

# THE PEPPER BIRD

SCNL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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## **SCNL BRIDGING THE POLICY GAPS: LIBERIA-SIERRA LEONE SIGN AMENDED BILATERAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR GOLA FOREST**

*"Helping to Conserve Nature"*

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# **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE**

The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) was established in 1986 in accordance with the Liberian Business Law of 1976 for non-for-profit organizations. The organization is a non-governmental, nonpolitical and not-for-profit agency. SCNL is the Lead National Civil Society Organization for nature conservation in Liberia. SCNL also maintains a membership base as part of its efforts to increase voices for nature conservation in Liberia as well as within the West African Sub-Region and the world at large through sustainable partnerships. As part of the activities of SCNL each year, a General Assembly (GA) is hosted in order to deliberate on issues around nature conservation, related policy issues and the advancement and sustainable way forward for the organization.

**Vision:** That biodiversity is effectively managed and wisely used.

**Mission:** To educate, encourage, and assist the public to understand the need to conserve nature, build consensus on the effective management of Biodiversity, and to ensure that the use of natural resources is sustainable.

## **Objectives:**

1. Increase institutional capacity for effective management of biodiversity.
2. Strengthen community structures in providing basic information on the threats, use of other resources and biodiversity
3. Increase advocacy for the creation of additional protected areas.
4. Increase alternative livelihood opportunities for communities around protected and potential conservation areas.
5. Heighten public awareness on the socio, economic, environmental, aesthetic and cultural values of natural resources.

***Motto: Helping to Conserve Nature***

## Preface by Board of Directors

The year 2019 showed our resilience as a team to forge forward in the achievements of all of our programs and projects. We achieve most of our targets and we are hopeful that this year, 2020, is no exception to making even better progress. As I said during our Annual Retreat in January, 2020, I encouraged each of us to continuously work as a team, improve capacity and seek more projects and programs to sustain jobs and keep SCNL afloat. In spite of the setback we have been experiencing with the Corona Virus, we are still determined to meet our targets for 2020. We remained vigilant in keeping safe while delivering to our donors and partners.

Thank you!

Moses A. Massah  
**Chairman, SCNL Board of Directors**



## Message from our Executive Director



2020 started on a really great note as we made plans to complete our pending projects and programs that were coming to a close and start new ones that were being finalized for roll out.

We also made plans to engage in and work on policy matters that affect the Gola Landscape while improving staff capacity and productivity through training and capacity building initiatives. We hosted our Annual Staff retreat in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, from January 9-12, 2020 with all senior staff in attendance as well as members of our board headed by our board chair. We made robust work plans, set resolutions and crafted action points for each of our projects/programs and departments. We also adopted our Gender and Social Inclusion and Safeguard policies at that retreat. We achieved a major policy milestone which was the signing of an Amended Memorandum of Understanding for the GOLA TRANSBOUNDARY Landscape On February 18, 2020. It was signed between the Republics of Liberia and Sierra Leone at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Liberia located at Capitol Hill, in Monrovia through the coordination of SCNL and the FDA. On March 19, 2020, we took a hiatus from full time work

with a skeleton staff working few hours per week when Liberia recorded her first index case of Corona Virus and a State of Emergency was declared. This worldwide pandemic stalled most of our field activities because we had to work from home for a considerable number of weeks. However, we made all necessary provision available for our staff and set up a channel of communication to keep in touch with each other. We also set up an Emergency Coordination Response Team to buttress the Government of Liberia efforts in creating awareness on the Corona Virus and provided preventive materials for all of our project sites( Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Sinoe Counties) as well as a donation of same to the Montserrado County Health Team. This emergency response was made possible by our Donors: Rain Forest Trust, Green Livelihood Alliance, WABiCC and our newest project PAPFor. We have since resumed work as of May 27, 2020 (working from 8Am to 4pm) with all staff on board and some field activities are being implemented, but with stringent measures in place to keep our staff, affiliates and partners safe from this deadly virus while doing our work. We pray for a resolution to resume full time work and to start a full roll out of our project activities for our newest projects like PAPFor and Darwin that have been finalized for implementation. We extend a big thank you to all of our partners and donors who continue to ensure that SCNL stays afloat during this world wide pandemic.

**Thank You!**

**Michael F. Garbo**  
**Executive Director**

## SCNL BRIDGING THE POLICY GAPS - LIBERIA-SIERRA LEONE SIGN AMENDED BILATERAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR GOLA FOREST.

On February 18, 2020, an Amended Memorandum of Understanding for the GOLA TRANSBOUNDARY Landscape was signed between the Republics of Liberia and Sierra Leone at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Liberia located at Capitol Hill, in Monrovia. This process began in 2010 with the establishment of the Gola Rainforest National Park, Sierra Leone, and the signing of a bilateral MOU in October 2011 Between then Presidents, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone. These specific amendments focus on the shared responsibilities for the conservation and management of the Gola Forest.

Signatories to the amended Bilateral MOU were Honorable Gbehzohngar Milton Findley, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Liberia, Sierra Leone's Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Sam-King Brima; Secretary-General of the Mano River Union, Madam Medina Wesseh; Paramount Chief, Alameen Kanneh of Koya Chiefdom, Kenema District, Sierra Leone and Paramount Chief of Kongba District, Gbarpolu County, Liberia, Chief John Try. The signing ceremony for the amendments was also graced by representatives of regional and local partners, including the Economic Community of West African States, USAID West Africa, USAID Liberia, the European Union, and the Society for Conservation of Nature of Liberia.

Honorable Findley making remarks during the



ceremony said: “What we are about to witness today is a balancing. We have to conserve Gola Forest, we have to conserve wildlife, but those who live in the communities around the forest, their lives also have to be improved”, while USAID West Africa Representative at the program, said, “It is our hope that in the era of conflict around the world, we can see a transboundary cooperation between Liberia and Sierra Leone to protect the Gola Forest and will continue to serve as a model across the region, and indeed, the continent.”

SCNL Executive Director Michael F. Garbo also making remarks at the ceremony applauded the partners; BirdLife International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSBP), USAID, EU, Rainforest Trust and other donors for their support that brought the Greater Gola Trans-Boundary collaboration to fruition. Mr. Garbo at the same time pledged SCNL's commitment in ensuring the Trans-Boundary Peace Park is protected. And for their part, Paramount Chiefs Kanneh of Sierra Leone and John Try of Liberia reaffirmed their willingness to work with all stakeholders to conserve the forest, with the expectation that all parties involved would honor their commitments and chart a path together.

Paramount Chief Kanneh said: “This event is a very important one, but the process that ensues out of this is what actually matters. With this memorandum of understanding, our destinies are now inextricably linked, our futures are all the same, and that our children's futures will be protected.”

This forest landscape which hosts the Gola Transboundary Peace Park, is home to the Gola



Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone and the Gola Forest National Park in Liberia. Together, the forests is more than 350,000 hectares and represent one of the largest remaining blocks of the Upper Guinea Forest. The process was led by the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) through its West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Project (WABICC) with funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in collaboration with the Forestry Development Authority.

When other smaller forests are considered, including community forests and the proposed Foya Nature Reserve in Liberia, this massive forest landscape measures more than 600,000 hectares, equivalent to more than one million football fields.

The Gola Forest Landscape is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, and is home to more than 899 vascular plants, 49 mammals, 327 bird species, and 43 amphibians. Many of the wildlife and plants are threatened or critically endangered, including rosewood, the forest elephant, West African Chimpanzee, Western Red Colobus Monkey, and Pygmy Hippopotamus. The forest plays a critical function through the range of ecosystem services that provides and contributes to the mitigation of climate change impacts. Thus, its health is of global importance.

When the 2011 MOU was signed, it was considered “mutual interest in continuing and strengthening joint management and conservation of national parks close to their contiguous borders for the purpose of conserving shared resources and ecosystems.

Understanding the importance of putting the MOU into action, the USAID-funded West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABBiCC) program has been a key partner to both countries in their quest to better

protect the forest. In 2018, WABBiCC supported a meeting of technical representatives to lay the groundwork for the first meeting of the Coordination Committee, including the development of a draft action plan.

Additionally, in 2019, WABBiCC supported the first meeting of the Coordination Committee in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and later played a key role in reviewing the suggested amendments. Through signing the amendments, Sierra Leone and Liberia will refocus their efforts on



conserving their shared natural resources. Together, they will seek to curtail the main drivers of the forest's continued degradation and biodiversity loss, including illegal hunting and poaching, mining, pit logging, and agricultural encroachment.

SCNL and WABBiCC are excited to witness the signing of the amendments, and through its own work and that of its partners, who continue to collaborate with both countries to ensure the forest's survival.



# SIGNING CEREMONY PICTORIAL



# SCNL'S LOCAL COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT OFFICER WINS CEPF'S HOTSPOT HERO AWARD!!!

On May 22, 2020, International Day for Biological Diversity, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) announced that Emmanuel G. Smith and nine other conservationists from around the world were named “Hotspot Heroes” for their efforts to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots.

The CEPF is a joint biodiversity conservation initiative of I'Agence Francaise de Development, Conservation International, European Union, Global Environment Facility, Government of Japan and the World Bank. CEPF works to protect ecosystems and the species within them by awarding grants to local and international civil society organizations working in biodiversity hotspots around the world. As part of its 20th Anniversary celebration, CEPF is recognizing 10 Hotspot Heroes across 10 Global Biodiversity Hotspots where CEPF is funding hundreds of civil society organizations.

Mr. Smith works for the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) as coordinator of a CEPF funded project. SCNL is the country's oldest conservation organization. In his role, he coordinates efforts to support 15 communities in establishing two community forests, linking Gola Forest National Park in Liberia, the proposed Foya Nature Reserve, and the Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone. Together these form the Greater Gola Landscape which represents the largest single block of remaining Upper Guinean Forests. These forests are part of the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot, which extends across the southern part of West Africa, from Guinea to western Cameroon, covering all or part of 11 countries.

According to CEPF Grant Director Peggy Poncelet for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot, "Mr. Smith's role requires outstanding relationships with the communities he's working with as well as the many technical partners. He has dealt with a range of issues—from commercial bushmeat and beekeeping to loan schemes and literacy," She also mentioned that “He is



Honoree Emmanuel G. Smith

deeply committed to conservation in his home country, Liberia."

According to Mr. Smith in an interview with the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS), he stated “This award has inspired me to do more than ever before. I have always worked because I have a piece of work to do and desire to achieve project and institution objectives. I did not know that I would have been recognized for the work I do until this time.” He used the occasion to dedicate the award to SCNL stating that it is team work that matters at the organization and called on young conservationists to make themselves available to serve at all times.

# SCNL CONDUCTS 2<sup>nd</sup> COMMUNITY ECOGUARD TRAINING

The Project, Strengthening Local Communities and the Law Enforcement Network to Combat Wildlife and Forest Crimes in Liberia being implemented within the framework of the European Union conducted its 2nd Community Ecoguard Training from June 7 to 19, 2020, in Mano River Kongo, Grand Cape Mount County and from June 26 to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, in Kongbor, Gbarpolu County. The specific objective of the training was in two folds: (1) to train local community members in Gola in biomonitoring techniques and community engagement protocols; and (2) to allow FDA, CFOC and SCNL to select qualified candidates to serve as community ecoguards for both the community forest and the Gola Forest National Park.

The training brought together participants from the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), CFOC (Community Forest Organizing Committee) and the youth from the community forest and the Gola Forest National Park communities in both counties. The training was conducted under the observance of the following Covid-19 Training Site Protocol:

- 6 feet from one another considering social distancing requirements
- Wearing of nose mask during the training session
- Temperature check before and after the training were also observed
- Each trainee was mandated to wash his /her hands before entering the training hall

A total of one hundred and twenty-five persons were trained (9 females and 116 males) from both counties. They were trained in the following techniques: biomonitoring; Rules and behavioral considerations; Navigating data sheet; Fauna Direct observation; Fauna Indirect observation; Anthropogenic observation; using GPS unit and a compass; Camera Trapping Bushnell and Pygmy hippo survey.



The training is conducted to strengthen the participation of local communities in the management and protection of Wildlife and Forest Resources. The data that will be collected will be useful for management decision which will lead to the conservation and management of Wildlife and Forest Resources.

The collective participation of the community members indicate how they are prepared to carry out patrols and data collection. At the end of the training the participants expressed their happiness in participating in such training and committed that they are ready to start work as soon as possible.

The first set of ecoguard trainings under this project were held in Mano River Kongo, Grand Cape Mount County from October 22<sup>nd</sup> -27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and in Kongbor, Gbarpolu County, from December 27<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. These trainings brought together a total of 121 persons (11 females and 110 Males) from the two counties.

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# PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

## GolaMA/CEPF Project/Rainforest Trust

Building upon the just ended European Union (EU) funded “GolaMA project” and the WABICC project, the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) continues to support the Normon and Tonglay Clans in the acquisition of their community forests through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) project “Communities as Environmental Stewards of the Largest Guinea Rainforest Block”. The project started in 2017 and has been supporting the 9 steps process and forest friendly income generating activities.

Also building upon the GolaMA and CEPF projects is the Rainforest Trust project titled “Empowering Communities to Protect Rainforests in Liberia”. This project is supporting 3 other community forests (Gola Konneh, Sokpo 1 & Sokpo 2) in Grand Cape Mount County in addition to the Normon and Tonglay Clans community forests. The overall objective of this project which started January 2020 is “To catalyse the development of Community Forests around the Gola Forest National Park (GFNP) in Liberia” by:

1. To support ongoing works of five community forests in Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount Counties
  2. Support the establishment of three additional community forests around the GFNP
  3. Support and encourage communities to include strict conservations zones in their community forests
  4. Build the capacities of Executive Committees (EC) and Community Forest Management Bodies to manage their forests
- Activities captured herein were carry out from 1 January to 31 March 2020 as follow:

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Training:** On January 17 & 18, 2020, two-day training was conducted for Community Assembly (CA) and Executive Committee (EC) members of Tonglay and Normon Clan Community Forests respectively. The objectives of the training were to build the capacity of community forest governance structures in basic leadership skills,

identifying roles and responsibilities of each group in the management of the Community Forest as well as to take ownership of the forest management.

- **Farmer Field School (FFS) Graduation:** Eighty-two cocoa farmers graduated from 4 FFS in Normon and Tonglay Clans on January 23 & 24, 2020. Thirty-eight farmers graduated from 2 FFS in Camp Alpha, Tonglay while forty-four farmers graduated from FFS in Normon and Jaiwajeh respectively. Among the graduates were 64 males and 18 females in total.
- **Community Forest Management Body (CFMB):** During the period under review, elections of Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs) of the Normon and Tonglay Community Forests were conducted on February 22-23, 2020. The election of CFMB is required by the Community Rights Law of 2009 with respect to forest land. The process is step 8 of a 9 steps process and was supervised by the Forestry Development Authority (FDA).



## CONSERVATION AGREEMENT (CA) FOR CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL In GRAND CAPE MOUNT COUNTY

On February 6, 2019, CI-Liberia with funding from UNDP, contracted the service of The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) with aim to roll-out a full scale Conservation Agreement (CA) through the delivery of agreed benefit packages from CI-Liberia base on an effective compliance to conservation actions by the communities.

### Implementation/Success Stories:

Between October 2019 to March 2020 SCNL has roll-out CA agreed benefit packages in Kanga, Falie & Gohn , Grand Cape Mount County .It trained 310 livelihood beneficiaries in environmental friendly and mixed cropping of vegetables and provide them with seedlings for crops production ; 60 livestock given to communities as well ; 30 students from Falie benefited from the CA Scholarship Scheme in five schools in Garwula District, Grand Cape Mount County; 20 persons benefited from Falie Small Loan program with start-up cash of LD 208,000.00; Kanga Community Clinic along with Zaaway Clinic and Sinje Health Center benefits assorted medications that cost about USD \$10,000.00 under the CA, ZLMC office was renovated, furnished and turned over to the communities on January 31, 2020;

35 Frontline Conservationists(FCs) trained in bio –monitoring of forest threats and are given monthly stipends as well as 7 Volunteer Teachers (VTs) given monthly stipend to teach in Gohn Zodua Public School in other to buttress government efforts in providing quality education in Liberia.



## SCNL JOINS THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 DONATES PREVENTION MATERIALS TO 4 COUNTIES

More than 7,000 people in 58 project communities of the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) and the Montserrado County Health team, have benefited from anti-COVID-19 support in an attempt to halt the spread of the Coronavirus among residents of those communities.

The project communities are situated in Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount and Sinoe Counties. The total cost of the intervention was in the tone of Seventy-eight thousand United States dollars (US \$ 78,000).

SCNL's support to stop the spread of the Coronavirus included the provision of thermometers, face masks, Hand Sanitizers,



*Covid materials presentation to Montserrado County Health Team*

clora, tide soap and faucet buckets. The organization also provided a total of four hundred and twenty (420) bags of rice to the targeted communities . The items were given to

produced face masks, washing and bathing soaps, tie soap, clora, sanitizers and buckets”. Receiving the materials on behalf of the Montserrado County Health Team, Mr. Sapleh Duo lauded SCNL for the materials and promised



households, strategic public places, Health Centers, markets, among others.

SCNL is also carried awareness through radio jingles, drama, interviews, news broadcast on local radio stations in both English and local dialects spoken in the project communities. A total of 36 communities in Grand Cape Mount County; 24 in Gbarpolu County and 8 from Sinoe County benefited from SCNL's Anti-COVID-19 intervention.

Mr. Michael F. Garbo, SCNL's Executive Director said, “due to the risks and threats the Coronavirus poses to the Country, his entity decided to join the fight against COVID-19 to buttress the government of Liberia effort and help reduced the hard time being experienced by her citizens”.

In separate remarks, SCNL's Program Manager, Michael E. Taire who led the team that made the presentation to the Montserrado County Health Team said : “We do understand how the coronavirus situation has posed many challenges to the Government and the health sector in the midst of financial and budgetary constraints, so we've decided to buttress government's efforts by supporting the Montserrado County Health Team with assorted materials of thermometers, locally

to use the items for its intended purpose.

SCNL COVID-19 awareness and prevention project was made possible through funds provided by: USAID-West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABBICC), the European Union, the Rainforest Trust and IUCN-NL.

SCNL distribution team, headed by Mr. Jerry C. Garteh (SCNL's Science and Conservation Coordinator) encouraged beneficiaries of this intervention to adhere to the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Institute approved health and safety measures so as to avoid the spread of the virus.



# KNOW YOUR PROTECTED SPECIES:

## Why are Western Chimpanzees important?

Chimpanzee are our closest living relative, sharing 98.6% of our DNA. Chimpanzees are found only in Africa. The western Chimpanzee is a special type of Chimpanzee unique to Liberia, Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire. Read on to learn more about amazing Chimpanzee!!!

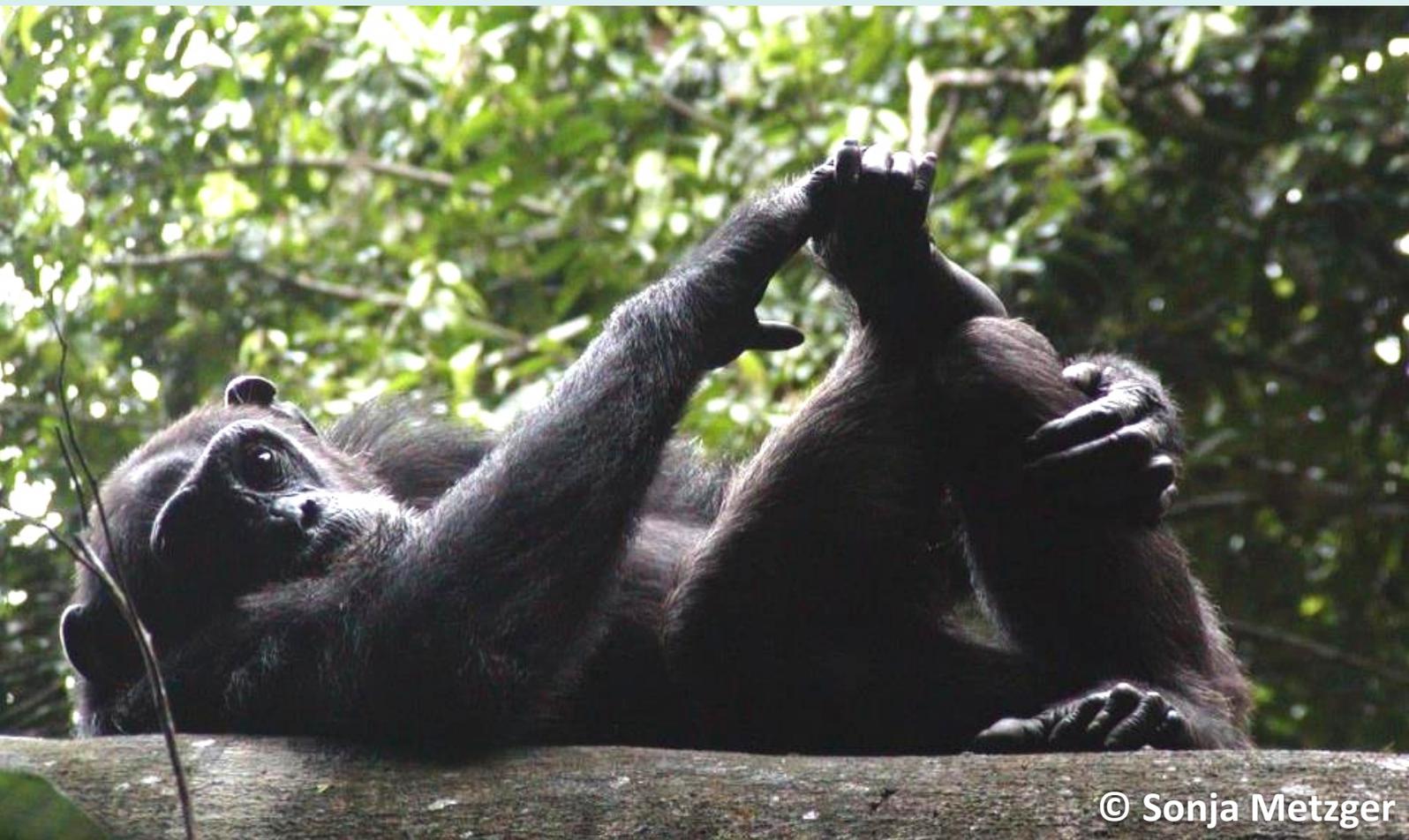
Chimpanzees play an important role in maintaining the Forest and its biodiversity.

➤ Chimpanzees represent a meaningful symbol in several West African Cultures. In Liberia some people hold the Chimpanzee as a totem.

➤ Chimpanzees are a unique and exciting species that encourage tourists from all over the world to visit Liberia.

### Did you know that....?

- Chimpanzees are fully protected under Liberia's Wildlife Law, meaning it is prohibited to hunt, kill, eat, capture, keep as a pet or sell a Chimpanzee or any Chimpanzee body part.
- Liberia still has large forest areas, making it one of the most important countries for the survival of Chimpanzees in West Africa.
- Western Chimpanzees in Liberia are under severe threat and need your help to protect them!



© Sonja Metzger

## **What are the threats to Western**

### **Chimpanzees?**

- ❖ Hunting and killing of Chimpanzees
- ❖ Cutting down of forest where Chimpanzees live
- ❖ Pet trade
- ❖ Mining and logging
- ❖ Disease

### **How can you help?**

- ✓ Don't hunt, kill or trade Chimpanzees
- ✓ Don't keep Chimpanzees as pets
- ✓ Report any Wildlife crime to FDA
- ✓ Create awareness and share your knowledge about Chimpanzees
- ✓ Immediately report any problems with Chimpanzees to FDA
- ✓ To learn more about Chimpanzees, visit [www.liberiachimpanzeerescue.org](http://www.liberiachimpanzeerescue.org)

### **Status:**

Critically Endangered

### **Strength:**

Chimpanzees are between 3-6 times stronger than an adult human.

### **Nest:**

Chimpanzees make a new nest every night to sleep in.

### **Life Span:**

Chimpanzees can live for more than 50 years.

### **Habitats:**

Chimpanzees live in both dense rainforest and grassland

### **Clever:**

Chimpanzees are very intelligent and have their own tools, such as rocks to crack nuts and sticks to fish for termites. They are excellent problem solvers.

### **Social:**

Chimpanzees live in large groups and form close friendships. Chimpanzees have emotions that are very similar to humans. They cuddle and kiss each other and also laugh.

### **Mother-Child Bond:**

Babies nurse and sleep in the same nest as their mothers up to the age of 5 years and have lifelong bonds with their families.

### **Diet:**

Chimpanzees are known to eat over 200 different types of food. They also use some plants as medicine.





This News Letter was produced and published by the Policy and Advocacy Department at the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia -SCNL

Contact: 0777822456/0555831170

Email: [polad.scnl@gmail.com](mailto:polad.scnl@gmail.com)/[ahanky@scnlliberia.org](mailto:ahanky@scnlliberia.org)

Physical Address: Tubman Boulevard, Congo Town

Opposite German Embassy

Monrovia, Liberia



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