



Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas

www.dzanga-sangha.org



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Newsletter March 2021



sacharuna



Wildlife

During the month of March, the UICN publicly announced two decisions concerning forest elephants. The first one was declaring the forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) an altogether different species, as until recently it was merely considered a subspecies. The second decision was declaring this species critically endangered.

Dzanga Sangha remains for the moment one of the few places in all of Africa where the number of individuals has remained relatively stable in recent years, and it is also the place where they are most easily observed.



The links attached below talk more about this subject.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/25/shades-of-grey-how-to-tell-african-elephant-species-apart-aoe>
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/25/africas-forest-elephant-has-been-largely-overlooked-now-we-need-to-fight-for-it-aoe>
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/both-african-elephant-species-are-now-endangered-one-critically>
<https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/environment/2466472/african-elephant-status-change-a-wake-up-call-for-humans/>
<https://theconversation.com/new-decisions-by-global-conservation-group-bolster-efforts-to-save-africas-elephants-158157>



In the other hand, Terence Fuh, Head of Primate Habituation, Research and Monitoring for the DSPA has been listed among the top 100 Young African Conservation Leaders, out of the 565 nominations received from 425 youth organizations and networks which underwent a rigorous judging and verification process.

<https://top100youth.africa/>



Over the last three years we have had a total of 4 gorillas babies born into the three habituated groups in DSPA. Two of them belong to Makumba's group, and Mata's and Mayele's groups have one each. We have been observing them and so far, we can confirm that all our babies are developing normally.



Epolo, 5 months old © Emmanuel Konyal



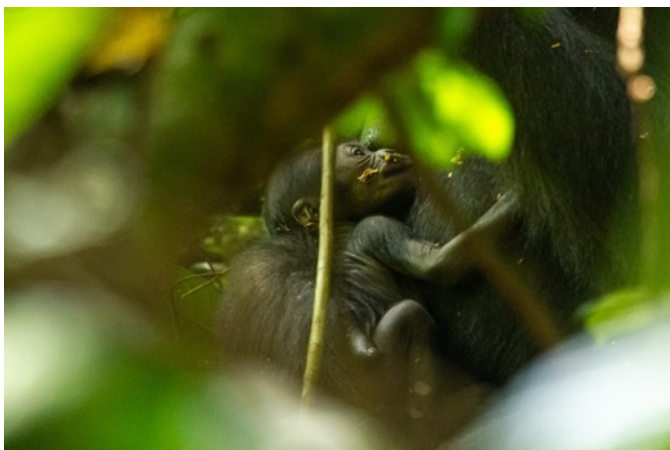
Meteyeba,, almost 3 years old ©Stef De Béthune.



Mbindjo, newborn baby, ©Nuria Ortega



Mbindjo, 2 years and 2 months later. ©Nuria Ortega



Ngumu, newborn baby. ©Nuria Ortega



Ngumu 2 years and 4 months later, ©Nuria Ortega

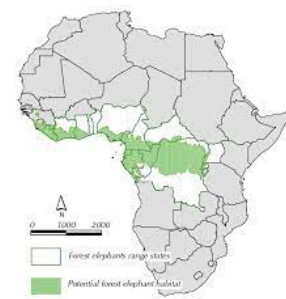
As the presence of COVID-19 here in the park has already been confirmed, even more precautions have been taken with the aim of keeping the gorillas safe, although we have considered it necessary to still keep up with their observation as it has been deemed more dangerous for them if following were to stop completely for what could be several months.

Discover the Biodiversity of the DSPA



©Miguel Bellosta

Scientific name:	<i>Loxodonta cyclotis</i>
English name:	African forest elephant
Taxonomy:	Class: mammals
	Order: proboscidea
	Family: elephantidae
	Genus: loxodonta



The African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) lives in humid forests in West Africa and the Congo Basin. It is smaller than the savanna elephant. Bulls reach a shoulder height of 2.4–3.0 m (7.9–9.8 ft). Females are smaller at about 1.8–2.4 m (5.9–7.9 ft) tall at the shoulder. They reach a weight of 2–4 tons

Both sexes have straight, down-pointing tusks that can grow to about 1.5 m (5 ft) long and can weigh between 23 and 45 kg (50 and 100 lb).

The African forest elephant lives in family groups comprised of between three and eight individuals. But in the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas, groups are observed of up to 20 individuals comprising adult cows and sub adult sons.

Once young bulls reach sexual maturity, they separate from the family group and form loose bachelor groups for a few days, but usually stay alone.

Baby elephants weigh around 105 kg (232 lb) at birth. Almost immediately, they can stand up and move around, allowing the mother to roam around and forage, which is also essential to reduce predation.

Females reach sexual maturity between the age of 8 and 12 years and, depending on the population density and nutrition available, begin breeding at the age of 23 and give birth every 5–6 years.

Forest elephants have a lifespan of about 60 to 70 years

Anti-poaching

With the arrival of the instructor from Chengeta, we have started the training of our guards. All of them in groups of twenty will take turns spending three weeks in Kongana training center. Furthermore, as part of a typical training, they will receive in-depth training on human rights.



Some of the stuff confiscated over the last months ©Nuria Ortega

37 regular patrols and 3 BLAB patrols. In total 1.287 rangers/days, 1.515 km traveled on foot and cover an area of 1.796 km². No one from the bi or tri national patrol because of COVID 19. This resulted in the seizure of 3 manufactured 12-gauge shotguns, 6 homemade 12-gauge shotguns, 1 and 34 gauge cartridges. In addition, 1.364 metal snares were dismantled and 1 kilogram of pangolin scales were confiscated.

12 poachers, arrested for minor offenses, were sensitized and released

No elephant carcass found this month

Community Development

After being able to last a little over a year without any Covid cases, this is the first month when we have detected some cases in the area. It was detected through an individual who showed some of the symptoms associated with the disease. He was immediately quarantined and right away we started testing the people he'd had contact with during the previous week, with some of the results being positive as well.

After informing health authorities both in the area and Bangui, we have made the decision to once again temporarily stop all non-essential activities and we are doing our best to limit all types of contact, as well as avoiding meetings as much as possible and encouraging the use of facial masks, all measures taken with the goal of reducing the spread of the virus.

Before any of the cases were detected, however, we were able to carry out a training program for the teachers working in the region. The aim was to improve the quality of education here in Dzanga Sangha, so that when children grow up they have more opportunities open to them work-wise.



Teaching the teachers ©Nuria Ortega

For a week, all educators in the area were required to attend a series of seminars given by different people. During these seminars they were given different teaching tools that they were encouraged to apply to their work, with the hope that they will help better the teaching process and facilitate learning for the students.

The week immediately after the seminars we started to follow up in several different schools to ensure that the teaching staff started applying what they'd learned, but unfortunately the first Covid case was detected soon after and we had to stop.

On March 8 we celebrated International Women's Day along with the rest of the world. The women in the staff were given the choice not to come to work and to remain home with their families for the festivities instead, something most of them opted to do.



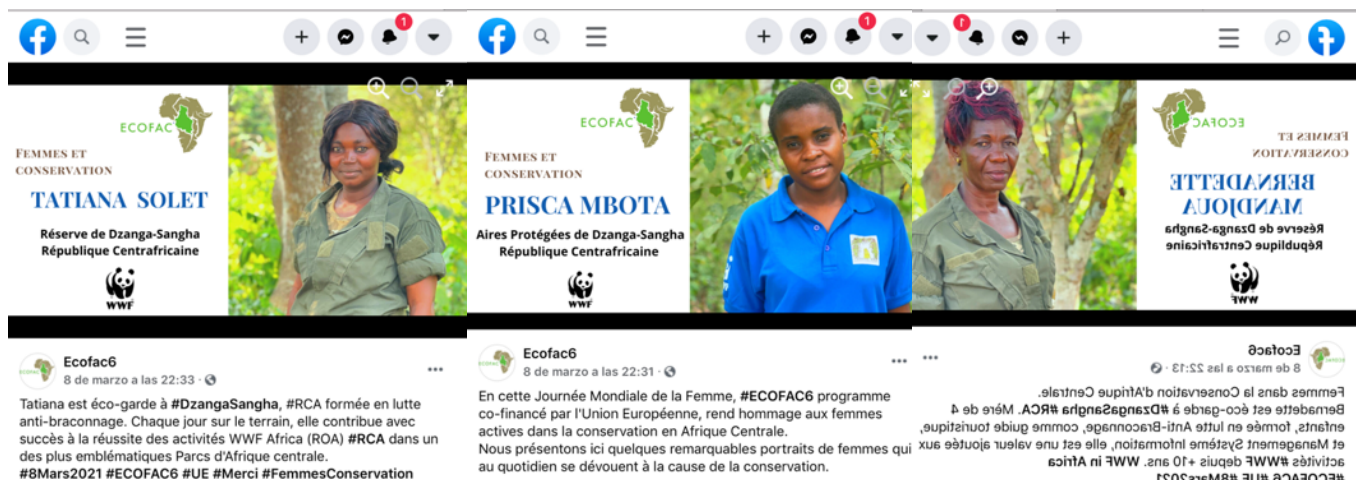
Some of the DSPA female staff celebrating their day ©Nuria Ortega

The ECOFAC program has published a series of portraits of women working in the area of conservation.

<https://www.facebook.com/Ecofac6/photos/a.802635846742550/1394471320892330>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ecofac6/photos/a.802635846742550/1394469960892466>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ecofac6/photos/a.802635846742550/1394462364226559>



An expert arrived to do an evaluation of the BENGU project, which will end next month, and that for the last three years has allowed us to work both with the community's health program and on the zoonosis disease.



The results of the first trials of local fish production through rearing in fish ponds have become palpable since the first emptying of a fish pond last February. In March fresh fish were collected from two other fish ponds in Mossapola and Babongo.. In view of these initial results the fish farmers of Babongo came together in a group called MIDJALI in order to maximize production, through their pilot site of 1250 m2, with the goal of covering the needs of the communities in fishery products

Ndimakali <http://www.ndimakali.org/> organized 6 youth workshops on the knowledge of traditional culture, a total of 157 people (95 girls and 62 boys) took part and treated the followings topics: Braiding of baskets, braiding of hunting nets, braiding of traditional mats, and traditional songs and dances



Trying to preserve traditions © Prisca Mbota

An anthropologist has arrived in order to prepare a socio-economic study that will start next month, and will try to gain insight into the current situation of the region's population (health, education, human rights, nutrition, living arrangements etc.,) as well as evaluate the work that will be done over the next few years

Main DSPA Health Data Number of patients

Structure	Number of patients
Lindjombo Health Post	153
Monasao Health Post	306
Belemboke Health Post	406
Bayanga health post	162
Mobile clinic	
Total	1027



Park Administration

The football field development has also continued. It has finally been completely cleared out, and thanks to a couple of storms we've had, the earth is compact and some grass is beginning to grow. The next step will be the construction of the stands.



The football field is already operational ©Nuria Ortega

Construction is also underway for a new pier in the Sangha river.



The non-existing pier ©Nuria Ortega



The future existing pier ©Nuria Ortega

We have finished last year's FTNS audit.



We have finally been able to start with internal road repairs in the area. The first stretch of road we are rehabilitating goes from Dzanga bai to bai Hokou, where two of our habituated gorilla groups reside. We are trying to get as much work done as possible before the rainy season starts, making this task impossible



Repairing the roads in the Park © Nuria Ortega



Now, visiting Makumba is much more comfortable ©Nuria Ortega

Tourism and Marketing

A crew from the Living med www.thelivingmed.org arrived this month in order to film a short video featuring the Park, trying to show in under a minute what DS consists of and what you can expect to see here.



©Nuria Ortega

We are remaking some of the park signs that had become deteriorated over the years. We hired some local artisans for the job and asked to keep the aesthetic of the old ones.



©Nuria Ortega



We have also hired a local orchestra, called Super Tempo International, to write a song about DSPA and we are currently making a video clip of it



Tempo International live in concert @Nuria Ortega

In honor of the International Wildlife Day, WWF US has published the article linked below where our gorilla twins, as usual, are the protagonists

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/5-forest-dwelling-wildlife-species-we-love>.

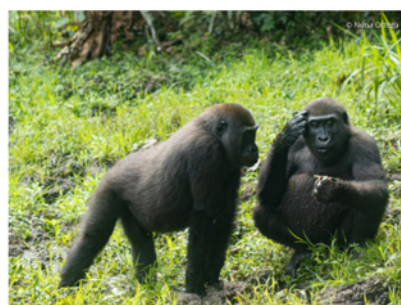


The western lowland gorilla

A rare pair of twins turn 5-years old this year

In 2016, the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas (DSPA) complex in the Central African Republic (CAR) welcomed [Inguka and Inganda](#), the first [western lowland gorilla](#) twins ever to be born to habituated lowland gorillas. The twins are part of a Primate Habituation Program that WWF and the CAR government manage, which works alongside local communities to make the gorillas accustomed to the presence of humans—or “habituate” them—in order to protect and learn more about them, and allow for tourists to safely and responsibly see them in the wild.

This year on January 25, the twins turned 5-years old and have officially moved into the “juvenile” stage, showing signs through their behavior that they are growing up. They’re less dependent on their mother, who gave birth to a new infant named Epolo in October, and spend lots of their time feeding, exploring, and playing together. They also spend a significant period of the day playing with their 2-year old half-sibling, Mbinjo. Given that they have survived the infant stage and are already over a year into the juvenile stage, the team that watches over them from afar is confident in their chances of survival and remains hopeful for the recovery of this critically endangered species.





Arrivals and departures



© Nuria Ortega

Gisela Arranz Toro, Biomedical Engineer and Teacher, has arrived at Bayanga to work as a private teacher and has helped us train our teaching staff to improve the education program



© Nuria Ortega

Aaron, from Chengeta Wildlife, has come to help us with the training for the rangers. He'll spend 6 months with us



© Nuria Ortega

Jeannot Minla Mfou'ou has come to Bayanga as part of the external evaluation group of the Bengo project for mobile Health, which ends in April 2021.



Francisco Marquez and Isabel Juárez from “The living Med” have come to make a short video on DSPA.

©Nuria Ortega



Victor Kuele Ndongue, has come to contribute to the animation of two workshops on reflection and conception of didactic tools for environmental education and sensitization

©Nuria Ortega