



Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas

www.dzanga-sangha.org



© Miguel Bellosta

Newsletter February 2022



Wildlife



Mongenje eating kiyeye stems at the bai © Lara Nellissen

Following the return of the MATA habituated gorilla group to the vicinity of the Bai Hokou camp and the emigration of Mpoka-Mpoka, one of the four adult females of the group, the silverback has been showing aggressive behavior towards the tracking team. He has been very vigilant and seems to continuously be on alert. Luckily there has been no incident so far. It is still unclear if his behavior is linked to the departure of the female.

Furthermore, this departure, affected the life of Mongenje, her 5-year-old offspring who is now learning to survive in her absence. He spends a lot of his time close to the silverback Mata and interestingly the other group members are nice to him. When foraging for termites he usually relied on his mother to break the mounts and share the termites with him but now that she is gone, he has developed a new strategy. He waits for Indolia, another female of Mata, to finish her termites and then he can eat her leftovers. As long as he waits patiently, Indolia does not grunt at him and sometimes she even waits a bit for him.

In the Mayele group, the newborn Konya starts exploring more, and Monganda, the very shy young female who joined the group last year, seems to join more group activities and feed together with others in trees. Hopefully that means that she will finally get more habituated and maybe it even means that she is getting more interested in the silverback Mayele which would be great!



Konya starts to explore and interact with the other members of the group © Lara Nellissen






Following the training of the Dzanga Forest Elephant Project team on elephant identification at Mbeli bai in Nouabalé Ndoki, they re-started the identification of elephants at Dzanga bai. This month 9 females previously identified through striking characteristics on their bodies by Andrea Turkalo, could be observed continuously in the bai.



Who says that all the elephants have the same colour? © Luis Arranz

The Principal Investigator of the Dzanga Forest Elephant Project from the Cornell University Elephant Listening Project has finally arrived Bayanga this month. Her travel initially planned over a year ago was delayed as a result of travel restrictions due to Covid-19. In the meantime, because of the importance of re-establishing a consistent research presence at the bai, a national Research assistant was hired since February 2021 to begin living at the research camp and monitoring elephants at the bai.

Dzanga bai data: based on the number counted every 30 minutes between 11:00 to 16:30 each day of the month.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
	0	77	135
	0	6	30
	0	6	11

*The only moment with no elephant was during the autopsy of an elephant in the bai by the veterinary team.

Discover the Biodiversity of the DSPA



© David Modry

Scientific name: *Rhamnophis aethiopissa*

English name: *Dagger-tooth tree snake*

Taxonomy:

- Class : reptilia
- Order : squamata
- Family : colubridae
- Genus : *Rhamnophis*
- Specie : *R. aethiopissa*



Dagger-tooth tree snakes, is a rear-fanged colubrid endemic to Africa and may attain a total length (including tail) of 1.5 m (4.9 ft),

It is a diurnal and arboreal genus widely distributed in central and western Africa

When threatened it is able to inflate its throat, a defensive display that makes him bigger and shows the colourful scales.

It has venom, which it may be able to inoculate by biting but very little is known about this species and its venom.

Anti-poaching



One of the trainers during the new ranger selection © Stef Debethune

We completed the final selection of candidates for the recruitment of new guards. The 25 selected candidates, among whom are 3 women and 4 indigenous Ba'Aka, have begun training at the Kongana Training Centre. This training will last 3 months and as always, will focus on Law Enforcement tactics that integrate human rights and Indigenous people's rights in line with WWF's social policies.



Fitness is an important condition to be a ranger © Stef Debethune

34 regular patrols and 2 BLAB patrols. In total 956 rangers/days, 984 km traveled on foot and cover an area of 1.44 km². This resulted in the seizure of 5 manufactured 12-gauge shotguns, 2 homemade 12-gauge shotguns, and 42-gauge cartridges. In addition, 1,311 metal snares were dismantled. The carcass of a baby elephant was found in Dzanga bai, probably caused for other elephants. It had not sign of poaching.

Community Development

As part of promotion of Ba'Aka values through music, we created a traditional modern Ba'Aka orchestra essentially composed of Ba'Aka singers and dancers accompanied on modern musical equipment by a team of musicians, mostly DSPA workers. The group is called "Kingo ya Ndimba" in Mbenzele, language meaning "Voice of the Forest" with main mission, *"to enlighten public opinion on the interest of Ba'aka communities in supporting and accompanying conservation effort"*.

They will act as a new conservation awareness tool. In fact the group made its first performance during the inauguration of the teaching week on February 19, 2022 at the Bayanga secondary school. Through a moving repertoire, the unleashed crowd bathed in an atmosphere of unprecedented cheerfulness. An estimated over 600 people attended this event, including local and administrative authorities from Bayanga and its surroundings.



The new Kingo ya Ndimba group in its debut in DSPA © Franck Mavinga



But also, they keep their traditional dances ,here the Jengui (spirit of the forest) © Luis Arranz



In addition, as part of conservation awareness in schools, videos on conservation achievements in the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas were projected three times in 4 schools (primary and secondary) during the teaching week. A total of 567 participants were registered of whom 97% students (292 boys and 258 girls) and 3% teachers (11 men and 6 women).



The children love watching videos projected at the school © Franck Mavinga

Main DSPA Health Data Number of patients	
Structure	Number of patients
Lindjombo Health Post	
Monasao Health Post	287
Belemboke Health Post	428
Mobile clinic	
Total	715

Park Administration

The Minister, Spokesman for the Presidency visited Dzanga Sangha, accompanied by a TV team to shoot extracts for parts of a documentary being produced about the Central African Republic.



His excellence the Minister on the way to the bai © Christian Bassoum

A mission from the EU delegation in Bangui was in Dzanga Sangha to witness first-hand the work being done on the ground and to discuss future projects that could start in April next year.



The EU mission, already at the bai © Luis Arranz

In an effort to facilitate travel between the capital Bangui and the field site, we entered into an agreement with an airline. From the month of March, we will have two flights every week between Bangui and Bayanga.



Tourism and Marketing

Another TV crew has spent the entire month in DSPA filming elephants at Dzanga bai and habituated gorillas at Bai Hokou.

Tourists have continued arriving to DSPA



And a group of tourists, relaxing after returning from the bai © Luis Arranz

As part of the celebration of 60 years of WWF, a history on Dzanga Sangha was published

https://africa.panda.org/our_work/60_years_of_action/

https://wwf.panda.org/60_years_of_action_at_wwf/#CAR



WITH YOUR SUPPORT

Together with local communities around the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas in the Central African Republic, we've established an ecotourism programme that both helps critically endangered western lowland gorillas and boosts livelihoods.

BUT...



Arrivals and departures



© Luis Arranz

Ivonne Kienast, The Principal Investigator of the Elephant Listening Project from the Cornell University, has finally arrived Bayanga



© Nuria Ortega

Yanthe Nobel, PhD candidate from the Robert Koch Institute in Germany, has left DS after spending 8 months with us, collecting data, and supporting the One Health program