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**Editor Note:** Video & Images available upon request

Lincoln Park  
Zoo

***Significant Win for Wildlife Conservation***  
**Lincoln Park Zoo's Conservation Work in Republic of Congo Influences  
Government to Enlarge National Park**

*Chicago (Feb. 16, 2012)* – For the past 13 years, Lincoln Park Zoo researcher David Morgan, PhD and his wife and research partner Crickette Sanz, PhD of Washington University in St. Louis have been studying wild chimpanzees and gorillas in a remote corner of Republic of Congo – one of the planet's last remaining pristine forest habitats. In January, the government of Congo announced a historic and significant decision to expand the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park by approximately 92,116 acres to encompass Goulougo Triangle – Morgan and Sanz's study area – thereby providing critical protection from logging and other environmental degradation. The national park is managed by the Wildlife Conservation Society, a conservation partner in the region.



“This is a great achievement for wildlife conservation because this is one of the most important chimpanzee and gorilla habitats left on Earth,” said Morgan in an email from Congo. “It has taken a lot of time and patience documenting and monitoring the wildlife here and demonstrating to the government what makes this region so special and worth protecting. During this time, we have made several major discoveries in chimpanzee tool use and tool complexity. Not only are these important in terms of improving our understanding of chimpanzee culture, but we’ve identified some of the most complex tool-use in all the animal kingdom.”



Researchers have long known that chimpanzees use tools. But Morgan and Sanz’s observations from Goulougo Triangle revealed the unprecedented step of chimpanzees developing an entire tool kit – using as many as five tools for a single task. The animals may use a pointed stick to perforate a termite mound before using a slender tool they have modified to perform more efficient gathering of the insects embedded within the mound. While

collecting honey from beehives, they will also use multiple tools; one tool to create an opening, another to enlarge the break and then a slender probe to extract the honey.

Those aren’t the only breakthroughs from the Goulougo Triangle. Fecal samples collected from the region’s western lowland gorillas contributed to pioneering findings on the origins of malaria. The protected landscape also provides a key baseline for ape behavioral observations, giving scientists the information they need to accurately estimate the impact of logging on apes and their habitats elsewhere.



Two decades ago this area was completely untouched, but Morgan warns that logging has expanded dramatically around the national park region over the past 15 years. “Populations have increased in regional towns as have the road networks that are established in association with timber production. It is very easy to travel in the region now with this infrastructural development,” said Morgan. “As a

consequence it is also easier to access once remote forests with abundant wildlife and many are willing to take advantage of this development. We have witnessed a dramatic increase in poaching as a result of a dynamic bushmeat trade fueling it.”

Morgan explains that protecting this area from logging and poaching is critical. The Goualougo Triangle Ape Project's studies of the feeding ecology of apes in the area will provide crucial information that can be utilized to help apes not only in Goualougo Triangle, but in other regions, including those outside the borders of national parks. "We are learning what resources the apes need to survive. That information can then be used to look into logged areas to see what resources are available there and how it may dictate population sizes of apes," he explained. "If you don't have pristine forests as a baseline, you can't make those kinds of comparisons and have a good understanding of how apes' behavior and ecology are impacted in such altered habitat. So this is a really important area and there aren't many places like this left."

In protecting the Goualougo Triangle, the Republic of Congo has preserved a window into the wild, an unobstructed view of how chimpanzees and gorillas lived before human contact and influence. "The annexing of the National Park to include Goualougo Triangle shows that a conservation presence supported by applied research can make a difference, and in this case lead to official protection of one of the continent's most important old growth forests," Morgan said.

To learn more and donate to support the Goualougo Triangle Ape Project, please visit [www.congo-apes.org](http://www.congo-apes.org).

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#### **ABOUT CHICAGO'S LINCOLN PARK ZOO**

Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, a historic landmark founded in 1868, is dedicated to connecting people with nature by providing a free, family-oriented wildlife experience. A leader in conservation science both globally and locally, the zoo exemplifies the highest quality animal care and educational outreach. The not-for-profit zoo, managed by The Lincoln Park Zoological Society, is a member-supported organization and one of the nation's only free, privately managed zoos. For more information, call 312 -742-2000 or visit [www.lpzoo.org](http://www.lpzoo.org).