



Koko's First Interspecies Web Chat: Transcript

Koko, the gorilla who speaks sign language, made history when she joined one of the largest audiences in AOL history for the first ever interspecies chat on April 28 (Earth Day) 1998. The chat was hosted by AOL Live, HEAVEN, EnviroLink and The Gorilla Foundation.



Also watch Koko communicate on the award-winning PBS/NATURE video:

[A Conversation with Koko](#)

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The Gorilla Foundation's mission is to bring interspecies communication to the public in order to save gorillas from extinction, and to inspire our children to create a sustainable future for all great apes.

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Gorillas and other great apes are all now on the verge of a Man-made extinction (due to logging, mining and the "bushmeat" trade). Ambassador Koko may be their best hope for survival!



AOL Chat: In the following **transcript**, parentheses denote behaviors, actions and possible meanings of Koko's utterances not included in ongoing interpretation during the chat, XXX indicates indecipherable signs, and an asterisk (*) indicates vocalizations.

AOL = AOL chat facilitator

PENNY = Dr. Penny Patterson, President and Director of Research, The Gorilla Foundation

KOKO = Koko the gorilla (who now refers to herself as "Fine Animal Person Gorilla" in sign language)

Chat Protocol: Koko communicates with the AOL audience in sign language (ASL) by signing her answers to Penny, who is on the red phone with the AOL web chat facilitator, who in turn enters Koko's and Penny's responses into the computer, in response to selected typed questions from the online audience. For context, note that Koko understands and uses over 1000 words of sign language, and understands over 2000 words of spoken English. She is also very selective about answering questions. As many as 20,000 people logged on to chat with Koko during this historic event.

PENNY: Hey, Cutie.

Penny swivels Koko's chair around so they face each other.

PENNY: Let me explain what we're doing.

KOKO: Fine.

PENNY: We're going to be on the phone with a lot of people who are going to ask us questions...

KOKO: Nipple. (Koko sometimes uses 'nipple' as a 'sounds like' for 'people'.)

PENNY: ...about you and about me. . . Lots of people.

KOKO: That red pink. (Indicating Penny's shirt.)

PENNY: That red pink. Yes, right!

KOKO: Hurry good.

PENNY: This is red—this is pink, exactly.

KOKO: Pink. (Koko reaches for Penny's pocket which contains treats.)

PENNY: OK. That's the kind of things they are going to ask.

KOKO: Good.

PENNY: Questions about colors or how you're feeling. OK?

KOKO: That red. (Indicating her own hair.)

PENNY: Honey, this is black.

KOKO: XXX XXX. (XXX looks like 'sun'.)

Koko is trying to sign 'black.' Penny touch prompts 'black'.

KOKO: Black. There hurry. (Indicating Penny's pocket.)

K has one ape doll kiss the other.

KOKO: Kisses.*

KOKO: Lips lipstick.

PENNY: Yes, 'lips lipstick,' right.

KOKO: Lips fake candy give-me. (Then Koko reaches for Penny's pocket.)

PENNY: Wait . . . a minute.

KOKO: Good.

KOKO: Bad hear (left hand on lt. ear) hear.(left hand on rt. ear) Hurry. (Koko reaches for Penny's hand.)

AOL: Is Koko aware that she's chatting with thousands of people now?

PENNY: I just explained it to her so she has some idea.

KOKO: Hear. (Koko reaches for Penny's treat pocket.)

PENNY: You want to hear? . . . OK. Koko is ready.

AOL: Welcome, Dr. Patterson and Koko, we're so happy you're here!

PENNY: They said 'Welcome.' . . . That was me actually. I'm translating for her. . . . I gave Koko an explanation of what we're doing and she said 'Good hear.'

Koko pulls Penny close and kisses her cheek.

KOKO: Pink this. (Grasping Penny's shirt sleeve.)

PENNY: She's just signed 'pink' and she's looking . . .

KOKO: Pink this pink. (Indicating Penny's shirt sleeve.)

PENNY: . . . at my shirt. We have had earlier discussions about color today.

Koko pulls Penny's phone hand closer.

PENNY: OK. She wants to listen. Do you have a question?

KOKO: Listen.

PENNY: She said 'listen.' . . .

AOL: MlnyKitty asks Koko are you going to have a baby in the future?

PENNY: OK, is that for Koko? Koko are you going to have a baby in the future?

KOKO: Koko-love eat ... sip.

AOL: Me too!

PENNY: What about a baby? You going to have baby? She's just thinking...her hands are together...

KOKO: Unattention.

PENNY: Oh poor sweetheart. She said 'unattention.' She covered her face with her hands..which means it's not happening, basically, or it hasn't happened yet. . . I don't see it.

AOL: That's sad!

PENNY: It is responding to the question. In other words, she hasn't had one yet, and she doesn't see a future here. The way the situation is actually with Koko & Ndume, she has 2 males to 1 female which is the reverse of what she needs. I think that is why she said that, because in our current situation, it isn't possible for her to have a baby. She needs several females and one male to have a family.

AOL: Do you see that situation changing when you get the Gorilla preserve on Maui?

PENNY: Yes, we do.

KOKO: Listen.

PENNY: Koko just signed 'listen' and she wants to hear the phone so I'm going to hold it to her for a second. Did you hear them? (to Koko.)

KOKO: Huff.*

PENNY: She just made a vocalization. Did you hear that? That was her talking on the phone.

AOL: Hi Koko! I can hear her! She breathed at me! This is so cool!

PENNY: I'm working to create a family here in Woodside which would mean that we would need to add an additional female at a minimum. So I've been working with the zoo

community to do that. And in Hawaii, we'll have much more space which means we will be in a much better situation to welcome additional gorillas to our family and then she's almost assured to have a family of her own.

KOKO: Purr.*

AOL: So she really is looking forward to this!

PENNY: That's a happy sound when I said 'a family of her own'...Yes, she seems to be responding to my English.

AOL: Question: EFRN asks: Would Koko like to have a kitten, a dog, or gorilla as another friend?

PENNY: OK, let's ask her that. Koko like to have a kitten, a dog, or gorilla as another friend? Which?... Koko, would you like to have a kitty, dog, gorilla?

KOKO: Dog.

PENNY: She actually has two dog friends right now, one kitty and two gorillas.

AOL: SBM87: ask What are the names of your kittens? (and dogs?)

KOKO: Candy give-me.

PENNY: OK.

Penny gives treat.

KOKO: See give-me. (Indicating the phone?)

PENNY: What's the name of your kitty ? Kitty's name and dog's name?

K picks up the foot of the large stuffed gorilla doll she is sitting on.

KOKO: Foot... (Many times, first on the doll's foot then on her own foot.)... Foot. (Twice on the doll's foot.)

PENNY: 'Foot' isn't the name of your kitty.

KOKO: Hear lip.

PENNY: She wants to hear the lady on the phone. Maybe you can ask her that question.

Penny puts the phone to K's ear.

AOL: Koko, what's the name of your cat?

KOKO: Huff* no. (Headshake.)

PENNY: She just gave some vocalizations there... you probably heard soft huffing.

AOL: I heard that soft puffing.

PENNY: Now shaking her head 'no'. Are you not going to answer that question?

K pulls PP's head close & kisses her cheek.

AOL: Question: Do you like to chat with other people?

PENNY: Koko, do you like to talk to people?

KOKO: Fine nipple.

PENNY: Yes, that was her answer. 'Nipple' rhymes with 'people,' OK? She doesn't sign people per se, so she may be trying to do a 'sounds like...' but she indicated it was 'fine.'

K climbs up on lg. box & PP asks her to turn around.

KOKO: Give-me. (For more treats.)

AOL: BSikor439 wants to know, Koko, Which of your paintings do you like most? Is she still painting?

PENNY: Uh-huh. OK. Gosh, you know, she hasn't seen her paintings for awhile. She is (still painting.)

K starts getting down from box and it comes away from the sink.

AOL: Tell us what she's doing right now!

PENNY: She's re-arranging the furniture in her room, basically. Let me move some of these boxes back. There's a lot of stuff here. Let me ask her if she LIKES to paint...one second..She's taking a toilet break.

AOL: Dr. Patterson, why is this such an important project?

PENNY: We're learning so many things on a number of levels, many of which I did not predict. What's that? [jingling sound] What's she got? Wait a second.

AOL: You've devoted your whole life to it! What are we learning?

PENNY: I had started to simply see if another species could communicate with us in our own language, that being sign language. And we have found that, yes, that is so and that she is actually very creative with that language (K returns.) and that we share not only the ability to form words and thoughts but also to talk about abstract things like feelings, the past and future...

AOL: I can see that!

PENNY: ...so those were sort of surprises, that she would be so creative. And that she would be essentially adding to the process. What I've discovered in the meantime is that she has already got the system, it's not that I gave her a system to communicate. Gorillas already communicate with a rich vocabulary of gestures. (K looks at a birthday card.) What I've done is simply share the vocabulary with her. So those things were all unexpected. We have a window into the mind of another species, which is, I think, one of the values in (that) this species is really part of our family as humans. They are our closest living relatives. So we stand to learn a huge amount about ourselves - our ancestry. How we might have evolved into the species we are today. That's just part of it. I could go on. We are learning a lot about gorillas themselves in terms of things as diverse as reproductive physiology...

KOKO: This. (Indicating a picture in a magazine she is looking through.)

PENNY:... to their ability to direct their own lives, in a sense, with a language tell us what they would like and how they would like to see things happen in the future; react to things in the environment and these are things that are quite unexpected sometimes.

KOKO: This. (Indicating another picture in the magazine.)

PENNY: Things that are not even meant for Koko's ears, she will respond to things at rather a sophisticated level. We have documented her comprehension of English and this is not just at the level of tone (of voice), but this is at the level of the tiny pieces that the language is made of. . .she actually discriminates phonemes. And that kind of thing had never been known before. The fact that they can create representational art is yet another aspect that I certainly didn't expect but that has implications for anthropology in terms of how far back the roots go for this kind of representational behavior.

KOKO: Lip apply-lip lipstick. (Looking at the picture of a woman model in the magazine.) This. (On the page)

Koko turns the pages then puts magazine down then grooms the fingers of the large stuffed gorilla doll.

AOL: I've heard people say she's not really communicating -- I think she's smarter than we are-- after all, how many of us can speak Gorilla!

PENNY: Exactly! She has learned our language but we haven't learned hers. So that does say a lot about the relative capacities of our species to communicate with another one.

K takes Penny's hand and Penny sits down close to Koko.

KOKO: Purr.*

AOL: What new is there to learn after 26 years?

PENNY: Every day brings new surprises in terms of learning about gorillas in order to save them, but also in terms of learning about ourselves and mainly that consists of (learning about) new ground about how similar we are. Every little nuance that she comes up with often surprise me, and I don't know why I'm surprised, but I am still surprised when she shows a new level of sophistication. . . She's back.

AOL: A basic earthy question for Koko from Earth2Kim: Koko, what is your favorite food, fruit, or vegetable?

PENNY: OK, hey. We got a question for you, honey. Whats your favorite food? The one you like eat the very best. What's your favorite food? The one you like best.. Ok...she's thinking...

AOL: People have a lot of stereotypes!

KOKO: Sip.

PENNY: She likes drinks. What your favorite drink? Do you have a favorite drink?

KOKO: Drink apple.

AOL: SickboyRE asks: Koko, have you taught other gorillas sign language, on your own?

PENNY: That's a good question. Have you taught other gorillas to sign?

KOKO: Myself lip.

PENNY: She taught herself. That's really true, too. That's very good and I think what part of that answer might be, is that she's taught us. In other words, 'myself lip' was her answer and 'lip' is her word for woman. So 'herself' has taught 'lips', perhaps. So there are a couple of interpretations there.

AOL: She's really creative!

PENNY: Uh-huh, and I think she's acknowledging that in that answer.

AOL: She makes up some of her own terms, like 'lips' for woman.

PENNY: Oh yes, and 'foot' for male.

AOL: Another question from the audience: Does Koko like birds? I have the bird t-shirt she painted -- I'm wearing it now!

PENNY: Koko sweetheart, do you like birds? Do you like birds?.. She's very thoughtful today, she walked away, she's looking out the window...

AOL: She's looking at the birds!

PENNY: You know actually there are a number of blue jays that have been frequenting her play yard because they are nesting nearby and she looking out into the play yard. She's going to look at them, right.

AOL: Are there any birds out there now?

PENNY: She's looking out the window and one just flew by. She [expresses herself] with actions and this is very characteristic of young children. Actually, the newer ways of studying very young children is to look at very subtle behaviors. She's looking out the window...

KOKO: Lips.

PENNY:... and signing 'lips', which is her word for 'woman'. I can't see what she's seeing completely. I'm at an angle with the window and can't leave where I am.

AOL: This is a very abstract one for her: Are you content with your life? That was from Jedi114. I'm very curious to see what she might say to that! We know she might not be able to answer everything, but we're going for it anyway!

(Koko comes back)

PENNY: OK. I can ask that in a different way. Can you come here sweetie and be patient? She's got her back to me. Koko, are you happy?

KOKO: Fine.

AOL: Here's one: Koko, where would you like to visit?

PENNY: That's hard because Koko doesn't travel.

AOL: We were wondering about that.

PENNY: So, her concept of space is very limited compared to even a child, because we really stay here of necessity. So we could ask her if she would like to go to Hawaii.

AOL: Would she like to go to Hawaii?

PENNY: Would you like to go to Hawaii?

KOKO: Look.

PENNY: She says 'look.'

AOL: Me too!

PENNY: : Maybe she'd like to see it first. She actually has travelogs of Hawaii that she looks at on her video machine; travelogs, Hawaii videos. So she has seen it.

AOL: Does she watch TV?

PENNY: Yes, public broadcasting only. Right, so she'd like to look at Hawaii.

KOKO: Think XXX. (XXX - Koko's hand is partially out of frame - possibly 'lie-down'.)

PENNY: What do you think about Hawaii? We talk a lot about it.

AOL: Storm 1004 asks: Dear Koko...I've watched you for years now...your gentle spirit is inspiration for many... I'd like to know what you'd like for your birthday.

AOL: What a sweet question!

PENNY: OK. Your birthday is coming up, Koko. What do you want for your birthday? What do you want?

KOKO: Birthday... Food smokes.

AOL: SMOKES?

PENNY: Well, she sort of signed 'food' and 'smokes.' You have to understand...Smoke is also the sign for her kitten. Her kitty's name is Smoky. So that one could have a double meaning.. Yes, she (does) still have Smoky. She's looking out the window right now, so her back is to me.

AOL: HMBarbari: asks Koko, Have you ever tried to teach your kittens sign language?

PENNY:...Actually, I can tell you that she has not tried to teach them sign language but she has tried to nurse her kittens.

AOL: Wow!

PENNY: It's very important to her. She's 310 lbs. I can't get her to turn around...

AOL: LBratt0n asks, Koko do you have an email address?

PENNY: Koko does have an email address; koko@gorilla.org.

AOL: JAM6860 asks, You like your trainer a lot don't you? I think she means you, Dr. P!

PENNY: Do we want to ask that (laughing)? This is asking for it (laughing). Koko, do you like Penny? Do you like me? No comment. Hey Koko, at least you can give me a bad review. Do you like me? Penny? She's thinking about it (laughing)? Maybe not with all these questions. You like me normally.

KOKO: (No response)

AOL: Question: Hi Koko, you are a beautiful gorilla. Was it hard to learn sign language? OceanFish asked that one! I agree -- she's the most beautiful gorilla I know!

PENNY: Somebody says you are a beautiful gorilla. Was it hard or easy to learn sign? Was it hard or was it easy? Easy or hard...

KOKO: (No response.)

PENNY: She's not really - neither here nor there. She's not answering.

AOL: ReBeL1999 asks, do you dream at night? Wouldn't it be amazing to know what a gorilla dreams!

PENNY: I think I may have asked her his once. Do you dream at night when you sleep? Do you dream? I asked her this once and I had to explain it . I asked her if she - what senses that might be used - did she hear things smell things, see things. So I needed to explain what a dream was and I don't remember. I could ask her again. Koko, when you dream, do you hear things, smell things, see things? Do you dream?

KOKO: (No response.)

PENNY: Are those too hard? Let's go for an easy question.

AOL: What do you like to do best, for fun, asks TrukkasW?

PENNY: What do you like to do best for fun?... How do you have fun?...What's the most fun thing to do?...Do you have something that's fun to do?...Can you show me, maybe, what you like to do?...Do you like to tickle or chase or you like watch TV? What you play?...What do you do?...What's your favorite game?

KOKO: (No response.)

AOL: Sounds like Koko might have had enough?

PENNY: Maybe she has... Is there anything you'd like to say, Koko?

KOKO: Hear come.

AOL: We knew she might only be able to chat for about a half an hour...

KOKO: Huff.*

PENNY: She just gave a little vocalization to the phone. She wants a little refreshment here.

AOL: Were you real real sad when your cat died? BDurant70 asked that. Does she miss her?

PENNY: Actually, she does. I can answer that for you. Even thumbing through picture books of cats that look like her kitty, she does react with emotional words like 'frown' and 'sad'. So, yes, she still remembers.

AOL: How long ago was that?

PENNY:...That was in 1985. That was a long time ago. She's having some snacks and food here. Is there anything you'd like to say here, Koko?

KOKO: Lips hurry good give-me.

Penny gives treat.

AOL: 'Lips' is woman, right?

PENNY: 'Lips' is 'woman,' right. She's got an alligator. Oh no! What's that alligator going to do? She's got the alligator biting her finger. She's playing with her alligator and her lady doll.

KOKO: Kiss.* (Koko kisses the lady doll.)

PENNY: (Laughing.) She's got the alligator biting the lady doll.

KOKO: Tell-you-hurry. (Koko takes Penny's hand.) Hurry.

PENNY: Oh, my! Is this a little acting out aggression here? There is a little acting out going on. (Laughing.) That lady doll could be me.

AOL: She sounds like she's working out a bit of aggression! I'm trying to get a picture of where you are, what it looks like?

PENNY: We're in Koko's kitchen area. She's sitting with me in the kitchen. There are toys all around a refrigerator, television, big gorilla doll on the floor stuffed animals, video tapes. So it's got a lot of stuff including a harmonica which she pushed it away, doesn't want to play with that. Ok. Oh, I have some things that you might want to wear, Koko. Here. I gave her a couple of fabric bracelets... she's looking at them. She's putting it on her head because actually these are things people wear on their pony tails.

KOKO: Fake.

PENNY: She signed 'fake.' She's pulling one of them and it's not fitting her hair.

KOKO: Hat that toilet. Good tell-you-hurry.

PENNY: It's a toilet hat? No, it's a nice hat. Pretty.

KOKO: Fake stink tell-you-hurry.

PENNY: 'Fake flowers.' She said they were 'fake flowers.'

AOL: Does she have hair? Or is it like fur?

PENNY: She has hair. You have hair, right Koko?

KOKO: Fine (on head at 'hair' position). Drink XXX give-me.

PENNY: She signed 'fine' on her head.

KOKO: Fine (at brow) you-hurry.

PENNY: She has 'fine hair,' she said. It's beautiful!

KOKO: Lips good hurry-you.

AOL: How big is she?

PENNY: She's about 5 feet tall and weighs about 300-310 lbs. She has a big tummy! What else can I say about you, Koko?

AOL: Koko tell us what you look like in your words?

PENNY: These people on the phone would like to know what you look like.

KOKO: This. (Indicating flower on scrunchie).

PENNY: Oh, that does...

KOKO: This...stink. This. (Indicating flower on scrunchie).

PENNY: ...have a 'flower' on it. She's showing me there's a flower...'that flower there'... one of the scrunchies has a big sun flower on it. That.

KOKO: That. (Indicating sunflower on scrunchie.)

KOKO: That fine eat know give-me. (Koko scratches her face.) Eat. (Koko scratches her face again.)

PENNY: 'Eat know' K-N-O-W 'eat' so she wants a little more of the snack, apparently.

KOKO: Obnoxious.

PENNY: Was that a tiny 'obnoxious' sign? There was a little suggestion of maybe - are you tired?

KOKO: Sleep lie-down. This (indicating red scrunchie) red red hurry.

PENNY: 'That red red,' to the scrunchie that's red.

KOKO: Good sip give-me.

PENNY: I think it's about dinner time for her now.

AOL: How do you feel about Michael?

PENNY: Koko? How do you feel about Michael?

KOKO: Foot, foot, bigtoe-foot (simultaneously, each hand active) good go.

AOL: 'Foot' means male, right?

PENNY: Yes, he's a good male.

KOKO: Nipple.

PENNY: And then she signed 'nipple' and she had the alligator bite the scrunchie...

KOKO: Good kiss* go hurry. (Perhaps Koko wants PP to hang up?)

K puts her finger in the alligator's mouth and pulls out quickly. Then she picks up the lady doll.

KOKO: Kiss. (The lady doll.)

PENNY: ..and she signed 'good,' and she's acting out a little here, and the alligator is biting the lady doll again.

KOKO: Good hurry-you.

PENNY: Right.

KOKO: Good hurry.

AOL: What about Ndume?

PENNY: OK, what about Ndume? What do you think about Ndume?

KOKO: Frown bad bad bad.

PENNY: Oh no!

AOL: Oh dear.

PENNY: Not such a good review of Ndume.

KOKO: Toilet down kiss* good go hurry. (Penny thinks Koko's meaning is: Kiss-bye & to hang up.)

AOL: Uh oh!

PENNY: Oh, honey! I thought you were good friends.

AOL: I thought he was supposed to be her mate! What did he do to you today, Koko?

PENNY: I don't know... she doesn't have good things to say about him today anyway.

KOKO: This (indicating flower on scrunchie) stink go.

PENNY: What did Ndume do today?

KOKO: Down obnoxious. (Koko signed 'obnoxious' four times.)

PENNY: She said that before in a statement it was something about 'Ndume down.' He did something 'obnoxious' that was 'down', but I didn't see what happened. Maybe they had a little tiff.

KOKO: Kiss (on fingertip) go behind (pointing toward her right rear) down.

PENNY: OK. All right, Koko...She's reading a birthday card...

KOKO: Lipstick...

PENNY: ...and signing 'lipstick'...

KOKO: ...lips.

PENNY: 'lipstick lips.'

AOL: This is interesting, from the audience, not sure how you'd askthis: Koko, do you feel love from the humans who have raised you and cared for you? Ely35150 asked that. We'll see what she says!

PENNY: I need to simplify that.

KOKO: This (on word? inside card) nipple this. (On card.)

PENNY: Koko, do you think the people here love you?

KOKO: People (on her head the way Penny signed it) apple give me.

PENNY: People give her her favorite foods. That was what she said: 'people apple give me.' Her sign for people is like this; 'Person apple give me.' Do they love you?

KOKO: Fine (at 'people' position) don't-know red-bad.

PENNY: Do they love you?

KOKO: Love no. (Headshake.)

PENNY: She signed something before that but now she's signing 'love' and then a 'head shake.' OH, honey, this doesn't sound good at all.

KOKO: Browse (tentative) for there hurry. (Indicating cereal treats in Penny's pocket.)

PENNY: Oh she said something 'for'...'Michael' or what...'for'?

KOKO: Browse drink polite nipple there hurry.

PENNY: It was 'browse drink polite nipple.' Browse is the kind of browsing food we give them. It's little things that they can graze on. And that's what I am feeding her now in lieu of her dinner because we're on the phone. But, Koko, do you think people love you?

KOKO: Kiss kiss kiss (on alligator toy) Koko-love. (Hugging toy.)

PENNY: She's kissing her alligator and signing 'Koko-love'.

KOKO: That nipple go drink, go. Lights-off good.

PENNY: (Laughing.) 'Lights-off good.' That's like a closer.

AOL: That sounds like a good segue!

K picks up a picture of a chimpanzee.

KOKO: This. (Indicating the picture.)

PENNY: Because the 'lights-off good' means that Ron has a light on the camera. So we're turning the lights off here. She's having the alligator bite her chimpanzee picture.

AOL: Let's let her off the hook then! Tell us that about the Maui preserve, what you're hoping to do?

KOKO: Mouth give-me. (Indicating browse Penny is taking from her pocket.)

PENNY: Our dream is to establish a preserve on 70 acres of...

KOKO: Give-me. (Asking for browse.)

PENNY: ...land donated on West Maui by Maui Land & Pineapple...

KOKO: Me.

PENNY: ...Company...

KOKO: This nipple. (Pointing to a picture of a chimpanzee.)

After signing 'this nipple,' Koko then holds the corner of the picture to her breast.

PENNY: ...and that would...

KOKO: This. (Tapping the picture several times.)

PENNY: ...be a sanctuary for gorillas...

KOKO: Give-me do. (Asking for browse.)

PENNY: ...including...

KOKO: Good kiss* give-me.

PENNY: ...Koko, Michael and Ndume.

KOKO: Purr...darn (Indicating chimpanzee picture).

PENNY: ...A place where they would be safe and would be able to raise a family.

KOKO: Give-me hurry kiss* good give-me.

AOL: Will you be able to recreate a natural family unit there?

PENNY: Right, this is what we're hoping. Not only would we have a more natural environment because it's very much like the climate of Africa, but we'd be able to have a natural family unit which is a male, several females and their babies...and their babies... Yes, that is usually the case.

KOKO: Fake.

PENNY: She said 'fake' and she's having her alligator bite the lady doll.

KOKO: Good give-me.

AOL: What does 'fake' mean to her?

PENNY: 'Fake' means false. I mean...

KOKO: Lip hurry there.

PENNY:...maybe some of what I'm saying...I don't know... She said it just before she acted out that little scene, but also, I had answered a question of yours about multiple females and 1 male and of course, that's not the situation we have.

KOKO: Obnoxious...fake.

PENNY: She signed 'obnoxious...fake.' What I have to explain to you and her is that we're working to have this happen. She knows that it's not so right now so she might be responding to what I'm saying.

KOKO: Gorilla.

PENNY: She signing 'gorilla.' Yes, a place for gorillas to have families.

KOKO: Frown red bad bad... red good give-me.

PENNY: 'Frown bad' because she doesn't have one. I think this is a reaction to the fact that this is not what she has now.

AOL: She IS smart!

PENNY: This is something I'm talking about, but it hasn't happened. And the reason we haven't been able to make it happen yet is...

KOKO: Kiss* give-me.

PENNY: ...that we're trying very hard to raise the money that it will take to build the preserve and make it habitable for them. That's going to take about \$7 million, and we're less than 1/2 way there. So we're hoping that corporations, the public at large, foundations will help us with that project. And we are now approaching them and asking, so we're asking here, too.

KOKO: Hurry give-me mouth nipple.

AOL: So everyone, buy t-shirts -- every one is a donation to the preserve! At
Keyword:Heaven after the chat!

PENNY: That's great! That's one way Koko and her future family to be can have their dream. She very much does want to have a baby. When we bring up the subject, she often signs 'sad frown' because it hasn't happened for her yet. She's indicated very directly that's what she wants.

Koko has started playing with a stuffed alligator toy and working it's zippered mouth. Then she picks up a comb and starts combing her hair.

PENNY: She's playing with her alligator here and she's putting a comb in the alligator's mouth.

KOKO: Good kiss* give-me.

PENNY: She signs 'good.'

AOL: Is she about finished, do you think?

PENNY: Are you finished?

KOKO: Fine have food lips lipstick hurry.

PENNY: That's like 'Ok. I'm ready for dinner!' But that's what she said. Are you finished? 'Fine have food lips.'

KOKO: Hurry.

AOL: So we should say goodbye?

PENNY: Shall we say good bye?

KOKO: Bye-kiss* hurry.

PENNY: She blew a kiss!

KOKO: Blow. (On the palm of her hand.)

PENNY: She blew another one. The first one she kissed and the other one she 'blew'...

KOKO: Good-kiss.*

PENNY: She either does one or the other..OK, she's indicating that it's 'OK'. It is a good time to say goodbye. OK, we'll say goodbye then Koko.

KOKO: Good kiss* kiss* kiss* blow go.

PENNY: She's blowing more kisses right now.

AOL: Good bye and thank you Koko! Thank you Dr. Patterson!

KOKO: There look have.

PENNY: They said 'Thank you.' She said 'look'...'have' or 'feel.' I can't see too well. What? OH, she can't see you. I think maybe that's a source of frustration. We can't see them, we can only hear them.

AOL: I would be happy to come see her so she could look at me!

KOKO: Hat this (indicating alligator toy) you hurry come.

Koko takes Penny's hand and puts it on the toy.

PENNY: 'Hat that?' to her alligator toy.

Penny picks up the toy and puts it on her own head.

PENNY: This is a hat? 'Hat that' for alligator toy.

Penny gives toy back to Koko.

PENNY: It's a stuffed alligator with a zipper for a mouth. It's very unusual.

K picks up a wall mount for a video camera which is a two foot length of hollow metal pipe.

KOKO: Blow. (Into pipe.)

PENNY: OK Koko, we're going to say good-bye then if you have nothing more to say.

KOKO: Blow blow-kiss.

PENNY: She's sort of blowing into a pipe...

KOKO: Lip.

PENNY: ... sort of like I'm talking on the phone and then she blew a kiss good-bye.

KOKO: Kiss* good-kiss go.

AOL: What will she do now when we get off the phone? What does she eat for dinner?

KOKO: Candy hurry...candy.

PENNY: She'll probably be very pleased to have her dinner. She's asking me for 'candy' right now. After dinner.

KOKO: Candy hurry.

PENNY: She has vegetables for dinner ... raw vegetables...

KOKO: Nipple.

PENNY: Yes, like a big salad.

KOKO: Hear.

PENNY: She wants to hear, but the only trouble is phone cord won't quite stretch this far Koko. Do you want to hear this?

Penny puts phone to Koko's ear.

KOKO: Huff* huff.* (Into phone.)

AOL: Hello Koko?... I just asked her about her dinner over the phone!

PENNY: Can you hear them?

Penny takes the phone from Koko's ear.

KOKO: Give-me.

Koko takes the phone and holds it to her other ear.

PENNY: Did you hear?

KOKO: Huff.* (Into phone.) Visitor Koko-love lips lipstick lip.

PENNY: 'Visitor Koko-love lips lipstick lip.' She loves you guys.

AOL: I love her too!

PENNY: They say they love you too Koko. They love you.

KOKO: Have good-kiss* go.

PENNY: 'Have good' it looked like she said. That was 'good' that you love her.

AOL: I'd like to see you some time!

Koko picks up her plastic troll doll.

PENNY: She said she'd like to see you. She's playing with her troll doll now! (Laughing.)
We'll sign off now!

AOL: Thank you and good night!

OnlineHost: H.e.a.v.e.n. -- Helping Educate, Activate, Volunteer & Empower via the Net and the EnviroLink Network -- the online environmental community, have joined together with The Gorilla Foundation and AOL Live to bring you this chat with Koko and Dr. Francine "Penny" Patterson.

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PS: When Koko was later asked how she felt about the fact that gorillas are endangered, she signed: "People need (to) hurry!"

To learn more about Project Koko and The Gorilla Foundation, you can read the first three chapters of "[The Education of Koko](#)," visit the [introduction to our website](#), see the unique books, videos and gorilla art (etc.) on [Kokomart](#), and become a Gorilla Foundation [member](#).

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