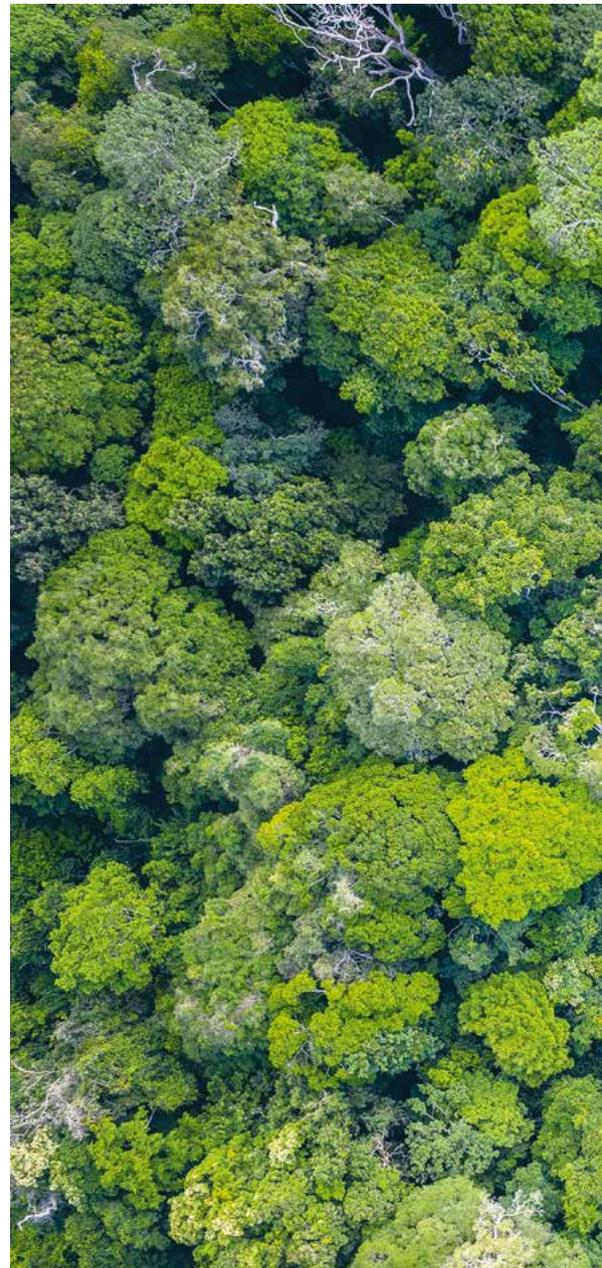


The LuiKotale research camp has almost been swamped by the tropical rain forest around it. It sits in the midst of the animal kingdom like a human island. It is 300 kilometers to the Congo River and 30 kilometers to the nearest village. The only way to reach the camp is on foot via tracks through the jungle.

The base was founded by behavioral biologist Barbara Fruth, who leads a research group at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior. Twenty years ago, she began researching with her husband Gottfried Hohmann the life of bonobo groups in the wild in Salonga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The protected area is 95 percent forest. It covers an area of 33,500 square kilometers, which means it is almost as big as North Rhine-Westphalia.

The camp has space for 15 people and is supported by the surrounding villages. Researchers set out in small teams to find groups of bonobos that are used to the presence of people. Without disturbing the animals, they observe their behavior and combine their results with physiological, genetic, and ecological analyses. Fascinating nature photos are also captured from extremely close up. Alongside chimpanzees, bonobos are the animals that are most similar to us humans. The researchers want to find out why our nearest relations have developed a way of living and interacting that is unusually peaceful for apes, where females set the tone.

*JUNGLE
CAMP*



ON LOCATION



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PHOTO: CHRISTIAN ZIEGLER