

First Year Report -- March 2008  
to the ARCUS FOUNDATION

A New Conservation Landscape for Bonobo:  
Discovery and Conservation of the Tshuapa-  
Lomami-Lualaba Landscape, DR Congo

Submitted by the  
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through the Lukuru Foundation  
Executive Director, Jo Thompson

Matching funds (2 yrs) through the *Abraham Foundation*

Additional Matching funds (1yr) acquired through *USFWS*  
Additional funding has been raised through *Iowa Great Ape Trust*,  
*Canadian Ape Alliance*, *Edith McBean* and *Wildlife Direct*



Tshuapa-Lomami-Lualaba Project

## Executive Summary:

An essentially unknown area in the very center of DR Congo is the focus of this project. The “TL2” teams set out to explore an area bridging three river basins, the Thsuapa, Lomami and Lualaba. In just a few years they hope to inventory great apes and other large mammals, understand major threats and develop the necessary collaborations to address those threats. Already the initial explorations are 2/3 completed with the revelation of important wildlife distributions and major bushmeat hunting threats. Inventories are underway and collaborations are growing with unexpected allies such as the National Army (FARDC) and a group of three new village associations that coalesced within an isolated hunting community.

## Aknowledgements :

This project would not have been possible without the relentless encouragement of the Alexander Abraham Foundation. We thank Nancy Abraham for her confidence in our team and we thank Messiane Cazé of the Abraham Foundation who has made critical contributions to the management of this project. TL2 is their child.

Equally essential has been the generosity of Jo Thompson and her Lukuru Foundation team who have offered simple solutions by offering their “umbrella”, their concern and their time. We still need all of these!

The breadth of our analysis and the quality of its presentation continue to be assisted by the creative dedication of Nick January and Maria Carbo.

The TL2 watersheds and all their large fauna are indebted to the National Congolese Army (FARDC) and particularly General Kifwa and Major John who took the initiative to clear out the poaching network and the automatic rifles that were endangering local bonobo as well as the last population of forest elephant in the TL2.

Finally we thank the Congolese National Conservation Institute (ICCN) that has been our national sponsor and has assisted us not only by providing the necessary documents but also through frank advice and absolutely essential arbitration to assure the successful continuation of the project.

## Introduction:

John and Terese Hart have done biological research work and conservation in DR Congo for the past thirty years. The unexplored, little known forest between the Lualaba and the upper Tshuapa has long been intriguing and a challenge. It was uncertain if Congo's endemic great ape species, the bonobo, occurred within this region and if it did, through how much of it and at what density. It was equally uncertain how people used the area and what other important fauna was present. Could a protected area be defined and accepted locally and nationally within this "forgotten landscape"?

Five years ago the Harts started working with Ashley Vosper in Salonga National Park conducting an inventory of bonobo and its threats. Having completed that work they wrote a proposal to continue bonobo work with Ashley in the forested basins bridging the Tshuapa, Lomami and Lualaba Rivers or the TL2 landscape. They knew that there was a well-trained and seasoned group of Congolese able and eager to do excellent survey work in difficult forested regions. The Harts had a long history working in close collaboration with the Congolese Conservation Institute (ICCN) and had good relations with the other international and national NGOs working on the ground within the bonobo's range.

The Harts applied to the Arcus Foundation with guaranteed matching support from the Abraham Foundation. Their proposal came through the Lukuru Wildlife Research Foundation, an NGO with long experience on the ground in DR Congo and committed to responsible bonobo conservation, working through traditional community structures as well as national structures.

Arcus Foundation agreed to support two years of funding at 150,000 USD per year and Abraham Foundation agreed to match each year with 50,000 USD.

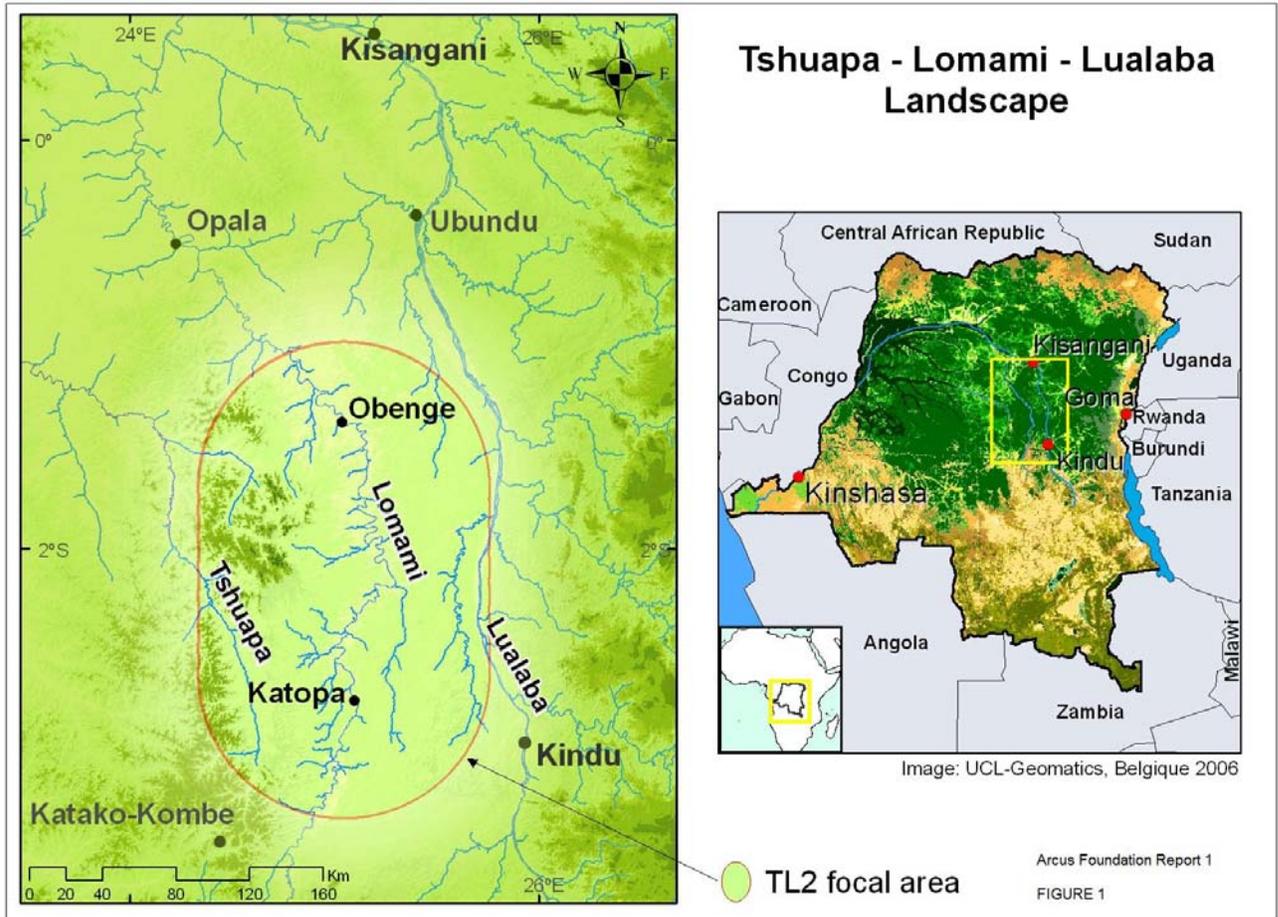
Since then we have received additional short-term funding for our work in the TL2 from:  
USFWS -- 100 000 USD

Iowa Great Ape Trust (for communications equipment) – 10,500 USD

Canadian Ape Alliance (to support a trainer and a training session) – 8,000 USD

Edith McBean (to investigate the presence of un-described primates) – 20,000 USD

Wildlife Direct (donations from a blog audience) – <http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/>



**A. Narrative description of the activities undertaken during the first year:**

Three objectives guide this spring-board initiative into a previously little-known area of bonobo (*Pan paniscus*) range. These include:

1. Explore the entire Tshuapa-Lomami-Lualaba (TL2) core forest in order to determine presence/absence of bonobo and other key mammals as well as to assess major threats (2/3 completed in Feb 08 including new areas added)
2. Inventory selected areas in order to determine population numbers for bonobo and to gain a better understanding of their distribution within the TL2 landscape (first inventories started in February 08)
3. Develop collaboration for conservation that is rooted in local communities but stretches to territorial, provincial and national levels and includes other international NGOs and conservation supporters. (this is underway at all levels)

Below I will report on the progress we have made on all three of the objectives as well as give a brief summary of several unexpected developments:

- The potential of creating a national park in the TL2 core forest
- Growth of a small community gardening project developed under objective 3
- Arrest and removal of two major elephant poachers and all their guns  
<http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/2008/03/20/two-down-for-the-lomami/>
- Discovery of new primate distributions and possibly un-described primate taxa

Explore the TL2 core forest to determine the presence of bonobo, other large mammals and major threats.

The little known area that we set out to explore covers approximately 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the forest block that starts south of Kisangani. As a result of the 2007 explorations we have now shifted the focal area south to include an extended forest savanna border southwest of Kindu (FIGURE1). This ecotone contains exceptionally high densities of bonobos and a major conservation potential. The extension includes blocks of savanna within a forest matrix over a distance of many tens of kilometers with little human occupation. The entire landscape overlaps the watersheds of the Tshuapa, Lomami and Lualaba Rivers.

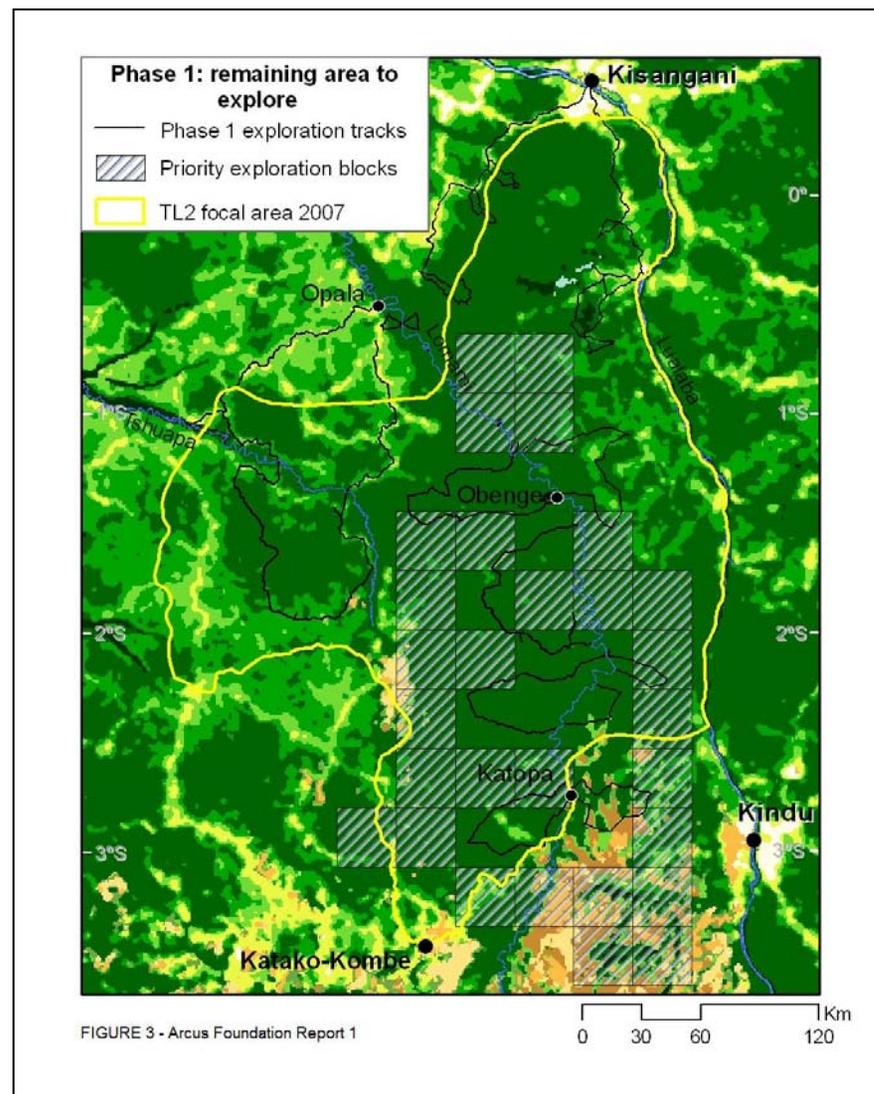
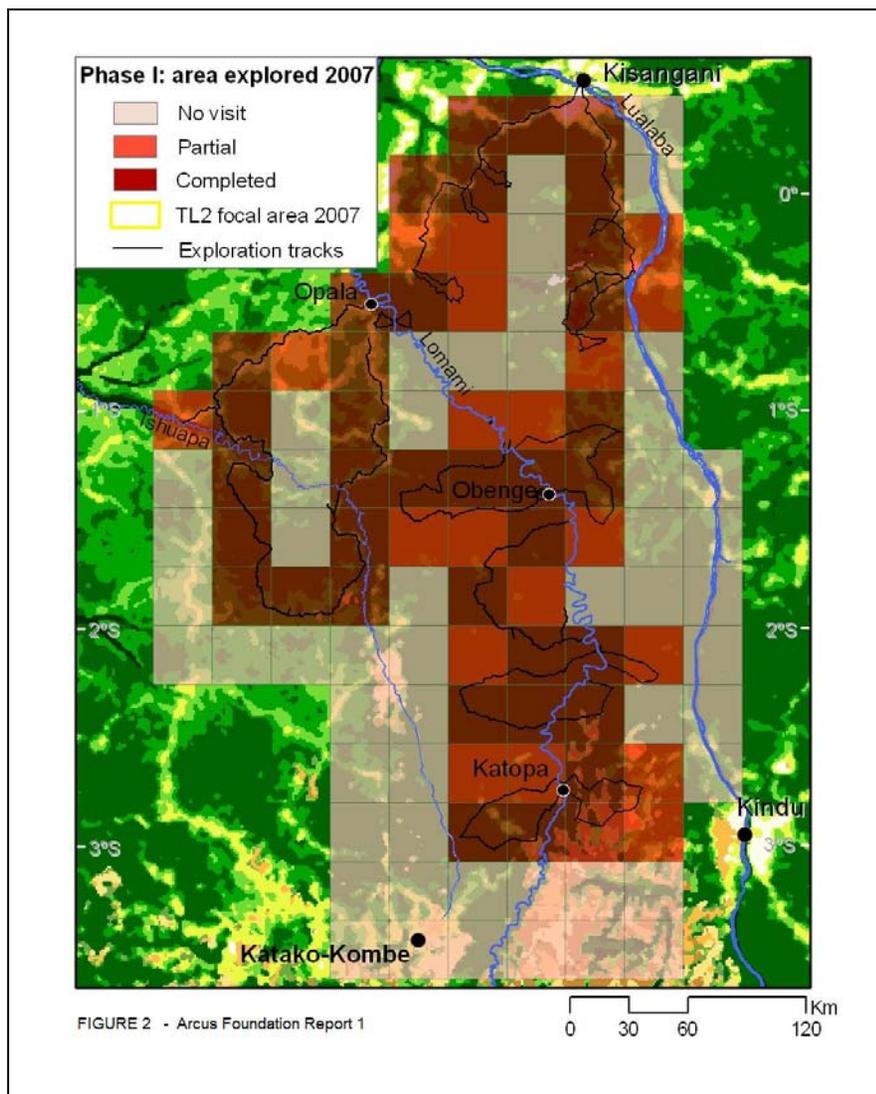
Three expeditions into the landscape occurred during 2007 (TABLE 1, FIGURE 2) and one is currently underway in 2008.

The exploratory circuits of 2007 can be combined into six principal areas as shown on TABLE 1. Of these areas the two northern ones (south of Kisangani and west of Opala) as well as the most western one (south of Tshuapa River) had a greatly reduced fauna. The southern-most circuit (Katopa) showed us that the bonobo distribution extended further south than we had expected with the greatest density of bonobo continuing through the southern forest border. Together these reasons explain the shift in the entire core area further south as shown in FIGURE 1. Final exploration is now being completed within the revised area; as simultaneously, the first inventory circuits of phase two have been started.

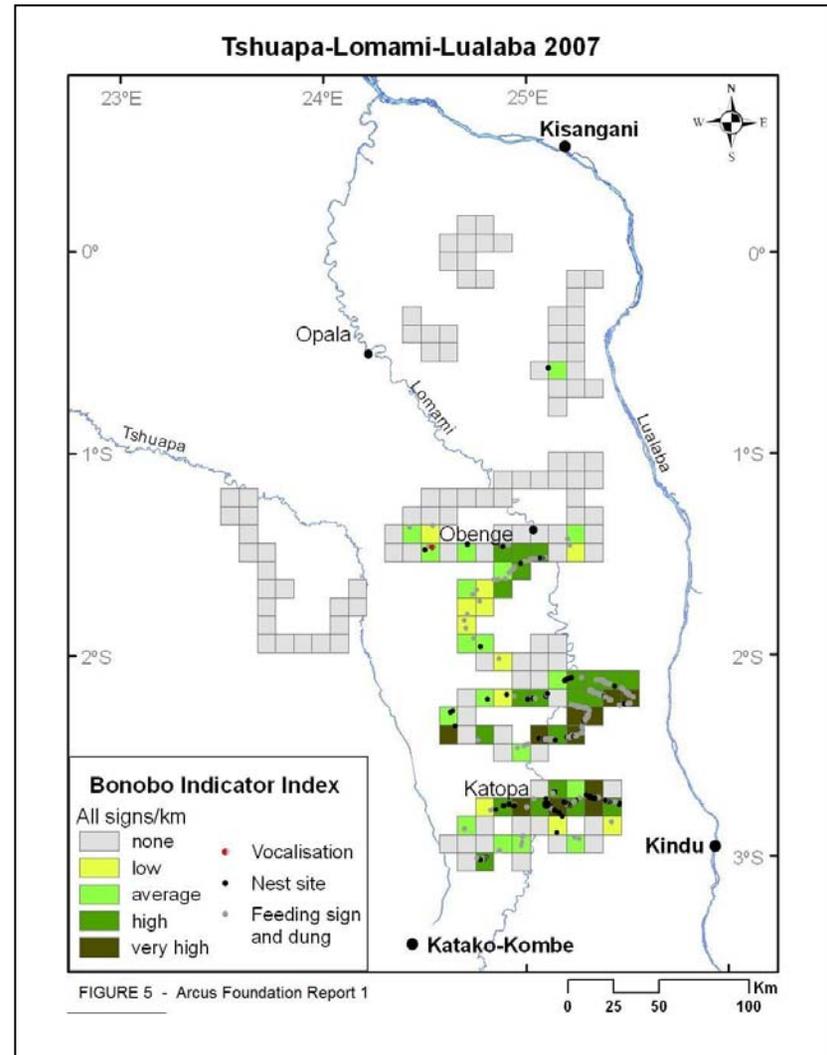
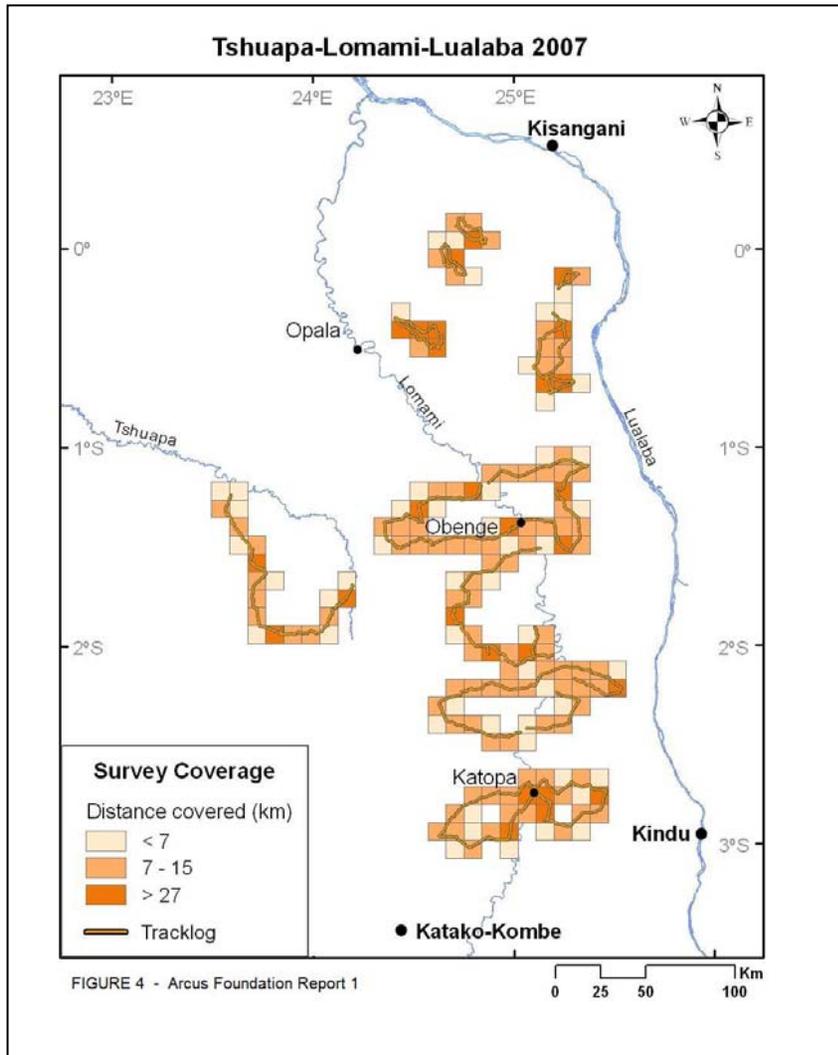
The exploration tracks are shown on FIGURE 2 (black solid lines) along with an evaluation of the level of coverage. In this map the entire landscape is divided into a grid of squares 30 km on a side (900km<sup>2</sup> per square). A square, or block, is considered adequately explored or "completed" if there is not only a minimum of 30km of forest surveyed but also the exploratory survey is felt to be representative enough to allow an evaluation for the entire block of whether a subsequent inventory phase should be carried out within that area.

TABLE 1 – Principal Findings from TL2 Exploration Circuits in 2007

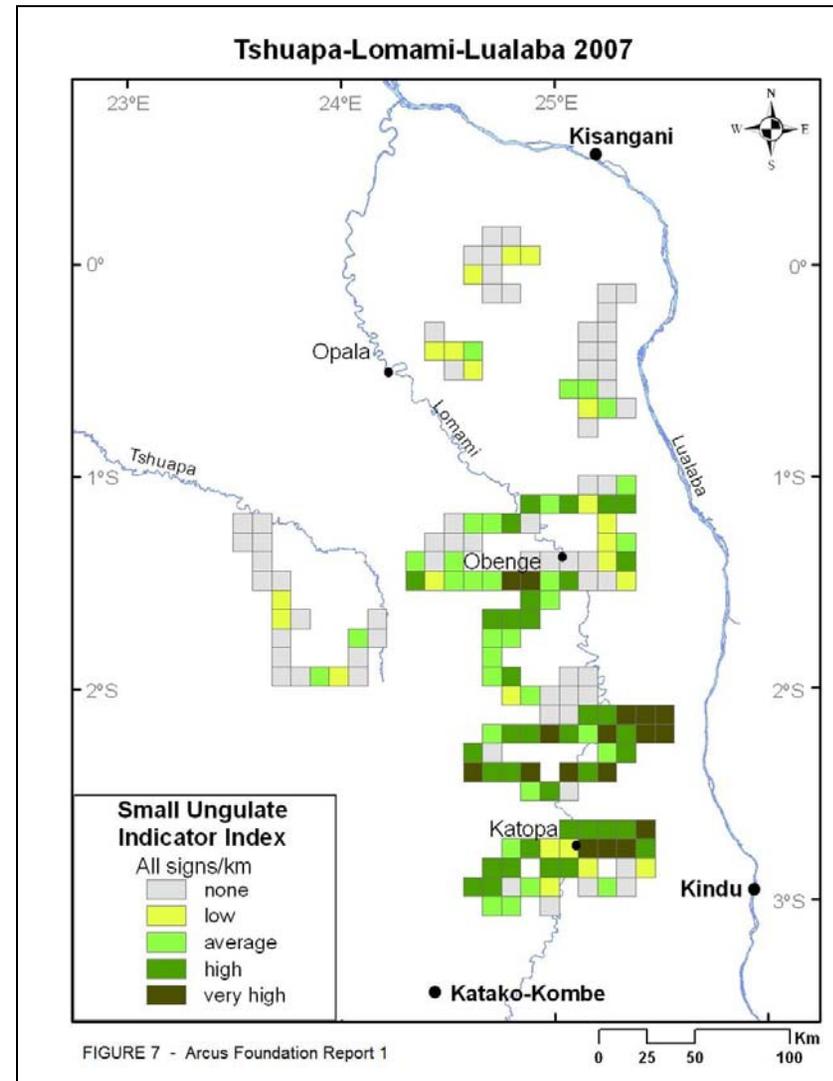
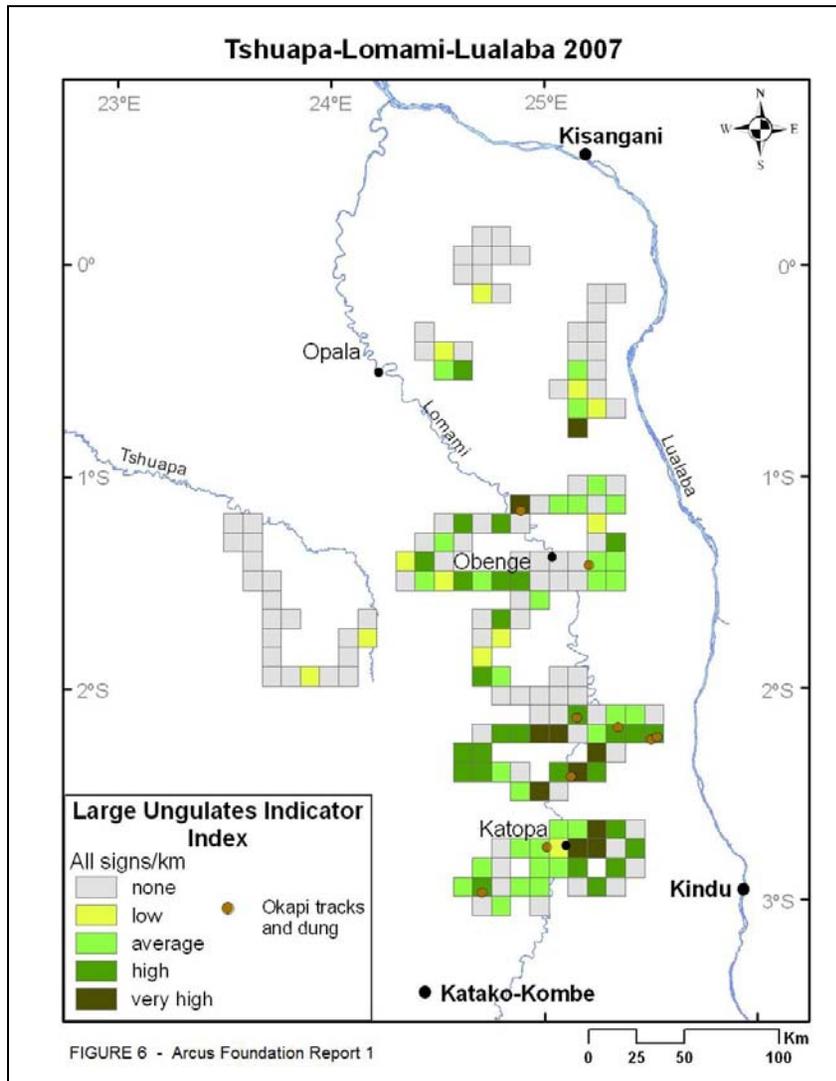
Circuit	Province	Dates (2007)	Fauna	Threats	Local population	Note
West of Opala	Orientale	Nov-Dec	Reduced	Intensive uncontrolled hunting. No respect for hunting season	Resident population particularly in north	Artisanal diamond mining camps but with small return
South of Kisangani, East of Opala	Orientale	Nov-Dec	Reduced	Intensive uncontrolled hunting. No respect for hunting season	Resident population localized in non flooded areas	Large areas of flooded forest ( <i>Sende</i> ), with low productivity
Obenge	Orientale	June-Aug	Abundant fauna, but bonobos very patchy, infrequent	Uncontrolled commercial hunting, hunters come from far away. No respect for hunting season	Low resident population	Last important population of elephants in the region, have been seriously threatened by rogue hunters with military weapons
Katopa	Orientale, Maniema, Kasai Oriental	June-Aug	Abundant fauna, important population bonobo.	Commercial hunting abundant with likelihood to increase.	Low resident population	Important savanna-forest mosaic that is little disturbed
North of Katopa	Maniema	June-Aug	Abundant fauna, Important population bonobo	Kindu military involved in hunting	No resident population	Evidence of un-described primate in forest
South of Tshuapa R,	Equateur, Kasai Oriental	Nov-Dec	Reduced	Uncontrolled hunting No respect for hunting season	Localized population near river and road	Fauna greatly reduced from intensive hunting ; population without wild meat resources



Source- Image: UCL-Geomatics, Belgique2006  
 Field data : TL2  
 Projection UTM – WGS84 1:2,500,000



Grid : 10x10 km  
 Projected to UTM 35S – WGS84 1:2,500,000



Grid : 10x10 km  
 Projected to UTM 35S – WGS84 1:2,500,000

Priority blocks for final exploration are shown in FIGURE 3. Priority was based on the need to develop a comprehensive view of a focal area where conservation zoning might be desirable. The focal area of the landscape (FIGURE 1) covers the forest where we recorded higher than average faunal indicator scores along with surrounding blocks, which are also likely to have high animal presence. This is a shift from the original proposed area (yellow outline). As the focal area includes unexplored blocks these now have a high priority for exploration. We also gave priority status to remaining blocks likely to represent boundaries between high and low faunal zones.

The inventories of the second phase will provide more precise information than the exploratory surveys. They will be conducted in representative sectors within the focal area, provide estimates of key faunal populations and an assessment of the local impact and urgency of threats.

The explorations that have already occurred provide an initial overview of the distribution of key faunal species and of distribution of major threats throughout the larger landscape. The actual exploratory survey coverage comprised of the tracts between forest waypoints along which animal sign was recorded, is shown in FIGURE 4. Each grid square shown here is 10km x 10km.

Bonobo were most abundant in the southeastern blocks along the Katopa circuits and the circuits just north (FIGURE 5). Bonobo were recorded by sight and vocalization, or, more frequently, by their nests, feeding sign and dung. The area where they were most abundant is slightly higher elevation with less swamp forest and apparently higher productivity than the area further north. The most northern area had a high percentage of low productivity, "sende", or white sand and black river forest. TL2 bonobo distribution mirrors that of bonobo within Salanga National Park (Grossmann et al, 2008); however, the fact that they were also absent from the islands of higher productivity in the northern part of the landscape suggests an impact of high bushmeat hunting.

The distribution of large ungulates (Okapi, pigs, buffalo, bongo...) as well as that of small ungulates (duiker sp and chevrotain,) was roughly consistent with the distribution of bonobo (FIGURE 6 and 7). For ungulates, however, there was little difference between the Obenge area with its lower elevation and the southern higher elevation. This might indicate a lesser role for environmental variability in determining ungulate density than bonobo density, with a greater role for hunting. This is supported by the fact that ungulates are so noticeably absent in the north and west where overhunting was recorded through interviews on the ground. The higher local populations in the north and west, with the closer markets, is the reason bushmeat hunting has been an important source of revenue more consistently and for a longer period of time than in the central part of the landscape.

Primates (other than the great apes) were more equitably distributed over the landscape (FIGURE 8); this group was also the most interesting in terms of new discoveries. Two unexpected new distributions include the owl-faced monkey on both sides of the

Lomami (*Cercopithecus hamlyni*) and the blue monkey (*C. mitis*) on the west bank of the Lomami. There are also several poorly described primates, all Cercopithecines, that we are now trying to get more information about.

The greater abundance of primates over other faunal groups in the far north and west could result from lower vulnerability to snare trapping which targets ungulates. It is likely, nevertheless, that different primate species show different levels of vulnerability to commercial hunting depending, among other factors, on their use of the forest floor as opposed to the forest canopy and their speed and manner of flight reaction.

Hunting snares made from metal wire are used throughout TL2 (FIGURE 9) and are noticeably still used in areas of low animal presence. In the case of the Lengola area in northern TL2, bushmeat markets are close due to the accessibility of Kisangani and Opala. This makes it worth snare hunting despite low returns. In the west ready markets for bushmeat are Ikela (Equateur Province) and Lomela (East Kasai Province).

In order to effectively hunt remote areas in TL2, commercial hunters come in from the towns of Kisangani, Kindu, Ikela, Katako-Kombe and Lomela. They spend extended periods in hunting camps tending their snare lines (FIGURE 10). They either leave with their catch themselves or else sell it to middlemen who ply the rivers and trails carrying trade goods such as soap, salt and sugar as well as second hand clothes.

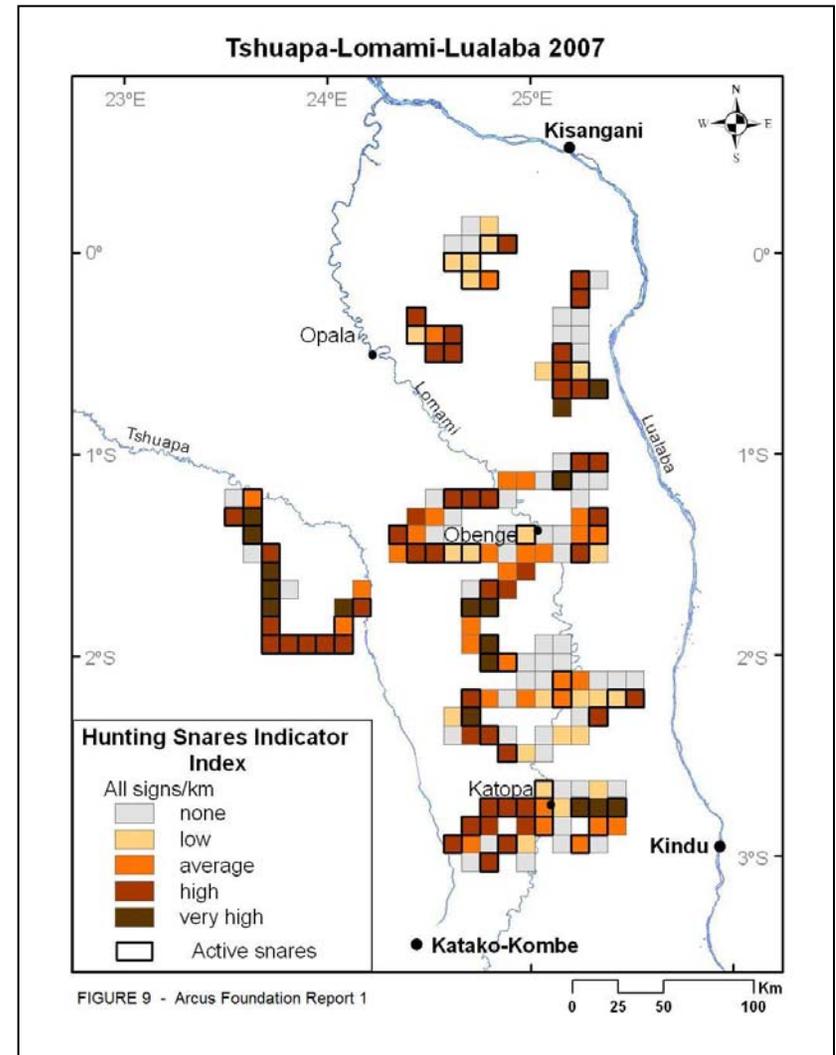
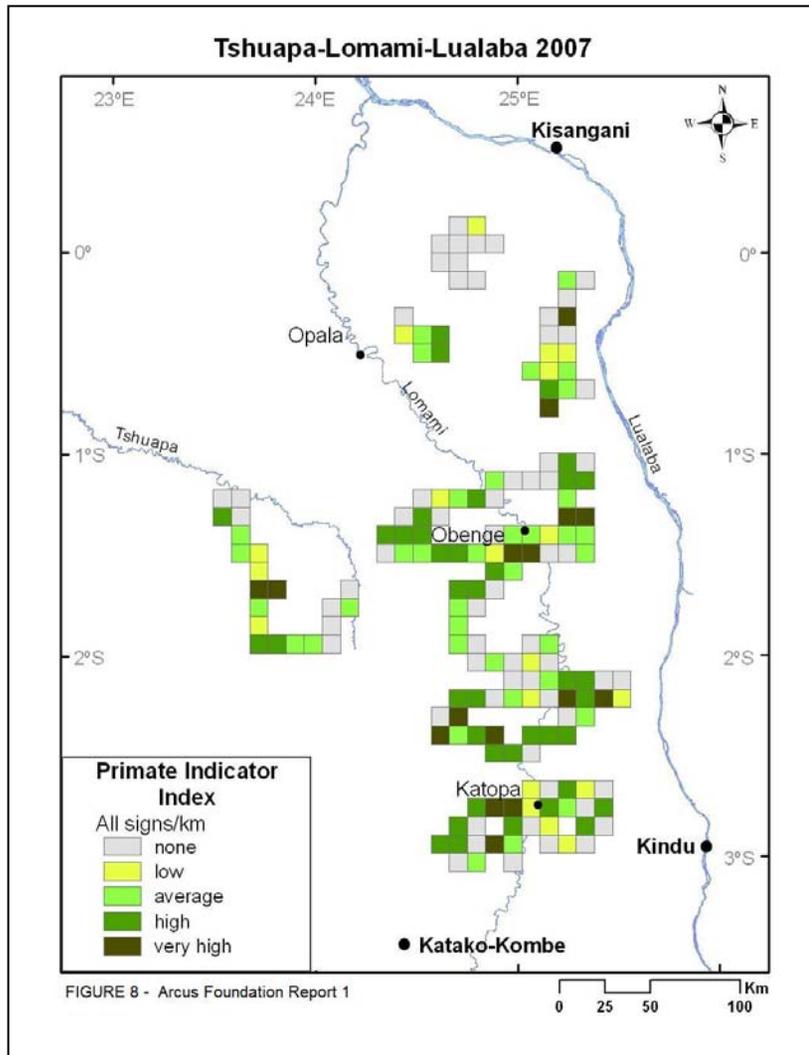
Bushmeat hunting is the largest and most widespread commercial activity throughout the TL2 landscape although there is a diversity of small-scale extractive activities including diamond mining, fishing, latex extraction and gardens. The only activities marked on FIGURE 11 are those for which evidence was actually seen on the circuit, as with all the other distribution maps.

Most of these lesser extractive activities have no, or only a localized impact on the TL2 fauna. Hunting is in fact a form of wide-scale extraction that is fast reducing a resource that is only renewable at limited levels of use. The larger animals are the ones driven to local extinction first. It is, therefore, not surprising that the most disturbing distribution records were those of elephant sign.

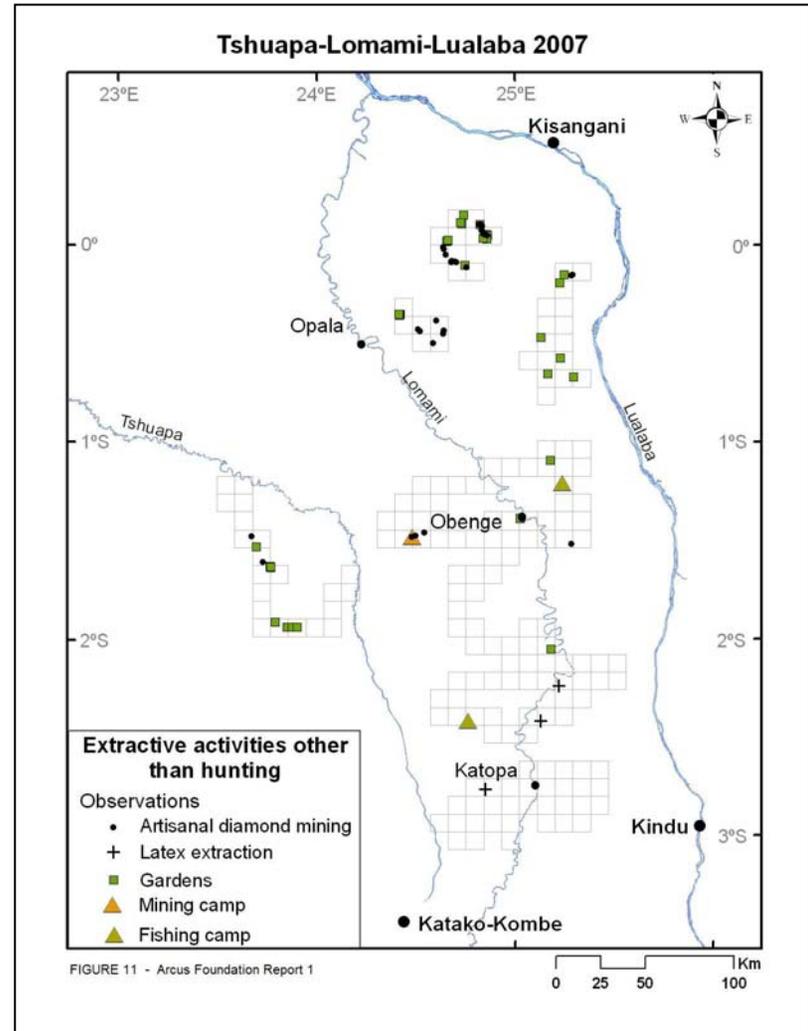
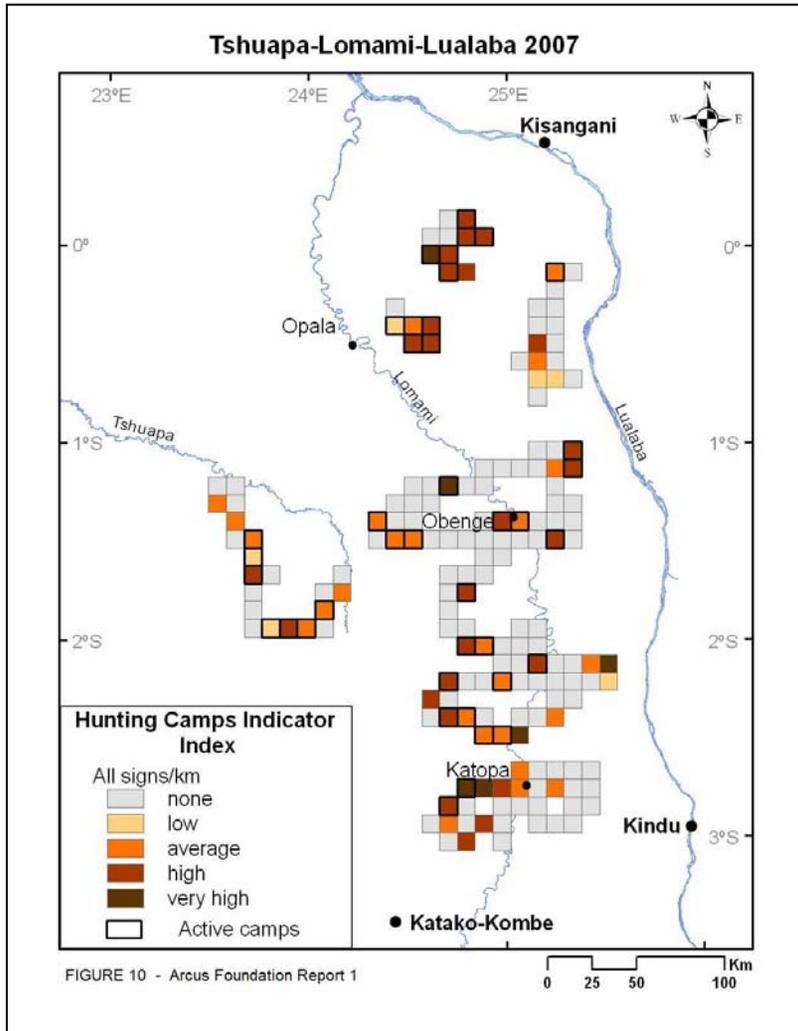
The only place that elephant sign was abundant was right around Obenge (FIGURE 12) mainly in the basin of the River TuTu a tributary of the Lomami. The reasons for such a small and restricted population are from recent history associated with the long civil war that took Mobutu out of power, put Laurent Kabila in power and then, after his assassination saw the ascension of his son, Joseph Kabila as head of state and now elected president:

<http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/2008/02/26/bushmeat-3-the-history-of-hunting-in-tl2/>

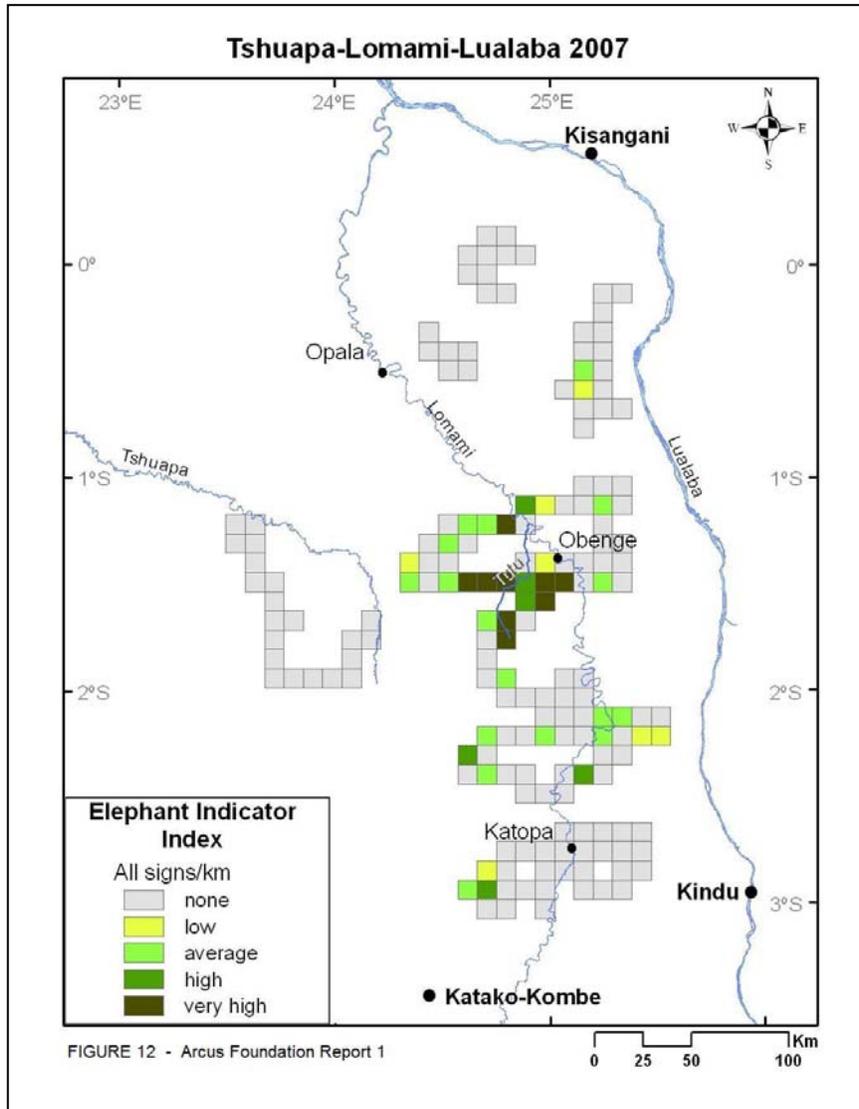
In 2001 the Rwandan backed RCD-Goma marched along the southern border of the forest to attack Laurent Kabila in Kinshasa. This was the occasion of massive elephant poaching in the south, whether “sponsored” by national or RCD-Goma troops, and also



Grid : 10x10 km  
 Projected to UTM 35S – WGS84 1:2,500,000



Grid : 10x10 km  
 Projected to UTM 35S – WGS84 1:2,500,000



The disappearance of elephants is the most urgent problem in the TL2 landscape and is linked to bonobo poaching with military weapons.

Progress was made this year to break a poaching network that operated out of Obenge. Unfortunately this was after a New Year's elephant slaughter that happened after the data collection shown.

The local population and chefitaine helped collect 10 AK-47s

Grid : 10x10 km Projected to UTM 35S – WGS84 1:2,500,000

the origin of part of the arsenal that continues to be used to pursue ivory today. In the same year a well-armed colonel from the RCD-Goma came to the north of TL2 in pursuit of fleeing Interahamwe. This Colonel Jado was from south of Ubundu and used the occasion to foment long-standing racial tension between the Banyamituku (his group) and the Balengola. The local warfare dragged on for years and among the casualties were the remaining elephants of the entire TL2 south of Kisangani and north of Opala.

A sad footnote is that in the first months of this year '08, before his recent arrest in Obenge, Major Ranger (MaiMai) was responsible for killing 14 elephants. It was the same automatic weapons that poached the elephants that were responsible for killing five bonobo in the Obenge area since the beginning of the TL2 project.

Inventory selected areas in order to determine population numbers for bonobo and to gain a better understanding of their distribution.

This second objective of the TL2 project has just gotten underway at the beginning of the month of March. Three survey teams are in the field right now. One of these teams is continuing with the exploration surveys (FIGURE 3), whereas two have started inventories within the focal area. The information from the inventory phase, as accomplished up to February '09 will be in the next annual report.

Develop collaboration for conservation at all levels of government and with other organizations as well.

An enthusiastic local response to our TL2 gardening project in Obenge led to the formation of several local NGOs (women, youth and ex-hunters). It also led to the practical abandonment of hunting, which had been the main livelihood of the village. Although it is difficult to know whether this is a long lasting trend, this village of approximately 300 people has given the garden project an eager reception and shown a communal will to redefine the village as an agricultural rather than a hunting community. Already we have expanded the project to include small animal husbandry. The intention is that this initiative be self supporting. It will be easier to evaluate its success after the second harvest is in (in another 3 months) and surplus has been sold and the profits recycled into the project. The first harvest from the initial one hectare of raised beds, included mainly vegetable crops such as beans, cabbage, green peppers, and tomatoes. The second crop growing on four additional hectares, includes important starch staples. Along with soja there is rice and improved manioc. An important test is the success of independent villagers who have now started their own gardens and husbandry with a few pigs and chickens we provided to one of the NGOs. A full assessment of these initiatives will be more revealing further into the project by next year's annual report.

At the national level we have the full support of the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) whose head director (ADG), Cosma Wilungula, has stated his intention to support creation of a national park in the area once appropriate boundaries could be defined with the local population. ICCN provides our "Ordres de Mission", or governmental authorization to be in the field.

Our regional efforts have been concentrated at Kisangani and at Opala. The two short French reports in annex were written on returning to Kisangani after each sortie in the field. Their purpose is to inform the provincial governor's office, the territorial administrator from Opala and the provincial assembly. Two PowerPoints introducing and reporting on the project have also been presented to local officials in Kisangani.

I (Terese Hart) have taken part in several small discussion groups or encounters, as well, whose purpose was to explain the project and often to get advice and solicit support. Two of the most important of these were with the vice governor of the Oriental Province and with Senator Bernard Labama (originally from Opala).

It will be important in the future to develop a more active collaboration with other conservation NGOs or conservation organizations to build up a stronger base of support in the international community and among experts able to contribute on the ground. Good progress has been made in this direction with the “bonobo roundtable” in Kinshasa on the 12th and 15th of March that brought together most field workers and where a strong desire for closer collaboration was expressed.

#### Brief mention of four unexpected positive developments

- The **potential of creating a national park** in the TL2 core forest : this is actually the suggestion of the ADG of the ICCN. We, therefore, have assumed a responsibility for careful preparation in order to assure that if a park is created it is located in the best possible place for wildlife, particularly bonobo, with the least possible conflict with other human activities.
- **Growth** of a small **community gardening project** developed under objective 3. This is described above. The most positive and unexpected result of the project is that hunting has been abandoned as the main source of income in the community of Obenge. We will give a detailed update next year.
- **Arrest and removal of two major elephant poachers** and all their guns <http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/2008/03/20/two-down-for-the-lomami/>  
A military unit was sent from Kisangani specifically to clean out the MaiMai involved in elephant poaching. We assisted by facilitating a preliminary reconnaissance and through use of our motorized pirogue to return with the MaiMai to Opala. This occurred earlier this month. Not only was Major Ranger removed from Obenge, but so were his associated thugs and 10 military arms were confiscated.
- **Discovery of new primate distributions** and possibly **un-described primate taxa**. The first year’s exploratory surveys came up with unknown primates and unexpected distributions of known primates. All are documented with photos, some of the photos are in the wild and some of captive primates. We have just now verified in the forest the presence of an “unknown” primate for which we saw one skin and one live animal in captivity. The narrative, photo documentation and maps to accompany this section will be much expanded in next year’s report.

**B. Your interpretation of the degree of success of the project, challenges faced, lessons learned, etc.**

At the time the original proposal to Arcus Foundation was written, there was very little knowledge of the area and our objectives were kept relatively low. I feel that we will meet them by the end of the second year. They include:

- (a) detailed record of bonobo occurrence in the TL2 landscape
- (b) population estimates for selected forest sectors
- (c) assessment of the conservation potential of the area and
- (d) development of a collaborative relationship towards conservation ends.

This apparent likelihood of success (but see financial report below) does not mean that the greater goal of landscape conservation is not greatly challenged in the TL2 area. In fact we have discovered a massive bushmeat hunting effort underway throughout the landscape. Guns introduced during the recent war have upped the ante. An unexpected challenge, and one for which we have had good success, is the control of rogue MaiMai rebels involved in elephant poaching and bonobo hunting. This has been reported on our blog (link given on page 5). We successfully informed and interested the army in removing two individuals from Obenge (Colonel Thoms and Major Ranger) that maintained a network of poachers and supplied them with arms and ammunition.

This leaves the challenge of bushmeat hunting, a much more vast enterprise that is deeply rooted in dietary habits and attitudes toward the natural resource of forest animals. On the other hand, we have had amazing success locally at the field base in Obenge where the local community has voluntarily said it will abandon hunting. Since January 08 it has indeed done so. This is explained in detail above. Where it figures into measuring the success of the project will be in determining the durability in this change of livelihood, its attractiveness to other hunting based communities south of Opala (Bimbi would be an important center to “convert”) and – most importantly – the assurance that the agricultural base will not result in a prosperity that will cause the village to grow through immigration.

Obenge, the largest village on the Lomami River south of Opala and before the savanna , consists of just over 300 inhabitants. It is a three day trip south from Opala in motorized pirogue. Our success in Obenge will ultimately need more than the successful removal of rogue poachers, and the conversion of bushmeat hunters to agriculture. It will require us to set up a base, accessible to others, from which a conservation initiative can grow spatially on the ground and “virtually” through meetings and effective publicity locally, regionally and nationally.

Lessons learned: The most important lesson learned is that we must take a very broad approach to communication. Whereas we had excellent collaboration and

communication at the village level, provincial level and the national ICCN level we had much more uncertain communication at the territorial and ethnic level. Unrest was sparked by a couple of people that then took a great deal of negotiating to settle. In the end the negotiations have served a purpose in and of themselves, having brought us closer to the civil society in Opala, an influential senator and the vice governor of the province, but it was a bit of a harrowing process.

### **C. Future plans in regard to this program**

Even when this proposal was introduced to the Arcus Foundation we stated that the inventory phase of the project would last into a third year and had to be followed by analysis and write up. A three year time line was submitted with the original proposal although funds for only two years were requested. We are currently looking for funding for this continuation of activities.

We still feel that three years are needed not only to complete inventories, write them up and disseminate results to a diverse audience but also to follow through the Obenge community conservation initiative. Other aspects of conservation of TL2 landscape will require even longer. The ICCN has expressed an interest in created a national park in TL2. We feel that in a total of five years this project could have progressed to the point of having worked with local communities to map forest-use areas and define a protected area. We also feel that in five years we could extend the successful agriculture/animal husbandry project into other village areas around the outside limits of the proposed protected area.

Eventually, but beyond the reach of this project would be development of park infrastructure and training of local guards. It would however be good to assure that community conservation projects continue at the same time as the park is being established.

### **D. Information from your project that has been made available to the field and the dissemination process**

Web site/ blog. Covers bushmeat crisis in detail, also the stages of the project, the agricultural efforts and the forest work.  
<http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/>

Reports after two field missions in Kisangani (annex 1 and 2)

PowerPoint presentation given in small session to Christophe DuCastel, Messiane Caze and Jean-Michel Sionneau (IUCN-DR Congo) Paris. October 07

Presentation (PP) at the governor's office in Kisangani. Provincial ministers present. December 07.

Meetings with the Societe Civile at the Senator Bernard Labama residence with deputies from the Provincial Assembly and members of the Civil Society. PowerPoint presentation. February '08

Two small PowerPoints given in Kinshasa for two commercial enterprises: Vodacom and Banro.

Distribution hard copy of maps and informal reports to ADG, ADT, Senator Labama and the Vice Governor of Province Oriental.

**E. Recommendations that you would make to other project directors working in this area or to the Arcus Foundation.**

Insist on communication between different organizations doing similar work in similar landscapes. In our case this includes other international and national conservation NGOs and research groups. We have found that meeting together and talking through problems allows us to maintain a certain quality control. Unfortunately there is a lack of sincerity on the part of a few (definitely the minority) of international/national NGOs. By pooling information and discussing goals it is possible to find out who is in that category and minimize the damage that they can do to conservation of the bonobo specifically, and conservation within the area in general.

**F. Please attach samples of our fund name used in your programs, brochures or advertising.**

Currently our blog is our only form of self promotion:

Arcus Foundation is in the sidebar of our blog under "Key Links"

<http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/>

And also in the post specifically about our funders

<http://lomami.wildlifedirect.org/2007/06/19/money-is-an-important-part-of-the-team>

G. References in text are to the two chapters below:

2008 Furuichi, T and J. Thompson, eds. The Bonobos Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation. Springer. 327 pp

Human hunting and its impact on Bonobos in the Salonga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo  
Hart, JA, F. Grossmann, A Vosper, J Ilanga. Pp 245-269

Range occupation and population estimates of bonobos in the Salonga National Park: Application to large-scale surveys of bonobos in the Democratic Republic of Congo. F. Grossmann, J.A. Hart, A. Vosper and O Ilambu. 189-216

Annex 1 : DEBRIEFING 28 Aug 07

Annex 2 : DEBRIEFING 10 Dec 07

## ANNEX 1

DEBRIEFING – 28 aout 2007

### PREMIERS CONSTATS DES EQUIPES REVENUES D'UNE EXPLORATION DE LA FORET LONGEANT LA RIVIERE LOMAMI

L'équipe du projet TL2 , Tshuapa-Lomami-Lualaba , qui travaille sous l'autorité de l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) et dans le cadre des projets de conservation de Lukuru Wildlife Research Foundation (LWRF) est de retour après deux mois et demi d'exploration dans le bassin de la Lomami . Ce voyage a été la première phase d'un projet qui aura plusieurs phases et devrait s'étendre sur plusieurs années. Il s'agit d'une exploration préliminaire, suivi par un dénombrement des animaux clés , avec comme fin la formation d'une aire protégée centrée sur la Lomami au sud d'Opala.

Le projet TL2 s'est organisé avec une coordinatrice, Dr. Terese Hart, un directeur scientifique, Dr. John Hart, et un directeur des travaux sur terrain, Ashley Vosper . Ce dernier a aussi été chef d'équipe de la première exploration qui vient de rentrer. Dr Terese est venue à Kisangani à la fin du mois d'aout 2007 pour une réunion avec Ashley et son équipe-de-base à la fin de leur mission.

Ce premier voyage exploratoire a monté avec la rivière Lomami jusqu'au village Katopa dans la province de Maniema. C'est à ce niveau où des chutes ont barré le progrès en amont de l'équipe. Tout le long de leur voyage en pirogue motorisé ils ont suivies des trajets de reconnaissance faunique dans la forêt. Les résultats sont très promettant. Ils ont découverts des extensions importantes des animaux uniques de la RD Congo, notamment de deux animaux endémiques au Congo :

1/ le bonobo, espèce qui n'existe que sur la rive gauche du fleuve et qui est connu surtout de l'est, a été découvert pour la première fois lors de ce voyage entre le Lomami et le Lualaba au sud d'Ubundu. Le bonobo a été vu et même photographié jusqu'à la savane au sud par les équipes.

2/ l'okapi, animal apparenté à la girafe des savanes, n'existe que dans les forêts de l'est en RD Congo et ce n'est que récemment découvert à la rive gauche du fleuve Congo. Ce n'est que ce voyage qui a reconnu que l'okapi se trouve jusqu'à dans la province de Maniema et même sur la rive gauche de la Lomami.

Aussi importants que ces extensions des animaux rares est le découvert des formes uniques de plusieurs primates. A ce moment c'est impossible de dire si ces primates sont des nouvelles sous-espèces mais leurs photos ont suscités un grand intérêt dans la communauté scientifique.

Il y a quand même des nouvelles bien amères que l'équipe a ramenés. Les populations des éléphants ont été exterminées récemment dans le secteur sud dans la province de Maniema. Ceci suite aux attaques non contrôlés des forces rebelles. Les populations reliques qui ont échappées et se trouve dans la province orientale au niveau d'Obenge sont en traîne d'être chassé à ce moment même par les braconniers envoyés par le Colonel Thom d'Opala.

Dr. Terese Hart, coordinatrice

## ANNEX 2

DEBRIEFING – 10 décembre 2007

### PREMIERS CONSTATS DES EQUIPES REVENUES DE DEUXIEME VOYAGE D'EXPLORATION DANS LA REGION TSHUAPA-LOMAMI-LUALABA (TL2) .

Les équipes de terrain du projet TL2, Tshuapa-Lomami-Lualaba, viennent de rentrer à Kinshasa ayant terminé un deuxième sorti d'exploration d'un mois et demi. Le projet travail sous l'autorité de l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) et avec l'appui administratif de Lukuru Wildlife Research Foundation (LWRF).

Le projet TL2 s'est organisé avec une coordinatrice, Dr. Terese Hart, un directeur scientifique et chef du terrain, John Hart, et un directeur financier et chef du terrain, Ashley Vosper. Tous les trois sont actuellement à Kisangani.

Pour ce deuxième voyage il y avait 5 équipes d'exploration et une équipe de conservation communautaire.

Les constats préliminaires et l'itinéraire des équipes est en attache.

Une suite de cette phase d'exploration est programmée pour le début de l'année prochaine. Les équipes pour les inventaires détaillés et les équipes de conservation communautaire doivent s'organiser pour descendre la Lomami déjà le 15 janvier.

Il y a cependant un obstacle majeur au plein milieu de la superficie prévue pour les inventaires : au village d'Obenge il y a un incivique, Major Ranger qui est en train de braconner les éléphants et les bonobos. Il déteint au moins 35 armes à feu.

Nous serions très reconnaissants de pouvoir en parler avec les autorités de la Province Orientale.

Terese Hart

TABLEAU 1.

Circuit	Province	Dates (2007)	Faune	Menaces	Population locale	Note
Nord Katopa	Maniema	Juillet-Aout	Abondante, Importante population bonobo	Implication des militaire de Kindu dans la chasse	Pas de population résident	Nouvelle espèce de singe est possible
Katopa	Kasai Oriental et Manieam	Juillet-Aout	Abondante, Importante population bonobo.	Potentielle croissance de chasse commerciale	Peu occupé	Importante mosaïque savanne-foret intacte
Obenge	Oriental	juin-Aout	Abondante faune, mais bonobos pas fréquents	Chasse commerciale non contrôles, mené par les chasseurs allogènes.	Peu occupé	Dernière population importante d'éléphants de la région, sérieusement menacée par chasse des militaires de Kisangani
Sud-est Ikela	Equateur	Nov-Dec	Très réduite	Chasse incontrôlée	Carence protéine animale évident	Faune réduite par une chasse intensive, population sans ressources de faune
Ouest - Opala	Oriental	Nov-Dec	Réduite	Chasse intensive et non contrôlée. Fermeture non respectée	Faune épuisée dans secteurs vers Kisangani	Campements de exploitants miniers, mais rendement faible
Walengola-Babira	Oriental	Nov-Dec	Réduite :	Chasse non contrôlée, Fermeture non respectée	Importante pêche pour marche kisangani	Grands zone de foret inondée ( <i>Sende</i> ), et de faible productivité