

E-mail from Nicolás Corredor

There are so many different memories that I keep from LuiKotale; going out in the morning and see the galagos flashing their eyes towards you, a silent duiker foraging under the cover of the night, elephants grasping grasses while we cross the rivers going to see bonobo. Then arriving silently to the nest site, hearing the first branches breaking while bonobos wake up and



stretch, the males going out of the nest and standing still staring at nothing, a little bit like us in the morning when the alarm clock ringed and it is time to jump out of the tent. I experienced many different things with bonobos, going to the pools and see them eating water lilies was always fascinating despite the swampy and stagnant water going up to the chest (despite being 1.85m tall!), counting bites to measure intake rates, and realizing how similar they are to us while they lick their hands and remove the fleshy mesocarp of a Gambeya fruit, but I will forever keep in my mind those first times in the forest.

Even though I come from a megadiverse country like Colombia, Congo biodiversity, and abundance of life paralyzed me. I was completely astonished to see the hornbills flying from tree to tree, the chants of the great blue turaco, plus all the mammals on the floor! Several duiker species, honey badgers, red river hogs, elephants, and then you moved to the trees and you see all these pangolin species, wolf monkeys, mangabeys, colobus, squirrels, galagos, pottos, just incredible. I was lucky enough to be chased by elephants while being with bonobos, to encounter leopards and African golden cats, to chase hippos until they splashed us with water and disappear under the water, but it was my first week at Luikotale that I remember and perish the most. Gottfried and I went out for a walk in the forest, I remember that he stopped every once in a while to teach me something about a fruit, a tree an animal hiding behind a vegetation patch, then Kat (the PhD candidate that I assisted with data collection) ran into us; bonobos had disappeared during the handover and she was running to catch up with them. Gottfried looked at me and said “incredible, after 9 hours in the forest, she manages to keep running” and so, she disappeared down the trail. We waited for bonobos in different parts of the forest, we heard them a couple of times, and then, when I thought it was over and we were going back to the camp without a bonobo nest, Gottfried smelled something and we changed direction. After waiting for some minutes, we saw a black shadow running through the forest... so fast, so quiet, and so beautiful. During the next minutes we cut through the vegetation and found bonobos nesting, it was the first time I saw a bonobo, it was the first time I saw something so beautiful and the most shocking event was how relaxed they were in our presence.

Many nests I had during my time there, many mornings under the pee rain to get one sample, many times with the tsetse's, the midges, the snake encounters, many times under the rain for hours, many times with the feet under the muddy waters, drowning in swamps, with thorns, vegetation patches, and yet what I remember the most, is the peace LuiKotale brought to my mind, the accomplishment of my inner child long-life dream!

It's just incredible what Bonobo Alive is accomplishing, protecting all this biodiversity, learning from it, sharing it with the world, and allowing people like me, to accomplish their dreams.

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