

## E-mail from Cristian Alvarado

I can start saying that I had the most amazing quarantine ever, my lockdown was in the middle of the forest, yes in the middle of the forest. I never imagine crossing the Atlantic Ocean during a pandemic, just to go and follow Bonobos. I still remember my first encounter with them, I was under their nest, seeing them waking up, just a lot of movement in the trees, a lot of branches shaking, lianas



swinging and then coming out from the mist of the morning I saw this amazing primates climbing down reaching the ground, and then walking on their four limbs, so majestic, so powerful and at the same time so peaceful, I still have that image on my mind, seeing this Bonobos walking around me just doing their life, that's when I knew that I was in the right place... But I only had to wait a few minutes to see the real madness which stole my heart.

I never thought that following bonobos was that hard, suddenly I was running through the forest, waking up at three in the morning to get to the nest before the bonobos come out from their beds and have what I used to call a "bonobo shower" which means staying under the nest and wait until the bonobo pee fall on you and be able to collect it, maybe.. if you are lucky, perhaps, some solid things can also fall on you (know what I mean?), and that's how the morning used to start. You can probably have a really nice day, not much walking and easy feeding sessions or your day can just be total madness: running through swamps, lianas all around you, crossing rivers or the terror of must of us Haumania patches where sometimes you have to crawl to pass through, you also can be attack by ants or bees or sweet bees or tse-tse flies. But somehow you forget about all this, being with bonobos is the most amazing thing, I can assure you they always, always do something that make you laugh, something that make your curiosity grow even more, even seeing them just sitting doing nothing. Watching them behave, such things as grooming, this thing of given kisses during the grooming session was unbelievable! And chaotic moments as food sharing, I have no words for this. But the most amazing thing for me personally is: when suddenly the dominant female, most of the times, scream and everybody goes up to the trees and begging to build the nest, I still can hear this sound of a breaking branch; seeing this primates folding branches one over the other just amaze me every day, every single day I couldn't help it, it always was like the first time when I see them building their bed.

Being in Luikotale was a changing life experience, you learn to appreciate the little things, to see the best of the people, I learn so much from everyone in camp, share experiences with the local people

was one of the most remarkable things, going with them to the forest is a whole learning session. I still cannot believe that I was in Africa, running behind bonobos,

having encounters with elephants, going to the bathroom and see a group of monkeys passing right in front of you while you are doing your business, sleeping in a tend and then suddenly hear a bunch of antelopes running around in the middle of the night. People always ask me how I do this, the answer always is "I don't know, is so much fun", and thinking that this could be gone someday, makes tear my eyes, that's why I have to thank to Luikotale Bonobo Project and Bonobo alive for this amazing job, for this great effort, for this great fight to preserve this forest and these amazing animals. So... thank you so much! Like we say in Colombia: "Me quito el sombrero" which in English means: "I take my hat off". Thank you so much for let me be part of this and I hope to see you a next time.

¡Abrazos!

Cristian Alvarado Tamayo, Colombia.