

Fifi's Biography

by Elizabeth Vinson Lonsdorf:

My favorite memory of Fifi was one day when I was following her in my very first visit to Gombe in 1998. She was resting with her family under a very thick vine mat. I had to crawl under it also to be able to observe what was going on. So, there we were, all lying down on the forest floor and Fifi started playing "airplane" with her baby, Flirt. She was flat on her back with her feet straight up in the air and was dangling Flirt from one foot so that she could tickle her with her hands. All of the sudden, she turned to look at me and held my gaze for a full 20 seconds before returning to tickling her baby. That picture in my mind, of a chimp playing airplane with her baby and calmly accepting my presence still gives me goosebumps. I'll always wonder what she was thinking as she looked at me.