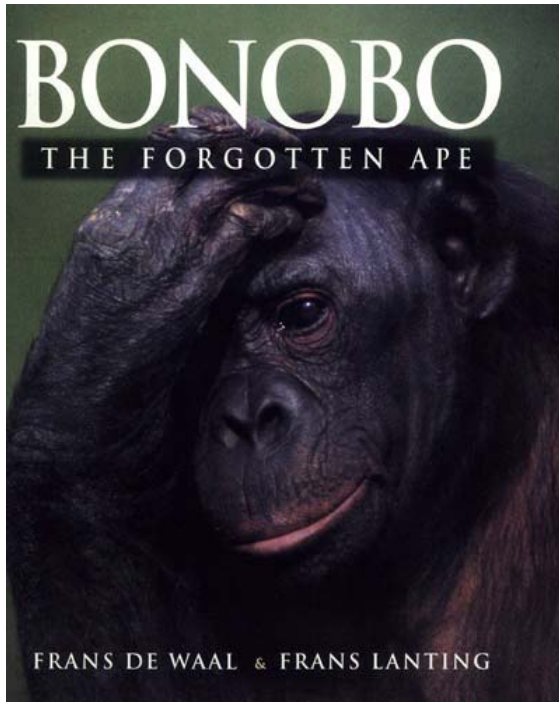


Book of The Century



Frans De Wall & Frans Lanting (1997). *BONOBO. THE FORGOTTEN APE.* University of California Press. Berkeley, Los Angeles London 202 pp.

How better to celebrate a little-known close relative than by marrying science and art, combining hard-won information with provocative images? The result is the first book that tries to piece together the bonobo puzzle in a fashion that we hope will appeal to a wide audience.-Preface.

Additional commentary

"It is high time for increased public awareness of this appealing, fascinating primate, one that presents a major challenge to traditional notions of human origins" (p. XIV).

"The bonobo is not a historical phenomenon, however--at least not yet. The species still lives in a region of the world whose remoteness has thus far protected it from the large-scale habitat destruction that is taking place

everywhere else in the tropics. If we take good care of the bonobo, we may for a long time share this planet with a family member that affords us an entirely new look at ourselves". (p. XV).

"Had bonobos been known earlier, reconstruction of human evolution might have emphasized sexual relations, equality between males and females, and the origin of the family, instead of war, hunting, tool technology, and other masculine fortes. Bonobo society seems ruled by the "Make Love, Not War" slogan of the 1960s rather than the myth of a bloodthirsty killer ape that has dominated textbooks for at least three decades" (p.2).

"Enter the bonobo, which is best characterized as a female-centered, egalitarian primate species that substitutes sex for aggression. It is impossible to understand the social life of this ape without attention to its sex life: the two are inseparable. Whereas in most other species, sexual behavior is a fairly distinct category, in the bonobo it has become an integral part of social relationships, and not just between males and females. Bonobos engage in sex virtually every partner combination: male-male, male-female, female-female, male-juvenile, female-juvenile, and so on. The frequency of sexual contact is also higher than among most other primates." (p.4).

"The truth is that if bonobo behavior provides any hints, very few human sexual practices can be dismissed as "unnatural". (pp 4-5).

"Because the role of sex in society is such a loaded and controversial issue, scientists have tended to downplay this side of bonobo behavior, whereas the few journalists who have written about the species have naturally hyped it. In this book, I hope to strike a balance: I intend to give the topic the attention it deserves, without reducing bonobos to the lustful satyrs that our closest relations once were considered to be. Sexual encounters of the bonobo kind are strikingly casual, almost more affectionate than erotic. If the apes themselves are so relaxed about it, it seems inappropriate for us to give in to typically human obsession. In addition, there is a lot more to bonobo natural history than sex. The entire social

organization of the species is fascinating, as is its mode of communication, raising of offspring, remarkable intelligence, and status in the wild. The whole creature deserves attention not just part of it." (p.5).

"Physical violence almost never occurs in bonobos, yet is common in chimpanzees (p.9)

The picture emerging from Wamba, then, is one of a female-centered society; in which even the male rank order is largely dictated by mothers. (p.78).

"They nurse for four years and are carried around even longer; their mother takes them everywhere she goes. (p.94).

"Why else would this bonobo female be masturbating if not for pleasure? Bonobo females have unusually prominent clitorises and are among the most sexually solicitous creatures in the animal kingdom.(p.111)

(The maternal and social-sexual behaviors of the bonobos, which inhibit aggressive-violent behaviors, are remarkably identical to the Canela tribal culture behaviors described by William H. Crocker In Prescott, 2005 at: <http://www.violence.de/prescott/politics-trust.pdf> and the cross-cultural findings on affectional bonding in the maternal-infant relationship and sexual affectional bonding in youth relationships reported on this website-jwp).

(On 4 March 2003, this writer wrote Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D. concerning why no effort was expended in establishing the genome of the bonobo chimpanzee, the most peaceful and non-violent primate on the planet, compared to *homo sapiens*, the most violent primate on the planet. Violence is the primary health problem on this planet, which deserves the highest health priority. This letter was essentially ignored and there is no genome project on the bonobo to this day that the author is aware of. The letter at:

<http://www.violence.de/prescott/letters/COLLINS.html> --jwp)