Field research fellowship on bonobos in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The BonDiv project ([www.bondiv.org](http://www.bondiv.org/)) is accepting applications for a research fellowship located in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The BonDiv project is a large-scale collaborative research project that aims to investigate and document bonobo intraspecific diversity, allowing for simultaneous study of multiple sympatric species. While current plans are for up to 5 sites, the project aims to expand up to 30 sites within the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Research sites are located in exceptionally remote regions, with no (or very little) internet connection (but with access to a satellite communicator).

Each site will accept two people with complementary expertise: a Congolese person with expertise in working remotely within the local culture and a Fellow with relevant scientific knowledge. The fellowship appointment will have a duration of 12-15 months and will begin with a training workshop in Kinshasa, DRC, at the end of 2022/beginning of 2023, followed by 12 to 15 continuous months at the respective field site. We encourage all fellowship candidates to familiarize themselves with their country’s travel advisories before applying. Be advised, that all activities will fall within the geographic range of the bonobo, comprising the provinces of Tshuapa, Tshopo, Mai-Ndombe, Equateur, and Maniema.

About the Fellows:

Under the mentorship of local experts and the PIs Martin Surbeck, Erin Wessling, and Hjalmar Kuehl, each fellow will benefit from gaining valuable fieldwork and applied conservation experience, including data and sample collection that will contribute to the scientific understanding of the bonobo ecology including food availability, prey species, other sympatric wildlife, climate, and the relevance of human impact. Other learning opportunities will include the conducting of social surveys and the collection of a multitude of organic samples to support genetic, pathogen, diet, metabolomics, and isotope analyses of the bonobo ecosystem.

In order to standardize the methods of camera trap data collection, Fellows will be receiving training to refresh knowledge and gain first-hand experience with the installation of remote video cameras and subsequent regular revisits for maintenance and data download. Building upon the skills acquired and refreshed in the workshop, the fellow will then practice data collection, data entry, sample storage, and monthly reporting of progress and results in the field.

Along with the first-hand research data collection and analysis, fellows will also gain experience with other aspects of project management including hiring field assistants and reporting back to the PIs and the coordinator on budgetary and fieldwork status updates.

Those individuals who would be the best fit for the fellowship may have a combination of the attributes below:
● undergraduate degree in biology or a related field
● 6 + months of fieldwork experience, preferably in remote areas of the tropics
● conversational competency in French and English
● to be proficient with email communication, MS Excel, and Word
● good interpersonal and communication skills
● experience working with an international team
● communicate clearly and regularly via remote connections with coordinator/directors
● comfortable to live and work in a context and culture potentially significantly different than your own
● willing and able to live away from developed areas, isolated and with minimal living conditions (no plumbing, electricity, or housing) in extremely remote locations
● experience with GPS, camera traps, and biological sample collection
● proficiency with Cybertracker, QGIS, BaseCamp/MapSource

Expectations of conduct for Fellows: - respectful to members of local communities and wildlife - honest and accountable communication with project management - no drug use (including alcohol) allowed in camp or during working hours - sexual and/or gender-based harassment of any type will not be tolerated - failure of any of these points will be grounds for immediate dismissal at your own expense.

About the Fellowship:

This fellowship will offer:
● unique opportunity to gain field experience in the central African rainforest with the world’s least known ape species
● fellows will receive rigorous training and gain proficiency in diverse research and scientific methods relevant for careers in applied conservation and ecological research
● all expenses covered, including visa, roundtrip flights to Kinshasa (DRC), transport to/from the site, and lodging and food during the project
● all necessary equipment to perform diverse sets of research
● scientific contribution recognized in publications using samples or data that fellow collected
● $450 monthly per diem to cover incidentals
The following will be the responsibility of the Fellow:
● health insurance that covers emergency repatriation and liability, including COVID-related illness
● vaccinations required for entry into DRC prior to departure, and any medications recommended for remote field work, including malaria prophylaxis
● clothes, shoes, and personal field equipment (a suggested list of these items will be provided)

Applications should be submitted by September 30th, including a CV, letter of interest highlighting qualifications/experience, and the names and emails of three references to info@bondiv.org with ‘Field fellowship’ in the subject line. Interviews will be conducted via zoom.