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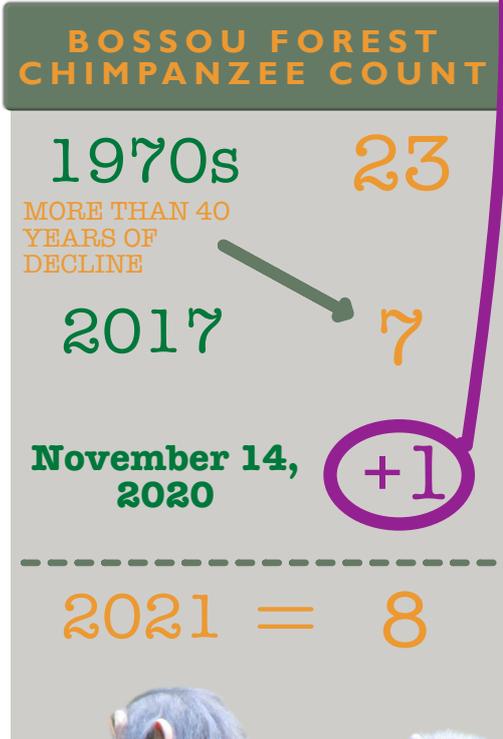
Baby Chimpanzee Reinvigorates Forest Community's Conservation Efforts

The baby chimpanzee nestled in its mother's arms was a joyful surprise for the Bossou Forest community of southwest Guinea. On November 14, 2020, residents witnessed the first birth of a western chimpanzee in the Bossou Forest in almost a decade. Community leader Boniface Zogbila named her Fanghaci, which means "take courage" in the Manon language.

The birth of Fanghaci was a validation of community conservation efforts, and the meaning of her name was a reminder that the Bossou community must continue to fight for the chimpanzees' survival.

The Bossou community has been working with several conservation partners to restore the health of a forest corridor stretching from the Bossou Hills to the Nimba Mountains on the border of Guinea and Liberia. The restored corridor would allow chimpanzees to once again migrate and interbreed between the two locations and grow their declining populations.

In the early 1970s when scientists flocked to Bossou to study the primates' use of tools and their changing health, there were 23 chimpanzees. When Fanghaci was born, only eight were left. The International Union for Conservation of Nature listed the chimpanzee sub-species, *Pan troglodytes verus*, as critically endangered in 2016.



Boniface Zogbila wants Fanghaci's name to inspire more births and open doors for the western chimpanzee. For 22 years, Boniface has been working to protect the chimpanzees by leading community outreach programs and acting as a tourist guide for the local state environmental institute, Institut de Recherche Environnementale de Bossou (IREB). In 2016, IREB demonstrated community commitment to the chimpanzees by allocating most of its earnings from tourism levies toward regenerating the corridor.



Above, Boniface Zogbila, who descends from the founder of Bossou Village. He named the newborn chimpanzee and is an advocate for chimpanzee protection.

**“ These chimpanzees are our
ancestors according to our
grandparents. Because of this, we
love them and protect them. ”**
Boniface Zogbila,

With the help of conservation partners, many Bossou community members have joined fire management programs and learned how to manage tree nurseries and out-plant seedlings. Those efforts have stopped forest fires from ravaging the corridor and have increased corridor tree cover.

The community currently has 26,000 native trees and 20,000 plants ready for outplanting from May 2021. They are committed to preventing what conservationists foresee as a growing stream of extinctions of West African primates and other wildlife.

The U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Agency for International Development are working closely with the IREB, Acteurs pour le Développement Rurale and surrounding communities to collaboratively restore the Bossou-Nimba Mountain corridor. The conservation partners also support alternative livelihoods and skills building in fire management, agronomy and conservation. Their long-term strategy is to enable local communities to own and implement the solutions for regenerating the corridor.

