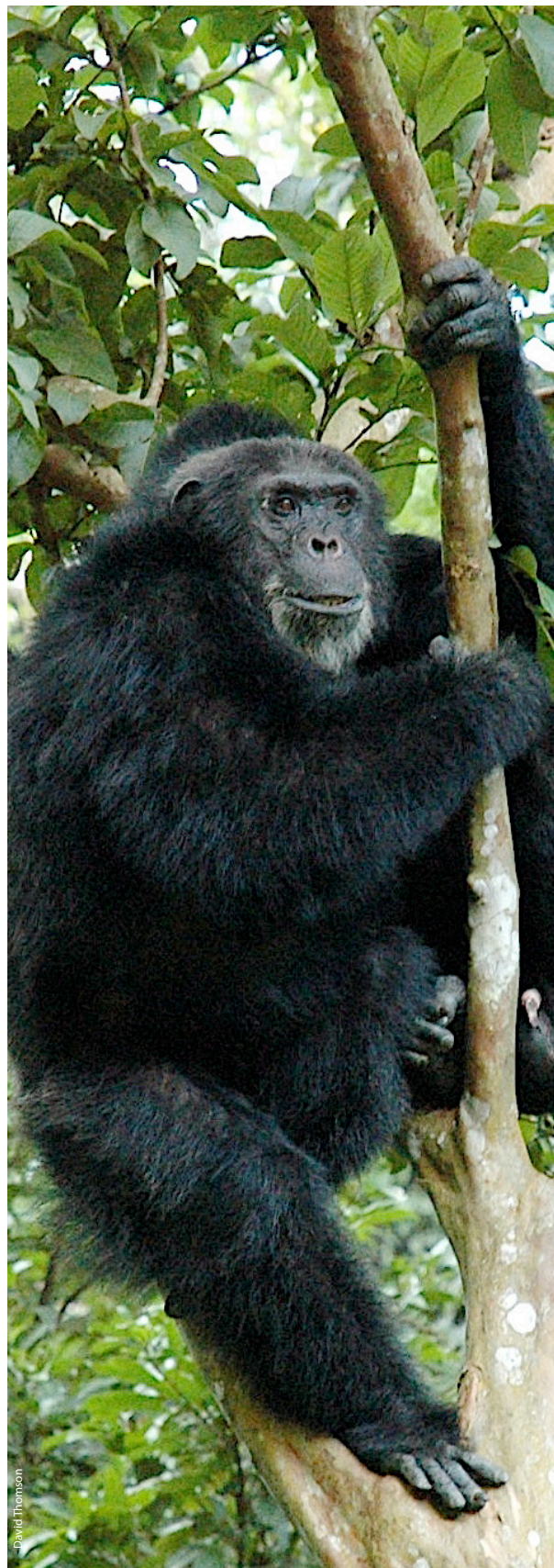


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- **AWF implements a long-term conservation strategy.** Ecological data and knowledge gathered from initial interventions allow AWF to develop a well-informed, comprehensive conservation plan that is tailored to the specific threats of target locations.

Ultimately, AWF's goal is to act as a collaborating force in critical great ape landscapes. AWF's experience and broad expertise in Africa allows us to identify and bring together relevant stakeholders—from wildlife authorities and researchers to local communities and NGOs—to create a strategic plan that ensures the future of specific great ape populations.

## Initial Project Areas

The African Apes Initiative has launched preliminary activities in three target ecosystems:

- **Lomako–Yokokala Faunal Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).** This part of the Congo Basin is home to an estimated 1,000 bonobos—as well as other wildlife, such as the endemic Congo peacock and giant pangolin. AWF worked with the Congolese Wildlife Authority and the community to establish a 3,625-km<sup>2</sup> faunal reserve and a scientific research center within the reserve. Community members have been trained in ecological monitoring and are being employed to protect the reserve. Lomako—and the conservation activities that continue here—serves as a model for AWF's other projects under the African Apes Initiative.
- **Niokolo–Koba National Park in Senegal.** Part of the transboundary zone of the Manding Plateau in West Africa, Niokolo–Koba and its periphery is home to a specific population of western chimpanzee that uses both woodland and savanna habitats. AWF provided training to the park authority here in using the CyberTracker ecological monitoring tool to collect field data on chimpanzee distribution and numbers. This will assist in the formulation of an anti-poaching plan for the park.
- **Dja Biosphere Reserve in northern Cameroon.** Dja hosts a representative population of both the central chimpanzee and the western lowland gorilla. AWF has conducted preliminary scoping in the evergreen Cameroonian–Congolese forests of this region. As with Niokolo–Koba, AWF provided training to park authorities in Dja on using the CyberTracker ecological monitoring tool. Plans are underway to formulate an anti-poaching plan in the reserve.



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