

**2023**  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



# Contents

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- 3** Letter From the President
- 4** Tshuapa Corridor Initiative in 2023
- 5** Finding Our Way to Tshuapa
- 6** What Makes the Tshuapa Corridor So Important
- 7** Meet Our Partners in Tshuapa
- 8** WildFF Organization



## Letter From the President

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Greetings WildFF Supporters,

As is often the case in environmental conservation, our gains in 2023 did not come easily. Yet with the support of our funders and collaborators, we persisted and made historic progress. As you will read in this annual report, we focused our 2023 efforts entirely on developing a new project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Tshuapa Conservation Corridor.

In 2021 and 2022, we partnered with our DRC-based partner, the Congo Biodiversity Institute, to conduct field expeditions and find our next project site. After much effort, our work paid off by finding the conservation opportunity of a lifetime! Getting to this point involved countless hours of reading everything we could find about potential opportunities in DRC to support forest conservation, and many difficult weeks were spent deep in the forest following up on our leads by surveying local communities and wildlife.

After such herculean efforts and many field expeditions later, we discovered a remote portion of the Tshuapa Province with rich forests, a diversity of wildlife and the interest of local people in sustainably managing their intact forests. I hope you enjoy reading more about our efforts and accomplishments and the immense promise of the >1 million-acre Tshuapa Conservation Corridor project. We couldn't do this work without you, and we hope you will continue to support WildFF on this important journey in th Congo Rainforest.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jason Scullion

***“We couldn’t do this work without you, and we hope you will continue to support WildFF on this important journey in the Congo Rainforest.”***

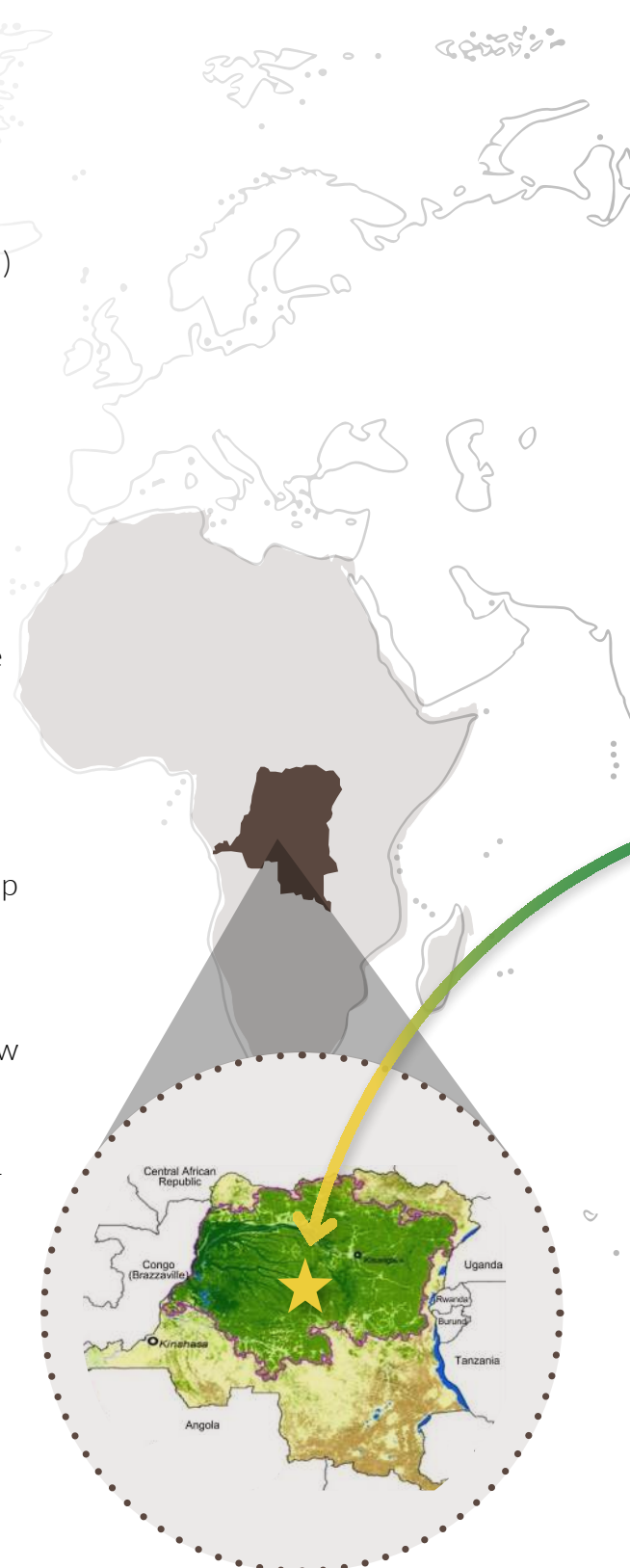
# Tshuapa Corridor Initiative in 2023

## With over two years of research, planning and deep community engagement, 2023 marks the official start to our first **flagship conservation project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).**

WildFF and our partners, the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) and the Congo Biodiversity Institute (CBI), are in dialog with local community leaders and government officials in Tshuapa about creating a regional conservation area over a million acres in size that would serve as a sustainable working forest and a wildlife corridor for nearby protected areas.

This progress was not without its fits and starts throughout the last year, but incredible progress has been made. One of the most important aspects of our work in the area is our goal of investing in the capacity and well-being of the communities that live in these critically important forests. To do so effectively, we are actively talking with local community leaders and government staff about the needs and interests of the community concerning investments in health, education, and economic development.

Another major accomplishment in the last year was our partnership with BCI. This collaboration happened through our discovery of commonalities in our goals for the region and the realization that integrating our distinctive expertise reinforced each other in the name of long-term regional conservation. As partners, we have now increased the depth of the project, combining our local and global scientific networks and increasing our funding opportunities. Such is the path of doing work on the frontlines of forest conservation—never a dull moment, often a challenge, and always rewarding.



# Finding Our Way to Tshuapa

**It took over two years of discovery work to commit to the Tshuapa region.** Do you ever wonder what informs WildFF's decision to commit to a place? The discovery and research phase are very important, and both academic research and field expeditions must confirm the following criteria:

- Are there large tracts of intact forest?
- Is the area at risk for commercial exploitation?
- Is there evidence of endangered or threatened flora and/or fauna?
- Are communities actively working or interested in sustainable initiatives?
- Would protecting this area benefit adjacent ecosystems and/or communities?

After assessing several forest landscapes in DRC based on published literature and tools like Google Earth, the possibilities were narrowed to a handful of places. In each location of interest, CBI set forth on field expeditions to survey the wildlife and meet with local communities.

## Areas of interest visited, 2021-2022

	Tshuapa	South Kivu	North Kivu
	Region is peaceful. Tshuapa Corridor is buffered between Lomami National Park and Sankuru Nature Reserve. Threats include mining, industrial agriculture, industrial logging, and commercial wildlife hunting.	Initiated a small nature reserve, Kalonge, but forested area was limited in size and vulnerable to high insecurity.	Local forests of interest were overhunted and insecurity was high.
Intact forest?	✓	✓	✓
At risk for exploitation?	✓	✓	✓
Evidence of endangered species?	✓	✓	✓
Community interest in conservation?	✓	✓	✓
Benefits adjacent areas?	✓	✓	✓

# What Makes the Tshuapa Corridor So Important?



**~1.6 million acres of intact forest**

Proposed area of conservation



**13 individual communities**

living within the corridor boundaries



**Primary bonobo habitat**



**Key buffer zone**

Conservation area is flanked on the east and south by two nationally protected areas, Lomami National Park and Sankuru National Reserve, respectively.



**Many endangered animals in the region**

Forest elephants, okapis, pangolins, leopards, African forest buffalo, and Congo peafowl



## Long-term goals of the Tshuapa Corridor Project:

- Protection of the forests from industrial extraction
- Protection of the wildlife from commercial hunting
- Nature-based solution projects, such as agroforestry, ecotourism
- Improved access to education and health for local communities
- Wildlife science and participation in the wider Bonobo conservation efforts
- REDD+ project for mid to long-term financing of sustainable development projects

REDD+, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

# Meet Our Partners in Tshuapa

## DALLEY-DIVIN SAA-SITA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CONGO BIOTROPICAL INSTITUTE (CBI)

Known to us as D-D, he was born in DRC and attended the University of Kinshasa for both undergraduate and graduate school. He is passionate about wildlife, and his interests center on the collaborative design and implementation of community-based conservation projects that support the co-existence of local people and wildlife.

He has worked as a youth leader in post-war social development efforts and in the field of forest and wildlife conservation as a co-creator of the Bapaitumba community reserve, the Kalonge community reserve, and the Tshuapa Corridor Initiative.

D-D is founder of a national non-profit, CBI, with members from DRC, France, and the United States. He has been recognized for his efforts as a Rising Wildlife Leader in conservation and received a 3-year fellowship from the Wildlife Conservation Network.

## BONOBO CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (BCI)

Founded in 1998, BCI is a non-profit based in both Washington D.C. and Kinshasa, DRC and is the only international organization solely dedicated to conservation of bonobos in the wild.

They are intimately connected with the Congo Rainforest, working there since 2001 on the Bonobo Peace Forest, a connected network of community-based reserves, supported by sustainable development, that provides protection for bonobos and other species in the Congo rainforest, while at the same time ensuring a better life for the people who share this precious land. The Peace Forest currently covers more than 9 million acres (50,000 square miles) of land.

Together with Congolese communities and organizations, the DRC government, and international partners like WildFF, BCI is implementing innovative solutions to address the complex problem of bonobo conservation.





## Mission:

WildFF is a diverse network of science and business professionals that activates local efforts to protect and restore globally important forests. We address regional conservation issues by connecting stakeholders, building capacity in local communities, and propelling ideas into action.

We believe what makes WildFF different is our investment in communities living on the frontlines of threatened forests. There are many local leaders and organizations eager to improve their communities in a sustainable way, yet lack the resources and connections to make a significant change. We take the time to understand the culture and local traditions and how it may translate to capacity building and economic opportunity. Communities who find a balance between sustainable land use and meeting economic needs is what will keep forests—their homes—intact for future generations.

## Executive Board



**Jason Scullion**

Board President and  
Conservation Director  
Cofounder, 2012



**Corrie Reynoso**

Board Vice President  
Member since 2014



**Michael Mueller**

Board Secretary  
Member since 2018



**Christian Machate**

Board Treasurer  
Member since 2023

### Meet our newest board member!

As a Human Resources leader for almost 40 years, he has built and managed many successful teams. His work allowed him to live and absorb the cultures of many global cities across Europe, the U.S. and Asia. He turns his attention to conservation with the hope of expanding the capacity of the WildFF organization and scaling our projects.

## Financials

In 2023, we raised:

**\$33,037**

from individual donors for the  
Tshuapa Corridor Initiative

In 2023, we invested:

**\$23,375**

in planning and preparing to formalize  
the Tshuapa Corridor Initiative

**\$9,662**

for operating expenses

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