

Study: 'Pacifist' chimps face extinction

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Pygmy chimpanzees known for resolving conflict through sex rather than fighting are reportedly facing extinction.

The Bonobos chimps that neither kill nor fight over territory live within strictly matriarchal families in the forests of Congo, The Telegraph reported Thursday.

Claudine Andre, a conservationist who runs an orphanage for the primates in Kinshasa, Congo's capital, said the chimps pair off for sex at the slightest hint of danger, stress or friction.

But she says the chimps -- among man's closest relatives -- might become the first great ape to become extinct on the planet.

She said there were an estimated 100,000 bonobos in 1980, but by 1990 that had dropped to 10,000. Since then Congo, which has been engaged in a civil war, has been too dangerous for conservationists to research the species' numbers.

Ape experts from 23 nations are meeting this week in Kinshasa, The Telegraph said. They have warned that gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and especially bonobos could be extinct within a human generation.

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