



Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas



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Newsletter January 2020



Wildlife



Last December it rained very little and during this month of January the precipitation was 0 mm. The Sangha River dropped below its normal level for this period and the forest is drier than before.



Beaches in the Sangha River © Nuria Ortega

Four years ago on the 25th January 2016, the first ever twins born to habituated western lowland gorillas were observed in Dzanga Sangha. We will never forget this day as it sparked a spirit of hope for this critically endangered species. This month, we celebrated the birthday of the twins, Inguka and Inganda, which at the age of 4 have moved from the 'infant' into the 'juvenile' age category. We know for sure that Inguka is male but the sex of Inganda is still debatable.



Inguka and Inganda celebrating their birthday ©Vitek Lukas

We have completely renovated and equipped the camps of Dzanga bai and Mongambe. Now, all three research field sites (Dzanga, Mongambe and Bai Hokou) are ready to receive researchers wishing to spend long periods.



Dzanga bai camp now is much more comfortable © Nuria Ortega

30 people selected as observers were trained for 11 days to man the teams for the DSPA 2020 wildlife Survey. This included 9 Ba'Aka, 2 students from Bangui and 19 people from Bayanga. All participants were first of all



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briefed on the theoretical background of ecological surveys with line transect and camera trap distance sampling, then trained on data collection in the field with a Trimble handheld device using CYBERTRACKER software, camera trap installation, map orientation as well as using compass, GPS and TOPOFIL. 24 more people will be recruited as porters.

A team from the Czech Academy of Science is in DS to continue their long-term research on parasite infections and gut microbiome of western lowland gorillas, humans and other wildlife in Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas.

A researcher from the same institution is here to study gut microbiota evolutionary patterns in murine rodents

Another team from The Elephant Listening Project of the Cornell lab of ornithology (Cornell, USA) has come to spend 4 months in Dzanga bai and deploy an acoustic unit to record elephant vocalizations as well as identify individuals visiting the bai.

Discover the Biodiversity of the DSPA



A Sitatunga male © Miguel Bellosta



Scientific name: *tragelaphus spekii*

English name: Sitatunga

French name: Sitatunga

Taxonomy: Class: mammals; Order: Artiodactyla; Family: bobidae

The sitatunga or marsh buck is a swamp-dwelling antelope. It occurs in tall and dense vegetation of perennial as well as seasonal swamps. The body and legs of this antelope are specially adapted to its swampy habitat.

The sitatunga is a medium-sized antelope. It is sexually dimorphic, with males considerably larger than females and provided with horns. The coat color varies geographically, but, in general, is a rufous red in juveniles and chestnut in females. There are white facial markings, as well as several stripes and spots all over, though they are only faintly visible. The coats of males darken with age, becoming gray to dark brown.



And the female ©Miguel Bellosta

Sitatunga are active mainly during the early hours after dawn, the last one or two hours before dusk, and at night, and spend a large part of this time feeding. Occasionally may emit a series of coughs or barks, usually at night, which may cause other animals

to join in, and these sounds can be heard across the swamp.

Sitatunga are good swimmers and in some cases, for instance when troubled by flies or pursued by predators, the sitatunga might fully submerge themselves in the water except for the nose and the eyes, which they keep slightly above the water surface.

Females are sexually mature by one year of age, while males take one-and-a-half-year. Breeding occurs throughout the Gestation lasts for nearly eight months, after which generally a single calf is born.

In DSPA sitatunga can be observed in the bais near Bai Hokou.

Anti-poaching



Elephant collar destroyed by poachers © JB Malonga

As we had reported, in February 2019, one of the elephants equipped with a GPS collar was killed by poachers. Following investigations two of the poachers were arrested and both the tusks and collar recovered but the group leader fled. He was tried in absentia, convicted of poaching and destruction of material and an arrest warrant was issued against him.

This month, the offender was finally arrested and brought to justice.

We have finished renovation works at the Kongana training Center.



©Christian Bassoum



©Christian Bassoum

This month one fresh elephant carcass was found in DSPA probably due to natural cause as both tusks were still intact and no bullets injury.

Main DSPA Patrols data:

34 regular patrols were deployed,. In total 1,242 men/days, 1,634 km traveled on foot and covering an area of 1,780 km². This resulted in the seizure of 3 manufactured 12 gauge shotguns, 4 homemade 12 gauge shotguns, 8 manufactured 12 gauge cartridges,. In addition, 1,802 metal snares were dismantled. 1 poacher was arrested. One fresh elephant carcass was found in the month. It looks as a natural death

Community Development

3 adult Ba'Aka who expressed an interest to continue their secondary education at Bayanga College were offered scholarships for the 2019-2020 academic year. We also have provided some school material to this college



Students at the Bayanga school ©Nuria Ortega

25 elders of the Ndima-Kali Association from DSPA and its surroundings gathered at the Pibongo field base during a council of elders to carry out an annual assessment of Ndima-Kali's activities and to propose new activities that can benefit indigenous people.

In addition, 28 youths (13 boys and 15 girls) from Kounda-papaye, Mossapoula and Yandoumbé were trained on traditional fishing techniques and on wildlife tracking techniques.



Even if is difficult to believe it, they are fishing © Martial Betoulet

Health

Within the specialist visits program a German gynecologist came to DSPA to assist local communities. In addition to working in the public hospital of Bayanga, he joins the mobile team to visit other villages.



Near 200 women have been already consulted by the gynecologist ©Nuria Ortega

In 2019, a total of 9.921 patients were treated through the DSPA health program both at fixed health posts and by the mobile unit.

Main DSPA April Health Data Number of patients January 2019

Structure	Number of patients
Mobile Clinic	72
Monasao Health Post	298
Belemboke Health Post	317
Lindjombo Health Post	80
Bayanga	128
Total	895



30 years
1990-2020

Park Administration

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the creation of the DSPA. In November 1985 a group of conservationists led by M Raymond Mbitikon, Central African High Commissioner of tourism, Waters, Forests Hunting and Fishing, and Richard Carroll from WWF/NYZS/ Yale University, presented a proposal with the purpose of the creation, development, protection and management of the Dzanga Sangha Dense Forest Reserve. Five years later, on December 29th 1990 with M. Mbitikon being Minister at the time, DS was declared a Protected Area by Law N° 90.018. The works started immediately and since then, WWF has been implicated in the financing and the management of DSPA. After 30 years, despite the difficulties and problems that face the country, we can say that conservation work in DSPA has been quite successful.

The financing agreement for 2020 has been signed with the FTNS

The communication manager who joined the team last July has stopped working for DS.

The weekly flights between Bangui and Bayanga started as planned in January.



Regular flights have done easier to come to DS ©Nuria Ortega

A second mission came to continue the study on the possibility of setting up a small hydroelectric power station that can supply electricity not only to our facilities but to the city of Bayanga. Now we wait for the final report to confirm the feasibility and cost.



We have localized two potential places to build a hydroelectric power station ©Michel Henri Bourge

Tourism and Marketing



©Nuria Ortega



©Nuria Ortega

Last December, a path was opened between the Welcome Center and Moussapola village that will allow tourists to hike a botanical trek. Along the path, a total of 74 tree species have been identified with the common, Ba'Aka and scientific name, as well as the families to which they belong.

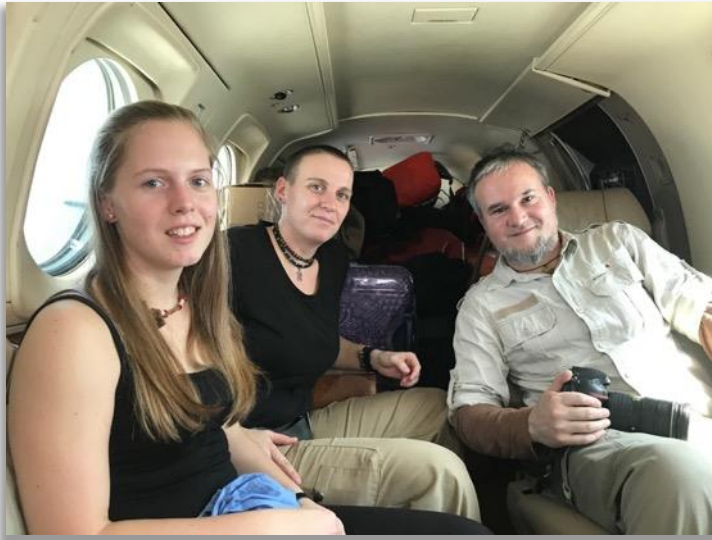
Along the path, it is easy to encounter women who fish in mud pits. Given the proximity to the Welcome Center, this trail will also serve to do some night walks and observe the nocturnal wildlife such as bush babies, pottos, genets, etc.



Tourists enjoying Doli Lodge ©Nuria Ortega



Arrivals and departures



©Nuria Ortega

Anna Strykova, a student of the University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences of Brno, Ilona Psenkova and Vitek Luka from the Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Czech Academy of Sciences



©Nuria Ortega

Dr Klara Petrzekova, also from the Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Czech Academy of Sciences is working in DS since 2007



©Nuria Ortega

Jakub Kerisinger, for Czech Republic is doing a study about rodents



©Nuria Ortega

Peter Wrege, Colin Swider, Anahita Verahrami and Liz Rowland from Cornell University (USA). They will spend near four month with us.



©Nuria Ortega

Brice Beukou from Cameroon has come to lead the training on terrestrial survey techniques



©Nuria Ortega

Dr Wolfram Alberti is a gynecologist from Germany with a big experience in Africa, having working previously in Botswana and Togo



©Nuria Ortega

Michel Henri Bourge, expert in the construction of hydroelectric power plants, has come to see if there are possibilities in Dzanga Sangha to build it.



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Julie Bela Wanona has left DS after 6 months working in communication with us.