

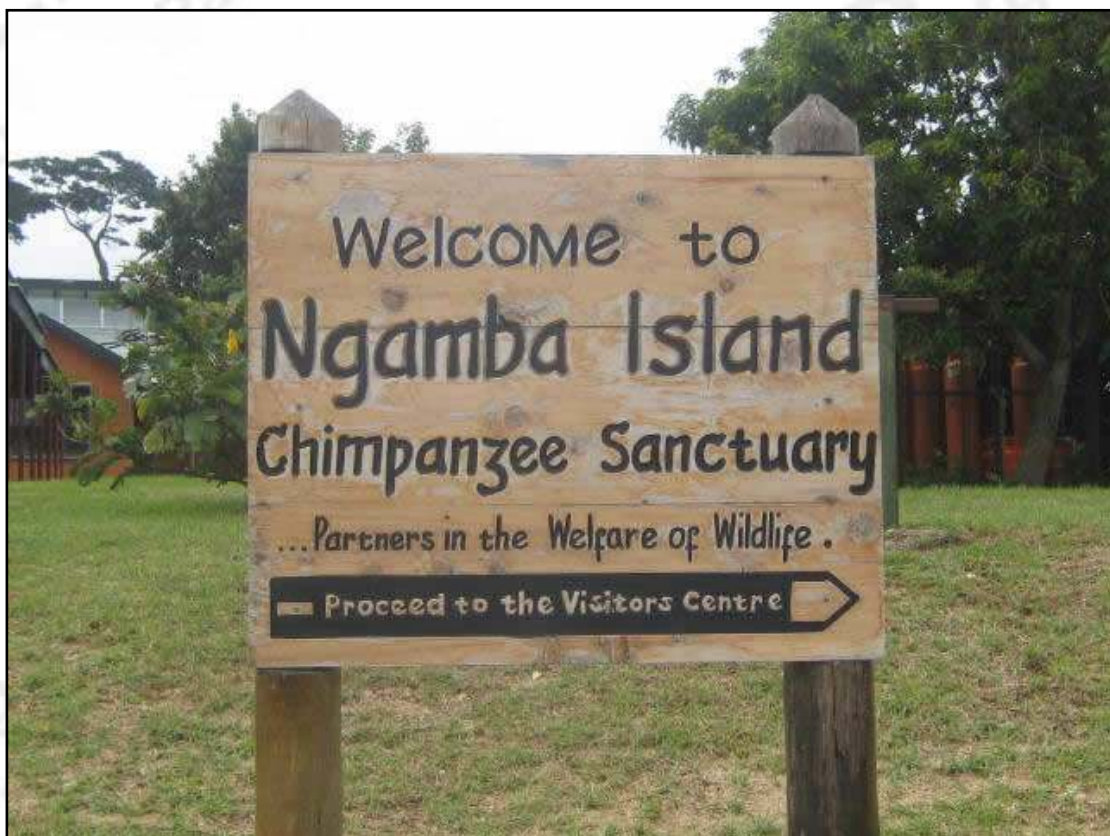


Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary

(Eco-tourism)

Uganda

A Case Study



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This case study is produced as part of the programme and activities of the:

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Eco-tourism	1
Location of Ngamba Island	2
Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWCT)	4
Background Information of Chimpanzees in Uganda – Their Distribution	5
Background Information of Chimpanzees in Uganda – Threats to Populations	6
Ngamba Island Attractions	8
Involvement with Local Communities	10
References	11

Introduction

Ngamba Island is situated in the Ugandan part of Lake Victoria and lies just south of the equator. Ngamba is part of the Kome group of islands which are part of the Mukono District Administration.

In 1998 a chimpanzee sanctuary was established on the island, this now attracts many visitors each year.

The sanctuary's primary role is that of taking care of chimpanzees that have been rescued from poachers and other distressful situations. Visitors to the sanctuary generate income which is used to support its activities.



Location of
Ngamba Island in
Lake Victoria

Eco-tourism

Eco-tourism is a term that is used to describe a variety of situations and circumstances. It is often used to mean responsible travel, to usually protected or environmentally sensitive areas, that strives to have a minimal impact on the surroundings.

Typically eco-tourism does the following things:

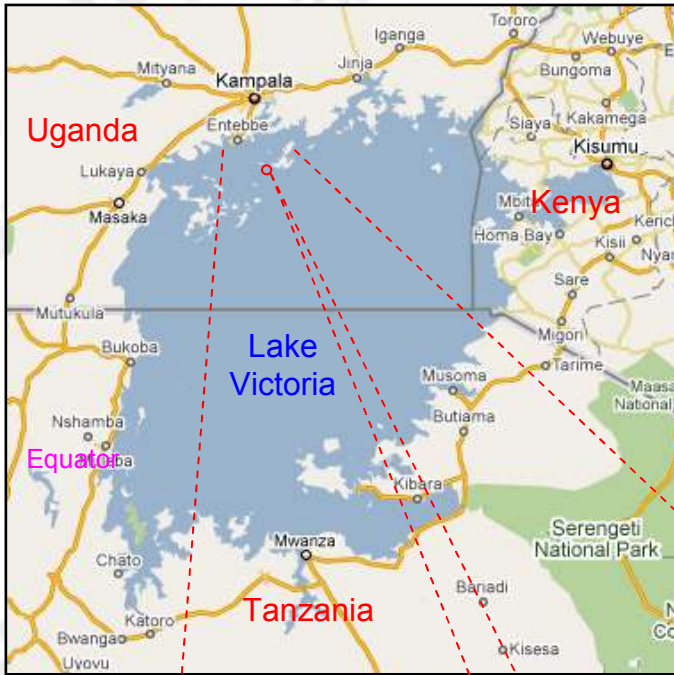
- Educate the traveller
- Provides funds for conservation
- Directly benefits the economic development of local communities
- Increases the political empowerment of local communities
- Fosters respect for different cultures and human rights.

A commonly accepted definition of ecotourism is:

“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people”

On the other hand the term “eco-tourism” has been used just as a marketing tool to promote tourism, which is related to nature. When used in this way, and the activities associated with it actually have a detrimental effect, the term “greenwashing” is sometimes applied.

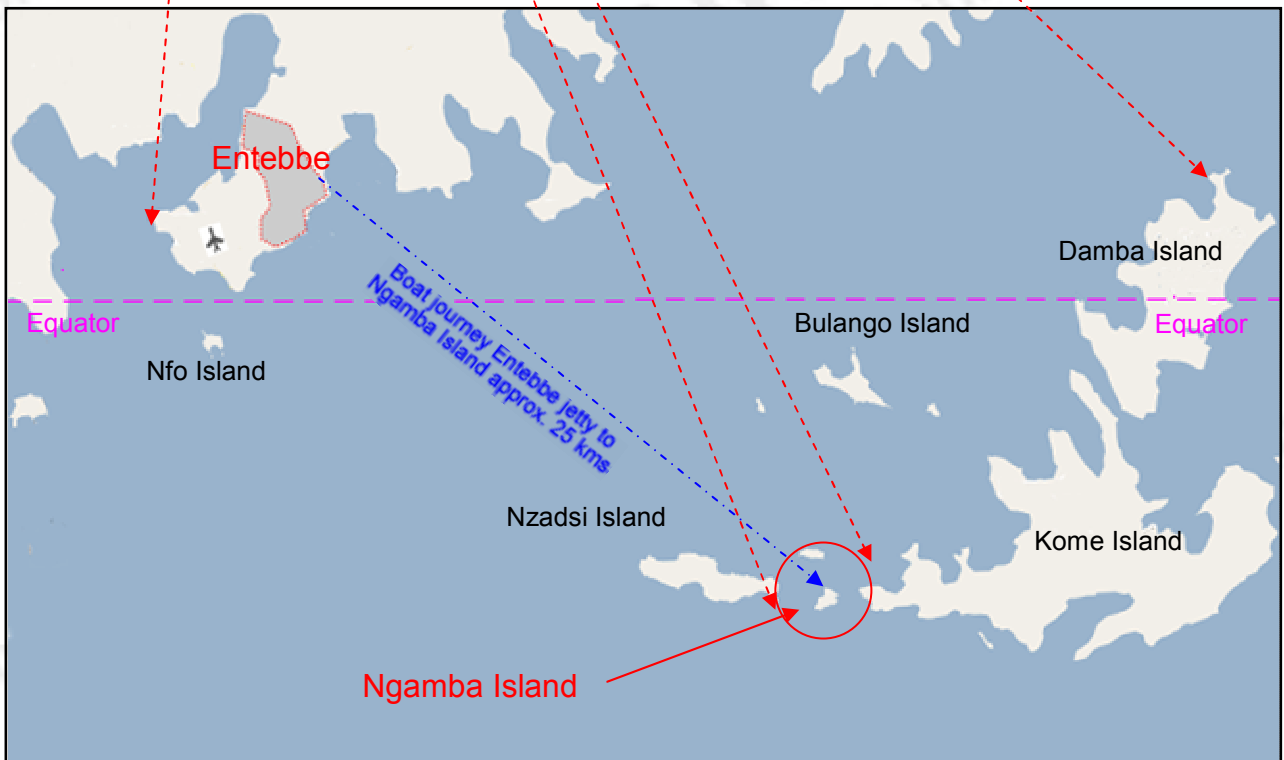
Location of Ngamba Island



Region around Lake Victoria

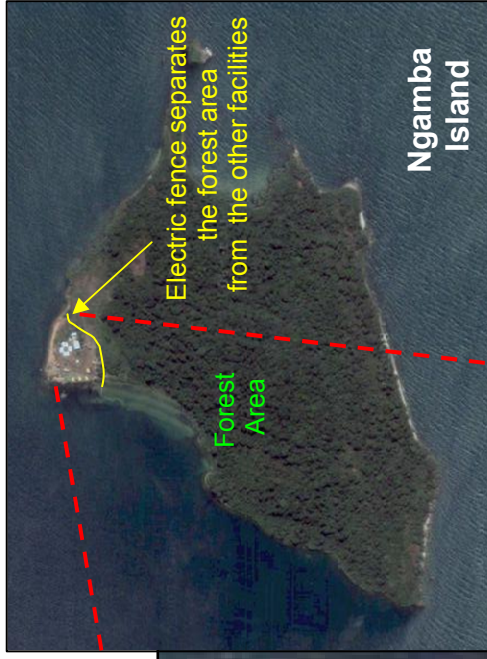
Ngamba Island is about 40 hectares in size and lies approximately 25 kms south-east of the town of Entebbe in Lake Victoria. To the west of Ngamba Island lies Nzadsi Island, while to the east is the larger Kome Island. It is from this island that the group of islands Ngamba belongs to takes its name.

The journey to Ngamba Island from the jetty at Entebbe takes about forty-five minutes by speedboat and between one and a half and two hours by traditional motorised boat; this is however dependent on weather conditions.



Enlarged View to Show the Location of Ngamba Island

An Enlarged View of Part of Ngamba Island Showing the Facilities



Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWCT)



Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary is governed by the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust which is a partnership between seven organisations which are :

- Born Free Foundation
- Ecotrust
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Jane Goodall Institute
- Uganda Wildlife Authority
- Uganda Wildlife Education Centre
- Uganda Wildlife Society

The goals of the Trust are to:

- provide a safe home for orphaned and confiscated chimpanzees.
- care for the environment on Ngamba Island.
- provide a high quality educational experience for visitors.
- benefit the local communities.

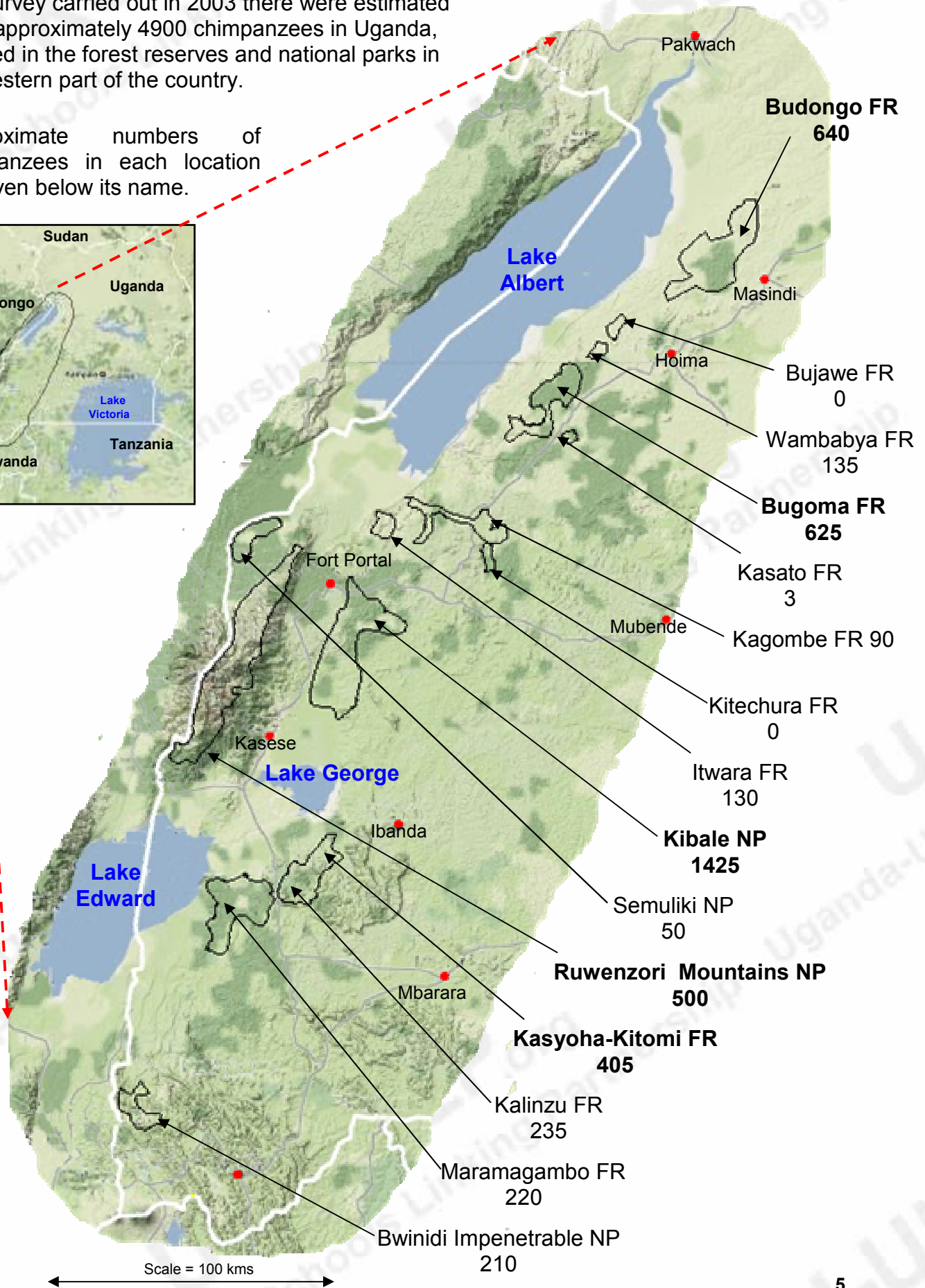
When the sanctuary was opened in 1998, nineteen chimpanzees were initially cared for, that has now increased to forty-four, which is more than the sanctuary's expected capacity. Although Ngamba Island extends to some forty hectares it is far too small to support a community of chimpanzees of this number. (In Uganda the highest population density surveyed in the "wild" is approximately 2.3 chimpanzees per km², or about one chimpanzee per forty hectares, the area of Ngamba. However a more typical figure may only be 0.35 chimpanzees per km².) It is because of this that the chimpanzees need to have a regular feeding regime and overnight holding pens.

Re-introduction of the chimpanzees into the wild from the sanctuary is problematic and so unlikely to happen on a significant scale, therefore a commitment for the long term care of the chimpanzees is necessary – chimpanzees can live up to sixty years old. All the female chimpanzees in the sanctuary are given contraceptive implants to prevent them from breeding.

Background Information about Chimpanzees in Uganda - Their Distribution

In a survey carried out in 2003 there were estimated to be approximately 4900 chimpanzees in Uganda, situated in the forest reserves and national parks in the western part of the country.

Approximate numbers of chimpanzees in each location are given below its name.



Background Information about Chimpanzees in Uganda -Threats to Populations

Chimpanzees in Uganda are under threat from a range of factors, which include:

- Encroachment of forest areas
- Bushmeat and other hunting activities
- Timber extraction (including timber for firewood and charcoal production)
- Increased access to forests
- Crop-raiding

Encroachment of forest areas

As the human population of Uganda grows rapidly there is a considerable pressure to clear forests to gain land for agriculture. In recent times some loss of forest in the protected areas has occurred, but this is only a very small fraction of the total forest loss where chimpanzees are found.

Where chimpanzees are found in specific locations, it is important that “corridors” are kept or developed so the populations do not become isolated, but remain linked. Most of these corridors are on privately owned land, so landowners and land users need to be encouraged to allow this to happen. One important “corridor” is north of the town of Hoima which links the two forest reserves of Budongo and Bugoma. It is essential in order for the chimpanzees to flourish that this “corridor” remains open, making an effective link between the two areas.

Bushmeat and other hunting activities

Hunting of animals is widespread in the areas where chimpanzees are found in Uganda. Chimpanzees are often not the principle target, unless there has been crop-raiding, but rather they are inadvertently caught in snares set for duikers and bushpigs. Capture in snares often causes debilitating injuries, such as the loss of limbs or even death.



A female chimpanzee caught by the hand in the trap shown, she died of starvation. Displayed at Ngamba

Collection of chimpanzees for the pet trade or zoos is less common in Uganda than in other countries where chimpanzees are found. Some young chimpanzees have been brought over the border from DR Congo; preventing this movement into Uganda would reduce the burden on the Ugandan resources in caring for the confiscated infants.

Timber extraction

Timber extraction can have a serious effect on the habitat where chimpanzees are found. Extraction can be in the form of charcoal making and firewood collection, which usually serves local populations. There is also commercial extraction for manufacturing and building purposes. A method to mitigate timber extraction could be to grow some plant species in plantations, particularly in areas of high demand and low availability. Eucalyptus and pine could be grown as substitution “crops” in plantations to reduce the pressure on areas of natural forest.

Increased access to forests

Providing increase in access to forest areas has caused some problems. In all the areas where chimpanzees are found, increased access has led to habitat damage by fire. There is also the problem that chimpanzees may become accustomed to the presence of humans, particularly in relation to tourism. Becoming more accustomed to humans and less fearful increases the possibility of crop raiding, with its associated problems.

Also with closer contact with humans there is the possibility of the chimpanzees catching diseases from them. which would have a serious detrimental effect.

Crop raiding

When chimpanzees eat crops grown near their habitat, there develops a great deal of friction between the local communities and the protected area authorities. This has occurred around Budongo forest, where sugar cane is grown and Bugoma forest, where cocoa is grown. In these situations chimpanzees have sometimes been regarded as pests with consequent action taken against them by the local communities. One solution to address this problem might be to encourage local communities to grow cash crops which are not attractive to chimpanzees, such as chilli peppers. Another crop in this category is tea, which can act as a good buffer crop. It is because of this that tea is grown around Kibale National Park.

Ngamba Island Attractions

Day visits

Day visits to Ngamba island coincide with one of the two feeding sessions which occur at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Visitors are given an informative talk and a guided tour of the facilities. From the raised walkways there are excellent opportunities to observe and photograph the chimpanzees from close quarters. Lunch can also be provided for day visitors to the island.



The chimpanzee observation walkway



Viewing the chimpanzees from the walkway

Overnight Stays

Overnight stays are available on the island, thus allowing for an extended stay of two days, and the viewing of the early morning feeds. Accommodation is in an East African style tented camp of four twin tents, each with an observation platform looking over the lake.



Overnight tented accommodation



Shop and Visitor Centre

Two further options are available for overnight visitors - the opportunity to be a caregiver for a day and a forest walk for an hour with the chimpanzees.

Being a caregiver involves participating in the preparation and feeding of the chimpanzees, as well being involved in the activities that are happening that day such as medical check ups, research and monitoring, and preparing holding areas etc.

The forest walk takes place either in the early morning or late afternoon and is restricted to a maximum of four visitors at a time. Visitors have direct contact with the chimpanzees, so there are specific instructions to follow to make sure the visit is safe both for humans and chimpanzees. All visitors must be in good health so as not to transfer disease to the chimpanzees.

Fees for the above attractions help support the activities of the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust, particularly at Ngamba Island.

Longer term Visitors

By arrangement longer term visitors carrying out research, or those coming to gain more experience with chimpanzees, such as veterinary students, are welcomed at the Island.



Veterinary Centre



Chimpanzee Holding Pens

Involvement with Local Communities

The Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust who govern and manage Ngamba Island believe that unless local communities have “ownership” of the project then its success would be very limited.

For this to happen the local communities need to derive benefit from the sanctuary; this is achieved in a number of ways.

- As many as possible of the handicrafts sold in the island shop are sourced locally
- Requirements for the chimpanzees, such as grass for nest building in the holding pens and some of their foods, are purchased from local communities
- Provision of transport by boat to and from the mainland to the island is provided by local people, thus giving them a source of income.
- The sanctuary has facilitated the building of classrooms and a toilet block for the local community on the nearby Kome Island.

In an attempt to maintain and further develop the “corridor “ between the two forest reserves of Budongo and Bugoma in the Hoima district, the Trust has been instrumental in providing local people with alternative sources of income rather than exploit the forest. Alternative income has been derived from bee-keeping, and chicken and pig rearing projects.

Chimpanzee - eastern subspecies

Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii



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