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Gorilla Friends Around the World: *Barcelona, Spain*

by Susan Lutter

Not too long ago, the Gorilla Foundation received a request from the zoo in Barcelona, Spain, to contribute materials for an exposition on gorillas they were designing. The zoo's Executive Director, Dr. Carmen Maté Garcia, has followed the Gorilla Foundation's work for many years and is a strong advocate for human understanding and protection of gorillas.

We sent photographs and stories and copies of artwork, and ZooBarcelona incorporated them into an exceptional permanent exposition at the zoo. The exposition is now complete and very popular with visitors. The four-foot title on the building says "Goril•les," which is "gorillas" in Catalán, the language of Barcelona. The walls are covered with displays and descriptions in three languages: Catalan, Spanish, and English. As visitors walk through the exposition, they pass through the story of man's first discovery of gorillas, into explorations of gorilla habitat, their characteristics and their intelligence, and the need to protect them against the man-made threats to their very existence.

A poster-sized photograph of Penny with Koko pointing to a photograph of Snowflake, Barcelona's famous albino gorilla, helps make the point that noses are as unique to gorillas as fingerprints are to people. A whole wall is devoted to Koko's sign language ability as evidence of gorillas' intelligence. And gorillas' artistic ability is addressed in a series of paintings – including ones by Michael and Koko – which are hung together and visitors are asked to guess whether each is by a human artist or another primate. Most think Michael's painting is by a prominent Catalan modern artist.

If you find yourself in Barcelona, don't miss the Zoo. ■

PROJECTE KOKO:
GORIL•LES QUE APRENEN
UN LENGUATGE DE SIGNES

PROYECTO KOKO: GORILAS QUE APRENEN LENGUAJE DE SIGNOS
PROJECT KOKO: GORILLAS THAT LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE

Després de gairebé trenta anys del projecte KOKO, el primer any de l'èxit de la comunicació de gènera amb comunicació humana (signes) ha estat el 2006. En aquest any, se n'han produït moltes més que en els anys anteriors. En aquest any, se n'han produït moltes més que en els anys anteriors. En aquest any, se n'han produït moltes més que en els anys anteriors.

El projecte Koko és un projecte de recerca i educació que té l'objectiu de demostrar que els gorilles poden aprendre a comunicar-se amb humans mitjançant el llenguatge de signes. El projecte Koko és un projecte de recerca i educació que té l'objectiu de demostrar que els gorilles poden aprendre a comunicar-se amb humans mitjançant el llenguatge de signes.

Als la Koko té un nou company, un macaco anomenat "Mico". Mico és un macaco de l'espècie "Macaca mulatta" que viu a la Koko.

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HA FET AQUEST DIBUIX?

In case your Catalán is a little rusty, the headlines read... "Project Koko: gorillas who learned sign language"

"Who painted this picture?"

On the front cover:
Zura, a female western lowland gorilla who lives at the San Francisco Zoo and is part of Dr. Joanne Tanner's research on spontaneous signing by zoo gorillas.
See article on page 6.

Africa Update: Inspiring Conservation Values

by Penelope Fraser
and Lorraine Slater



Deep in the forests of Africa, a gorilla family goes peacefully about its business. Guarded by the silverback, some females browse for food, others quietly nurse their babies. Youngsters frolic, while older gorillas bask in the sun.

But suddenly, the silverback leaps up, sensing intruders. Females and youngsters scurry for cover. He charges in the direction of the invaders to frighten them off. Others join in, creating an awesome display of gorilla power.

Tragically, they are no match for the guns of the bushmeat hunters. Several gorillas fall. The hunters transport their prizes to market, where they will be processed to satisfy a taste for exotic delicacies. Any baby gorillas now orphaned will be captured and, if they survive, sold illegally on the black market.

Heart-wrenching tragedies like this, coupled with the growing realization that habitats were vanishing at an alarming rate, intensified the Gorilla Foundation's belief that gorillas were on the road to extinction. To address this crisis, the Foundation partnered with Dr. Anthony Rose's Biosynergy Institute to establish the Wildlife Protectors Fund in Africa in 1999.

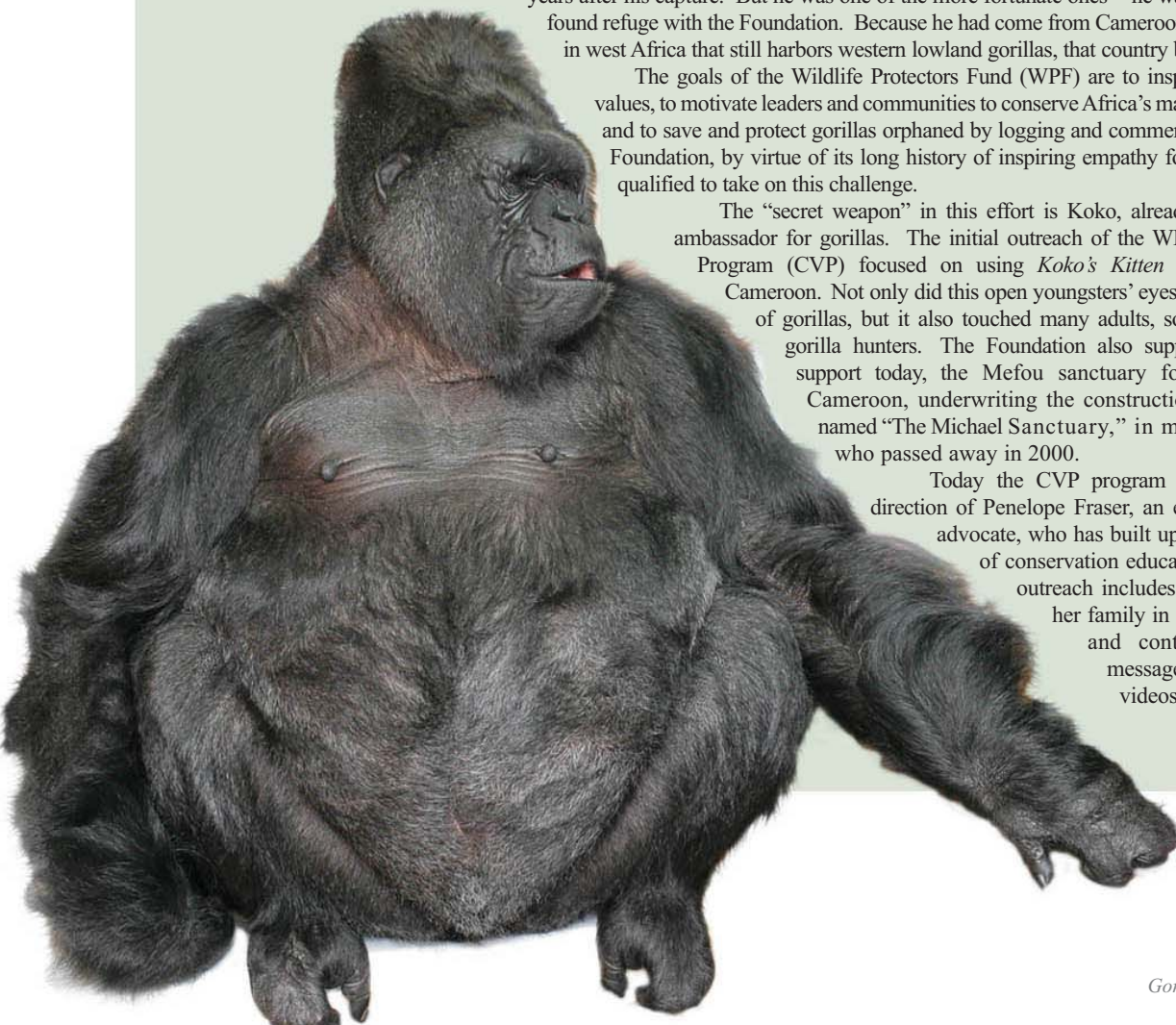
An added incentive for expanding the Foundation's mission to embrace conservation on the ground in Africa was the commitment to Michael the gorilla, who came to live at the Foundation in 1976. A bushmeat orphan, he had experienced a scene very similar to the one described above – a scene he was able to recount to us in sign language several years after his capture. But he was one of the more fortunate ones – he was rescued, and eventually found refuge with the Foundation. Because he had come from Cameroon, one of several countries in west Africa that still harbors western lowland gorillas, that country became a focus.

The goals of the Wildlife Protectors Fund (WPF) are to inspire humane conservation values, to motivate leaders and communities to conserve Africa's magnificent natural heritage, and to save and protect gorillas orphaned by logging and commercial hunting. The Gorilla Foundation, by virtue of its long history of inspiring empathy for the species, is uniquely qualified to take on this challenge.

The "secret weapon" in this effort is Koko, already proven to be an ideal ambassador for gorillas. The initial outreach of the WPF's Conservation Values Program (CVP) focused on using *Koko's Kitten* books in classrooms in Cameroon. Not only did this open youngsters' eyes to the amazing capacities of gorillas, but it also touched many adults, some of whom were even gorilla hunters. The Foundation also supported, and continues to support today, the Mefou sanctuary for orphaned gorillas in Cameroon, underwriting the construction of a large enclosure, named "The Michael Sanctuary," in memory of the dear friend who passed away in 2000.

Today the CVP program goes forward under the direction of Penelope Fraser, an experienced conservation advocate, who has built up a small but skilled team of conservation educators in Cameroon. Their outreach includes the stories of Koko and her family in California, and compares and contrasts the content and messages of Koko's books and videos with local stories, myths

Koko, ambassador for endangered species.



and legends about wildlife.

Penelope sees the CVP mission today in these terms:

“One of the greatest threats to wild gorillas, Koko’s cousins, is the currently unbridled slaughter, carried out by professional hunters, to satisfy a growing demand for primate meat. This market is greatest amongst Africa’s urban



The face of a bushmeat orphan.

populations: populations that are detached, both from their rural roots and traditions, and from modern scientific knowledge and thinking.

“Our goal is to engage Koko as an ambassador for her species to stem this abhorrent demand for gorilla meat. We will bring Koko into the schools, communities and church groups of urban Cameroon—to show people that gorillas are sentient, intelligent, caring creatures, to be cherished and loved, and that they are not meat.

“Some people eat gorilla meat simply because

it is put in front of them. They don’t really know what it is, or think about it, and some consume it because it seems exotic. Our experience working in these areas, over many years, has been that very few people have experience of living gorillas, or knowledge of them. We have seen that when both

Our goal is to engage Koko as an ambassador for her species...

kids and adults read about Koko, watch her videos and learn her sign language, they fall in love with her, they immediately understand gorillas in the same way as you and I, and are shocked and horrified at the cannibalism.

“Koko workshops in the past have prompted fascinating, spontaneous discussion and debate on wildlife and conservation issues, with participants keen to know more, to join our program, to get better acquainted with Koko and Penny. Most significantly, we notice that a number of participants became gorilla conservation disciples themselves.

“Our goal is that African kids become as familiar with Koko, and what she represents, as are American kids. We believe that this will take us a huge step closer to providing a safe and secure future for those precious gorillas living in their natural environment.”

This is the power of Koko—one interaction leads to another and a gradual momentum towards real change begins. To capitalize on this phenomenon, the Koko/CVP outreach in Cameroon is extraordinarily varied, as

Penelope and her team constantly are on the lookout for strategic opportunities and venues through which to maximize their impact. It is a truly priceless opportunity to influence the fate of a species.

The goal for the future is to continue—and expand—this unique and exciting program, both in Cameroon and beyond. As one of the few



Members of Koko’s Cameroonian fan club demonstrate signing in ASL.

forces on the entire continent of Africa promoting conservation values, the Gorilla Foundation has seen the need for bringing this outreach into other countries that gorillas call home. With Ambassador Koko leading the way, real changes in attitudes and behavior will lead to lasting change for the better for all gorillas. It is one very critical path to ensure that hunting will decrease, that habitat can be preserved, and that gorillas can be saved from extinction. ■

Joseph Melloh

First Recipient of Wildlife Protectors Award

The Gorilla Foundation is delighted to announce the inauguration of the Wildlife Protectors Award. This grant is designed to honor and support the work of individuals who at the local level have performed exemplary exploits on behalf of conservation, particularly as it relates to the Great Apes. The 2006 award, underwritten by a generous grant from the Morris-Rose family, is being bestowed upon Joseph Melloh, a native of Cameroon, to celebrate his decade of heroic effort as a Protector of Wildlife.

Ten years ago, Joseph Melloh converted from being a gorilla hunter to becoming an advocate for their protection. Since that time, he has undertaken valiant conservation efforts on behalf of gorillas and all rainforest life. He has been an exemplary advocate and role model to attract hunters into conservation, and has served commendably as conservation educator, gorilla habituation/protection supervisor, great ape field research guide, and

bushmeat crisis investigator.

This \$6,000 award is being made in tribute to Mr. Melloh’s past work and to enable him to continue his community education efforts in the service of wildlife protection in his native country of Cameroon. The Foundation is pleased to join with the Morris-Rose family in saying “thank you” to Joseph for all he has done. Dr. Tony Rose has noted, “As founders and supporters of the Wildlife Protectors Fund, and the Poachers to Protectors project, this award is a symbol of our ongoing devotion to wildlife and primate conservation.”

We look forward to honoring other individuals making similar contributions in the future. If you would like to find out how to assist in helping to fund this award for future recipients, please contact Lorraine Slater at lorraine@koko.org



All smiles, Joseph Melloh (third from left) has a “photo op” with his family, Dr. Tony Rose (center) and TGF board member Peter Roberts.

Koko's Impact

by Kristina Hancock

at the 2006
American Bar Association
Conference in Hawaii



When the American Bar Association's TIPS (Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section) Animal Law Committee began to plan for its annual meeting program this year in Hawaii, my first thought was how wonderful it would be to have Koko as the program's keynote speaker.

The mission of the Animal Law Committee is to be the instrument of a paradigm shift to raise consciousness and facilitate the evolution of thought on animal issues, both domestically and internationally. In the entire planetary animal kingdom, Koko is the only being who is able to communicate to us so clearly the inner thoughts and feelings of another species. Although certain other great apes, dolphins and parrots have achieved the capacity for more limited communication with humans, Koko's 35 year journey with Penny Patterson has singularly equipped her to serve as our true "ambassador to the animal kingdom," a role she fulfills with uncommon grace, insight and humor. So who better to represent her kingdom before a room full of lawyers? Koko was the obvious choice.

When we learned that the Gorilla Foundation and Koko were willing to be a part of our program, it would be fair to say that everyone at ABA TIPS was absolutely "tickled pink." The actual creation of the video turned out to be a labor of love and there was a true meeting of the minds that exceeded even our highest expectations. As Penny, Gary Stanley and Lorraine Slater focused their energies together with the members of the Animal Law Committee, a synergy emerged from the blending of our diverse perspectives (science and law) with a common goal: the creation of an educational vehicle that would provide a window into the soul of an animal, juxtaposed against the stark social reality that animals currently share the legal status of inanimate objects.

When we finished the video, I knew that something powerful had been created. Yet I was not prepared for the full impact that the piece would have on a room full of "rational" attorneys skilled in razor-sharp critical analysis. I was stunned when I glanced around the room after the scene documenting the death of Koko's first kitten, All Ball, and realized that there was hardly a dry eye in the room. Afterwards, a veteran ABA member described watching the video as "a life altering experience."

Public awareness of animal-related issues has reached an all-time high, and I believe this is largely attributable to the work of individuals like Penny Patterson. We at the ABA TIPS Animal Law Committee are honored to have worked with the Gorilla Foundation on this important project, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Penny and Koko for helping us to further our goal of improving conditions for all members of the animal kingdom. ■

"You-go there." Koko signing simultaneously. Her left hand is indicating Penny while with her right she points to where she wants Penny to go.



Kristina Hancock is a tax attorney at Luce, Forward, Hamilton & Scripps LLP's Del Mar office, and an adjunct professor at California Western School of Law, where she teaches Animal Law.



DO GORILLAS CREATE SIGN LANGUAGES? OF THEIR OWN



Photo of Kubie, Koko's brother, by Ronald Cohn

A summary of
“The development of
spontaneous gestures in
zoo-living gorillas and
sign-taught gorillas: from
action and location to
object representation”

by Joanne E. Tanner,
Francine G. Patterson and
Richard W. Byrne

Journal of Developmental Processes,
Fall 2006, Volume 1, pages 69-102 ¹

The photographs illustrating Zura and Kubie signing are taken from the field research videotapes of Joanne Tanner and Charles Ernest.

Introduction

What can we learn about the origins of language by comparing the gestures of zoo gorillas to those spontaneously created by Koko, a gorilla who has learned sign language? To address this question, the authors utilized Dr. Penny Patterson's complete data from Koko's first ten years of signing² as well as further examples from more recent years, and compared it to data collected by Dr. Joanne Tanner during 15 years of videotaped observations of the gorilla group at the San Francisco Zoo.

We assessed what the gestures represent as well as the means of representation and the space in which the gestures are produced. The broad conclusion we reached was that ordinary social action is the raw material from which earliest language may have arisen, and that apes and humans share an advanced ability to map action mentally and reproduce it physically in communication. This involves picturing motion in space, predicting its results before performing it, and translating from the larger scale of the real world to the smaller scale of the hand movements that describe it.

One of the most important shared aspects of the communicative gesturing of both zoo and signing gorillas is the element of “iconicity” that is found in many gestures. An iconic gesture in some way looks like what it represents, for example, moving the hand off the top of the head to indicate the meaning “take-off.” Particular attention is given to the development of iconic gestures because they require a type of understanding that can be linked to human representational abilities. We traced the use of

iconicity and the forms it took in the development of gestures in both zoo gorillas and Koko.

Development of Gestures in Zoo Gorillas

Information about the gestures of zoo-living gorillas is drawn from a long-term study of the gorilla group at the San Francisco Zoo from 1988 to the present. All social interaction was videotaped continuously for later analysis, including complete cataloging of all gestures. The subjects are members of a stable social group; all have been subjects of the Tanner and Byrne studies,^{3,4,5} but the interaction between Kubie, a young male (Koko's brother), and Zura, a young female, received the most intense analysis; by far the greatest amount of gesturing was done by these two gorillas.⁶

Zoo gorillas used gestures to depict action or indicate location, but these appeared later in the zoo gorillas than in Koko, who began doing this at the start of the language project, at age 1–2 years. Tanner's zoo observations began when the two principal subjects, Kubie and Zura, were young adults. The earliest information available on Kubie showed that nearly all his adult repertoire of gestures was already present at age 8, observed in the context of sexual positioning and sexual play with an older and uncooperative female. Some play gestures were present at age 2 years, but these do not appear to include gestures that indicate location or depict directional motion, tactile or otherwise.

A gesture used as a “negation” was seen in the zoo gorilla Zura from age 7; this was *hide playface*, used to suppress the urge to play and understood by her male play partner, who