



Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary

TACUGAMA CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY



On the 6th of October, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary hosted more than 500 guests to celebrate our 10th Anniversary. It was a great honour for us to have His Excellency, Dr. Alhaji Ahamed Tejan Kabbah, the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. We were also delighted with the presence of many Government Ministers, Ambassadors, International guests, heads of NGO's, village elders and children. At the entrance to the sanctuary, students from Regent's village community school entertained everyone with their traditional dances and welcome songs. The ceremony took place at the resource centre, over looking some of our chimpanzee enclosures and the beautiful hills bordering Tacugama. We also had curious spectators from the trees as the event took place in full view of some of Tacugama's chimpanzees. Statements from various governmental representatives as well as other national and international organizations were delivered. Bala Amarasekaran, the founder and director of the sanctuary, gave an emotional account of the 10 year history and emphasised the need to give better protection and status for the Western Area Forest. The keynote address was given by President Kabbah and it covered important issues on conservation and sustainable development. Souvenirs were presented to some of the distinguished guests. It included t-shirts made specially for the event and a copy of the documentary on Tacugama's ongoing work, titled "Chimps Under Fire". The president was delighted to receive a special present from Bala, a toy chimp to take home. Some years ago, President's son had a chimp at home named Jido and The President requested him to hand-over the chimp to the sanctuary. Jido is now a confident member of Bruno's group. President Kabbah also officially inaugurated our onsite laboratory. The ceremony came to an end with a tour conducted by Bala accompanied by the President and our guests, visiting some of the chimpanzees, and the newly constructed facilities. The whole ceremony was a great success. Even for Bruno! Early that morning he and his group were supposed to stay in one of the enclosures, away from the resource centre. But he knew that day was special and didn't want to miss out all the fun. Perhaps he wanted to see the president too! Being the alpha male, he had his say and of course he wanted to be part of the celebration. Well...Bala would always say that Bruno is the founder of Tacugama. Bruno was the first chimp to be rescued by Bala some 18 years ago ! We had to keep the early arrivals waiting at the entrance until Bala managed to persuade Bruno to enter his den, below the resource centre. It was hilarious as Bruno also joined in with his own pant-hoots and banging the metal doors whenever there was an applause from the crowd responding to the speeches. [\(to read more about the presidential visit go to www.statehouse-sl.org/speeches\)](http://www.statehouse-sl.org/speeches)

From top to bottom: Tacugama staff, traditional dancers, the President Kabbah with Bala Amarasekaran, inauguration of the new laboratory, resource center during the ceremony.

DEWAR'S VISIT TACUGAMA

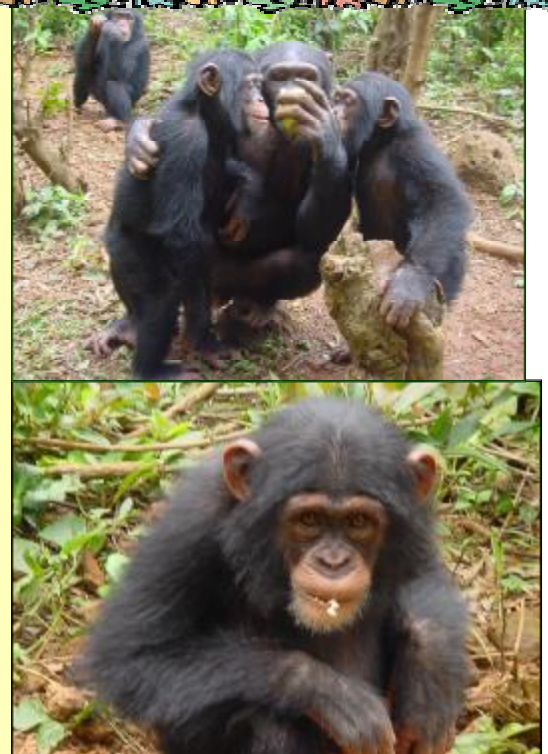
Jane and Stuart Dewar, the founders of Gorilla Haven (Dewar Wildlife Trust) and close friends of Bala, finally took the challenge to visit us in Sierra Leone. They are not only good friends but they also continue to sponsor some of Tacugama's activities. Tacugama is extremely grateful for their visit and support, considering the fact that they normally support projects where gorillas are involved. During their one-week stay, they were our guests of honour at the 10th Anniversary Celebration. It was also a special week for them. It was their 23rd Wedding Anniversary and we made time to take them to one of the most beautiful and popular beaches (River No.2) in Sierra Leone. They Loved It! The Dewar's travelled from the States loaded with presents for the chimps and staff, plus medical supplies. It was amazing that they had thought of every single person and everyone was so happy to be with them. We hope they will return to Tacugama in the coming years. (visit www.gorilla-haven.org for the report on their visit to Tacugama).



TACUGAMA CHIMP STORIES

PATTI: Escape and Return

It is always busy at the quarantine area and with constant cleaning and mending of cages, there is room for human error! So it happened again! Dauda forgot to check the padlock and Patti and her gang wanted to show that they are smarter than their keepers! Within the first hour we managed to track down and retrieve everyone except for Patti. We looked for her everywhere without any success. We still have wild chimps within the Western Area Forest where the sanctuary is located and there was always a possibility that she could come into contact with a wild group. Being a young female, she would have a better chance of being accepted by the group or she could be attacked and killed by other wild animals. We gave up the search after two weeks. But to everyone's surprise, the little girl turned up at camp exactly a month after her adventure. She had lost some weight but looked alert and healthy. She decided to stay near the enclosures but not allowing the keepers to get closer to her. That night, she nested on a tree situated just over her former cage. Next morning, she was still reluctant to get closer to the staff but followed her group from the outside of her former enclosure. She was making friendly gestures towards Mamma Lucy, the eldest chimp in the group of 16. She went missing again towards the afternoon feeding and we thought she had taken off yet again. Then Willie started yelling, "Patti is in the enclosure with her friends". Somehow she had managed to jump in. During the following days she became Mamma Lucy's shadow till she felt there was no threat from the rest of the gang and worked hard to get back into the group. She was hungry all the time and would eat anything and everything. Yes... Patti was happy to be back with her family!



Above: Patti (left) being protected by Mamma Lucy.
Below: Patti on the day of her return.

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In September, the crew of the HMS – Southampton (British Navy) and the IMATT team kindly donated heavy duty (chimp proof) ropes and visited the sanctuary to hang them up in two of our enclosures. Thanks to the sailors: PO Ashly Watson, LS Taff Wheeler, LS Dany Nicol, OM Rob Kyme, OM Ronie Corbett, OM Taff Matheus and SLT Rob Lamb and to IMATT in SL: PO Lochhead, B. Van-DenBergh, P. Mounson. Job well done!



In August, Dr.M. Sanjayan, lead scientist for The Nature Conservancy and an old friend of Bala, visited Sierra Leone during the filming of a BBC documentary based on his life. Sanjayan, native from Sri Lanka, immigrated to SL with his family where he spent his youth. Now he lives and works in the States. Sanjayan and Bala hadn't seen each other since he left to the States some 20 years ago. At that time, Bala was working as an accountant, without a clue that his life would take such a turn towards chimpanzee conservation. Their reunion was very emotional and full of memories. Many scenes were shot at Tacugama and we are looking forward to the film's release in December.



As a follow up to the visit by representatives from Kevin Mc Phillips Foundation in March 2005, Tacugama has been actively involved in the distribution of various items (clothing, foot wear, school bags and educational materials) donated by the foundation. The local communities and the school children have already benefited much from this gesture.

A big thank you from us and the pupils of Regent, Bathurst and Mortem schools. These donations were in addition to similar assistance extended

over the last year by Mr. Joseph Sabharwal of Aviance – Gatwick airport in collaboration with Kevin McPhillips. You make a world of difference to these poor people!

Tacugama continues to receive assistance towards rising running costs from the Arcus Foundation's Great Ape Fund. Arcus Foundation supports conservation efforts that promotes the survival of apes in the wild whilst also supporting sanctuaries. With almost 80 resident chimps, operational costs is a major part of our budget and without doubt, it is the most challenging to raise. Our immense thanks to Arcus Foundation for their support and to IPPL (International Primate Protection League) for facilitating the grant from Arcus. (for more information on both organisation check out: www.arcusfoundation.org and www.ippl-uk.org)

And coming soon.... In November, Tacugama embarks on a two year "Chimpanzee Conservation and Sensitisation Program" in collaboration with JGI (Jane Goodall Institute) with funding from USAID. The programme aims to increase awareness in the plight of saving the declining wild populations of chimpanzees in Guinea and Sierra Leone.

The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) continues to support Tacugama. If not for WSPA, we cannot boast of several electric fenced enclosures and night facilities. WSPA's new director for Africa operations, Mr. Nigel Wilson, attended our anniversary celebrations and we had fruitful discussions. We are looking forward to strengthen our relationship with WSPA and our work in Sierra Leone.



Mr. Nigel Wilson receiving a souvenir during the Tacugama 10th Anniversary Celebration.



Tacugama is one of the founder members of PASA (Pan African Sanctuary Alliance) and every year PASA organises and sponsors workshops and conferences bringing together many primate sanctuaries within Africa. This year, the veterinary meeting was held in April in Limbe Wildlife Center, Cameroon, and attended by our new veterinarian, Rosa Garriga. In June, Bala attended the manager's meeting held in Kenya (picture above). In this meeting, Tacugama was nominated to host the 2006 Veterinary and Health Care Management meeting in Sierra Leone.

GET TO KNOW OUR STAFF

Willie Tucker, senior staff and supervisor has been working at the sanctuary since its opening. After graduating from the College of Wildlife Management Mweka in Tanzania, he returned to Sierra Leone, where he worked at the Wildlife Conservation Office for two years before working at Outamba Kilimi National Park for six months. In 1995, he was appointed to work together with Bala. He probably knows all the Tacugama chimps better than most of his human family and friends. He is also a keen bird watcher.



Our onsite laboratory is up and running, although we still need some laboratory equipment and supplies. Tacugama is grateful to our resident veterinarian Dr. Rosa Garriga who has undertaken the setting up of the lab and training our local staff.



The staff is already enjoying their new night-quarters and we now have a waiting hut at the entrance to the sanctuary... finally a place where visitors can take shelter from unexpected showers!!



We continue our efforts to educate the people of Sierra Leone about the illegality of capturing and keeping chimpanzees. However adult chimps are still being killed and their infants captured in remote areas of Sierra Leone. In the past six months, we have received six infant chimps, aged between 1.5 to 3 years old. Baba, Zack, Jimmy, Kouze, Natasha and Grant. They were either handed in or confiscated. We need to point out to all ex-pats living in SL, that buying baby chimps and bringing them to us, do not help in stopping this wasteful and cruel trade. If you see a chimp with anyone, please contact us or the wildlife conservation branch at Tower Hill and we will act !



Left: Unni preparing food and Grant supervising



Top: new staff quarters
Bottom: waiting hut

Unni Hermansen from Norway is volunteering at Tacugama since September for three months. She helped Tacugama organising our 10th Anniversary Celebration and helped us with the furnishing of the new volunteer quarters. In addition to helping with the daily routines at camp, she also takes care of Natasha and Grant, the two young orphans recently rescued. Both infants were in bad shape upon their arrival. Unni also brought many medical items from Norway donated by Jan F. Andersen A/S, Gerd Waage, Martina Hansens Hospital, Lars Petter Bjerke and Norwegian Airlines. Tacugama is grateful to all of you.

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If you wish to help Tacugama and make a contribution, you may do so through Gorilla Haven in the USA www.gorilla-haven.org or through WSPA in the UK www.wspa.org.uk or www.ippl-uk.org