

Project Update: December 2012

The Fongoli chimpanzees are travelling far and wide throughout their 'home range' in search of baobab fruit. Baobab is a top food for Fongoli chimpanzees as it is a major source of calories for several months each year. The fruit, leaf, and bark of baobab are used by people too; thus, baobabs often remain in otherwise deforested areas of Fongoli. Early observations suggest that chimpanzees first target areas of their home range where baobab trees are clustered, mostly along the edges of ravines and plateaus. The high abundance of baobab fruit along ravines likely explains this pattern. In addition, ravines and the forests growing within them provide drinking water, shade, and other foods. Although baobab trees are rarely cut down, other trees are sometimes cut at ravines for livestock feed, timber, and swidden agriculture. Our preliminary findings underscore the importance of protecting forest habitat for savannah chimpanzees in Senegal.



Fongoli chimpanzees eating baobab fruit in a fallow field. © Stacy Lindshield