
ISABEL BEHNCKE IZQUIERDO

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SPEAKER
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- Primatologist, specialising in social behaviour



Isabel Behncke is a primatologist at Oxford University. The aim of her work is to discover how can our evolutionary past help us understand human social behaviour – and how can we apply this knowledge to improve human well being. She is particularly interested in the mechanisms which provide the foundation for the ability to adapt to an ever-changing world, and in particular the role of relationships in this process. Her most recent project involved studying the social behaviour of a community of wild bonobos with whom she spent three years in the depths of DR Congo tropical jungle. Bonobos are, together with chimpanzees, our closest evolutionary relatives, and previously unknown aspects of their lives have cast our own identity into a fundamentally new light. Her work shows that bonobos life-long playfulness contributes to their remarkable cohesive, tolerant and socially sophisticated societies.

Topics

- Social Behavior
- Society

She has an honours BSc in Zoology and a MSc in Conservation biology from University College London (UCL), after which she worked to help set up private parks in the temperate rainforest of southern Chile. Then she went back to the UK to earn an MPhil with distinction from Cambridge University in Human Evolution, after which she moved to Oxford for her doctorate work with Robin Dunbar.

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