



EDITORIAL by Aliette Jamart

Here is it, the one we did not expect anymore. Six months later. This is a record in the HELP's annals. A complete restructuring has completely turned our functioning upside down. Despite the tidal that has overwhelmed us, we are always there.

At the end of the year, the presence in France of Aliette Jamart enabled to retain donors who continue to trust us. Moreover, it enabled us to build a new HELP INTERNATIONAL Office with former volunteers like Laetitia, our Secretary, and Delphine, our Treasurer. Carole and Sophie are part of the Board too.

We would like to thank Michel Louis from Amneville Zoo for his additional aid of one thousand euros.

More than ever, we reiterate to say that our association is not suitable for psychologically fragile people.

Keep your trust in us; help the Congolese wildlife, forest, without which all our efforts are in vain.

More than ever, our chimpanzees need you.

HELP INTERNATIONAL is computerizing its system. Marie-Françoise suggested the GESTASSO software, which keeps track of memberships, sponsorships, donations and allows properly managing the files.

We regret the departure of Gilles, our former accountant for years, who is going to devote himself to his family and his coming baby.

Marc represented HELP at the PASA veterinary workshop. In England, Lucie attended two important workshops: The "PASA manager" and the "PASA reintroduction".

Arnaud Gotanegre, a friend and forest engineer, came to Congo to introduce us to his young wife, Sandra. He was delighted to see the progress of the project and to meet Marc. Swarming with ideas, we hope to have him with us to achieve them.

The SFDP symposium of Kinshasa enabled us to gather Delphine, HELP INTERNATIONAL President, Marc and Gotanègre couple. Serious discussions and the promise of a quick return on Congo should allow more progress.

The return of Tina on the island...a success! Now, we should think to release.

Thank you to Amneville Zoo, who took over the edition and publication of this gazette.

HELP International is considered as public interest. Help us and pay less income tax.

Gazette's layout edited by Yann Le Hellaye

HANDS GAME WILL END IN TEARS?

For our chimpanzees, the term “hands game for smart players” would be more appropriate. What is the difference between them and us, simple *Homo sapiens*? Chimpanzees have almost four hands, and four against two, that changes everything!

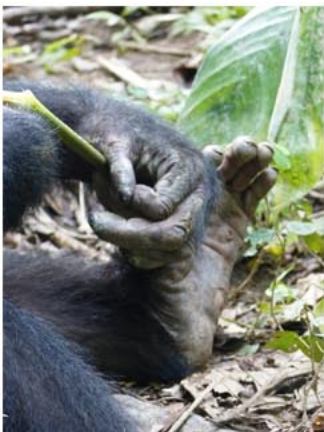
The evolution has allowed adapting themselves perfectly to their environment and to their way of life. For us, being in a standing position has transformed our feet into stabilizing elements, in order to be anchored on the ground (Maybe, that is why we say “To have ones feet on the ground”?) with, of course, a locomotive role but I must admit, we don't do a lot with our feet, hence the French expression, literally: “As stupid as his feet” (which means “Not the brightest match in the box”).



For chimpanzees, the foot is a hand: the opposable thumb is always present and mobility & sensitivity are extremely high.

With their four hands, agility of our cousins is just outstanding. They can move wherever they want, and catch up in any circumstance. Climbing a 6.5 feet diameter tree? No problem. Swinging from branch to branch? No problem. Catching a vine in the sky? No problem. To take some reserves when going nest, once again, no problem: two fruits in each hand, two fruits in one foot (some also in the mouth), the fourth foot is used for locomotion (in that case, there is much to be said, it's easier).

In conclusion, all minutes spent to observe chimpanzees are lessons to be learned about their intelligence, finesse, dexterity...



Anecdotally, for all those who came to see us in Congo, we think about Banane, at the Sanctuary, who, from his 75kg, loves to touch neoprene suits and is able to lightly touch your cheek when he is grooming you. More recently, Tina, during her stay in the camp, showed us she could defeat a double knot by gently using her fingernail, unbuttoning a shirt, turning the pages of a book with her finger...

And their strength...they can explode a coconut in 30 seconds, tear a metal sheet, flip a 200 liters barrel with one hand...a strong grip is required.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR...

1 veterinary: four-month stay by year to relay Lucie and Marie-Françoise

1 camp chief: long-term stay, one-month rest by year

Varied volunteers: long-term stay, six months minimum, all competencies are welcomed

1 responsible for the touristic field: reception, development and framing

Students able to work in a savage and secluded environment

BUDDING BOTANISTS

Since the arrival of HELP on the location of the Triangle, botanical research has continued to take place: the first time, attendees discovered in the same time than chimpanzees a lot of different fruit trees...Sketches and photographs multiplied.

Over the years, our botanical knowledge has tremendously evolved, not only thanks to chimpanzees that led us directly to the remarkable trees, but also thanks to the motivation and hard work of people who helped us.

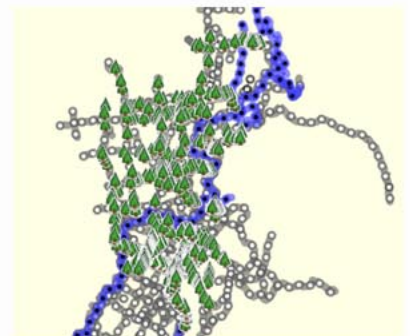
Since the acquisition of GPS in 2009, we started to computerize the data. In the beginning, it was for testing. But in 2012, new work began: the idea is to conduct a census of the Triangle area: every path is roamed and trees are identified in a 10 meter radius around the paths. Our aim is to create a true tree map of the site, classified by species, by family, by zone...once registered in a computer, synthesis work becomes a true playground for mapping enthusiasts. We have been bringing some samples to the camp in order to facilitate our researches, reviewing some books, creating photo albums with unknown trees...what a job!

But once again, thanks to the presence of ultra-motivated people (camp leaders, volunteers, local workers), we are moving forward. Currently, we have a photographic database of over 140 trees, more than 50,000 trees identified, and more than 15 "to identify trees" files.



What is the goal? With a full flora mapping (of course, it will not be exhaustive) and thanks to our knowledge of fruiting periods, we will have real tools to anticipate rich areas in fruits, according to the season, we will know the average distribution of species and it can be used in comparison with other sites. With the goal of releasing chimpanzees, knowing perfectly the density of trees and their fruits volume, we could anticipate the best season to give their freedom.

There is still a lot of work but we are already very proud of the work made by our team Thank you!



HAPPINESS & DISAPPOINTMENT...

It was a big surprise when Tessie and Emilie came to visit us, in our camp, both with a small ball hung to their belly. They came to present us their newborns.

We all hoped that this double birth would increase the survival probability of babies but, unfortunately, nature is often cruel. Emilie has lost, once again, her baby after a probable attack of wild chimpanzees, probably spawners. Fortunately, Tessie's baby is doing well and we wish him a long life.



www.help-congo-stories.org

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WELCOME ON THE NATIONAL ROAD N°5

We had already discussed, the ferryboat crossing the Noumbi River is a part of the fun. To continue the construction of the brand new road going to Gabon, engineers brainstormed to find a way to cross heavy construction equipments on the other side of the river. However, there has been a problem: the old ferryboat is neither large enough, nor strong enough to carry such huge devices.

So, they decided to completely rebuild the ferryboat, enlarging and lengthening it. Then, ramps are directly linked on the ferryboat, whereas they were fixed on the banks before. After a few weeks of welding and some coats of paint, the ferryboat is ready to operate. For the ramps, it was different: it was necessary to remove the old system, and, there the first mistake occurred: ramps and concrete blocks that kept them fixed to the banks fell into the water, in the middle of the river, preventing the docking of the new ferryboat.

After a few more weeks of reflection and tests that led to failure (it is a really heavy piece of concrete with a steel IPN beam fixed on it), they decided to put an excavator on the ferryboat to remove the awkward piece of concrete from the water. But, here's the thing: there is no bearing surface on the water. And when everyone got on the same side of the boat, you can imagine what happened. I let you admire what occurred to the excavator.



Don't worry, we also prefer to laugh about it...

Fortunately, our friends managed to send a new machine on the other side of the river and we hope to be able to re-cross vehicles shortly... Following in the next issue!

HELP INTERNATIONAL: NEW OFFICE, NEW BOARD



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