



Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas

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Mata © Nuria Ortega

Newsletter August 2022





Wildlife

Sad news from Dzanga Sangha: The silverback Mata, leader of the Mata habituated gorilla group at Bai Hokou is dead. The lifeless body of Mata was found on the morning of August 31 by the tracking team. There were neither signs of poaching nor of a fight with another gorilla, but macroscopic observations showed multiple fractures probably resulting from a fall from the top of a tree. According to the state of decomposition of the carcass, the death was dated back to about three days, during which time contact with the group had been lost and multiple teams were out searching for them. The silverback is normally the bond that keeps the group together, so the future of the rest of the group is unknown, but for now, observation will continue as far as possible.

The name "Mata" (which means 'next of kin' or 'successor' in the Aka language), was given by trackers to the deceased silverback because he had taken over the home range previously occupied by another gorilla group, known as 'Munye'. The Mata group was first located in 2010 and was only officially opened for tourism in April 2019. The habituation process took up to nine years due to interruptions during the political crisis in CAR, as efforts were rather concentrated to ensure the safety of fully habituated groups. This delayed the process by at least three years.



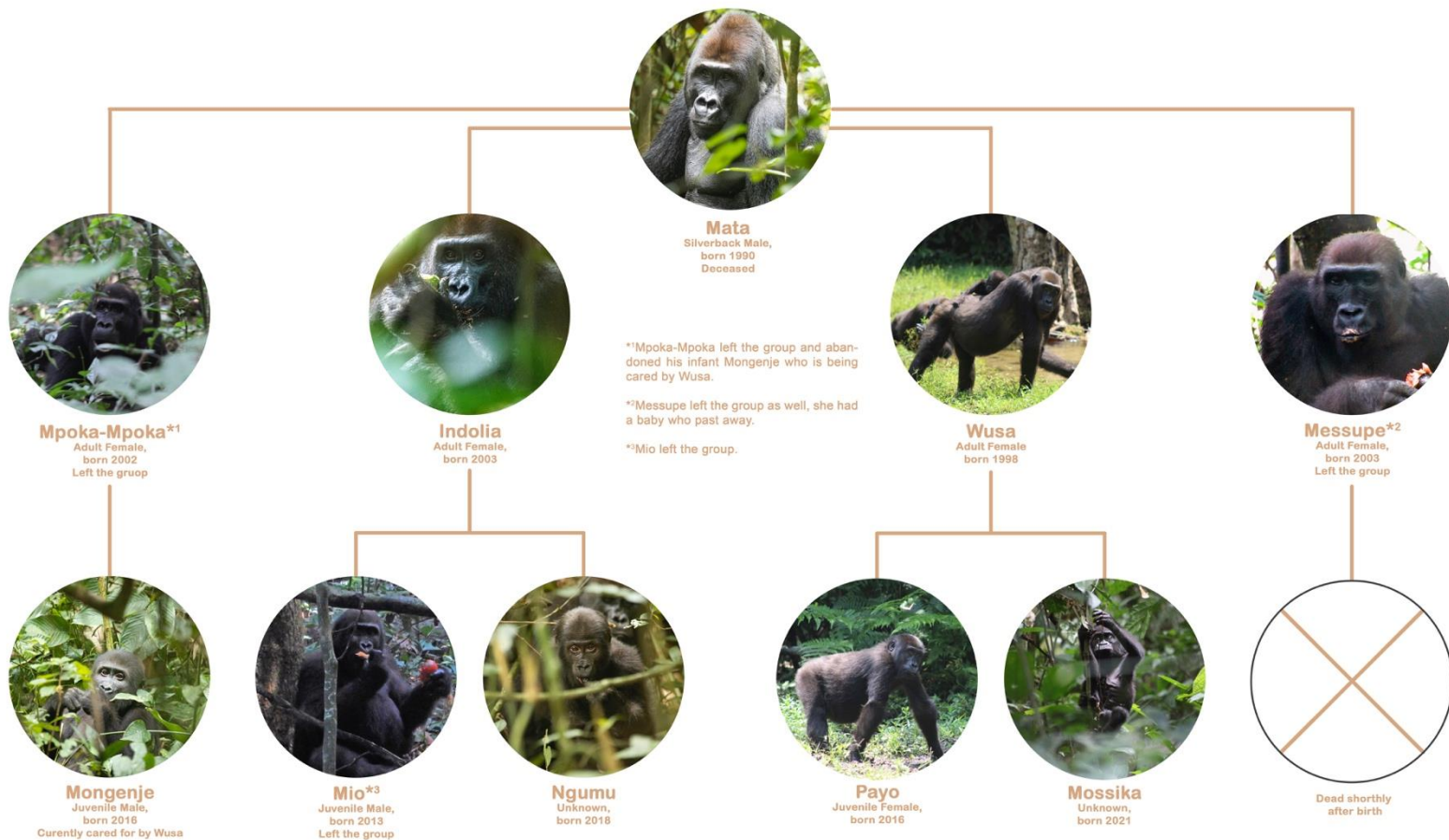
Mata took risk climbing trees, probably too much © David Santiago



As far as silverbacks are concerned, Mata was the nicest father we encountered! The way he took care of his offspring was exemplary. During the last stages of habituation, he would take his infants away by hand from “the annoying strangers” observing them, every time he felt they were too close. Mata was gentle and kind with his offspring, more than ever observed with other habituated silverbacks. For example, back in 2018 when the female Wusa was anaesthetized to get out a metal snare from her wrist, Mata personally took care of her 3-month-old offspring Payo, even putting it on his back until she recovered. This was extremely special for a western gorilla silverback. Before this, we always thought western gorilla silverbacks were barely in any physical contact with their kids!!!

Mata is estimated to be born around 1990. He acquired four females at his peak and sired at least seven offspring, with at least two offspring already present before he was first contacted and five born during the habitation process (two in 2016, two in 2018 but one died a few months later, and another in 2021). The group is now left with only two females and four young ones aged between one and six years old, who continue to be followed daily.

Family tree of Mata group



With historical photos we have observed that elephants can regrow their broken tusks, if not completely removed from the root. Sappho II, a bull (estimated 38 years old) that broke its left tusk back in 2016 was observed in 2022 with the tusk regrown to approximately one quarter (¼) of the length of its trunk. Indeed, Sappho II had its two tusks intact in 2010, the latter was seen in 2016 with an intact right tusk and the left broken. Suddenly in 2022 following a violent fight that would have occurred in the forest, Sappho II lost his right tusk and is now left with the partly regrown left tusk. Fights are the main cause of loss of tusk in bulls and may sometimes lead to the tearing of ears as well.



Sappho II in 2010 with both tusks © Andrea Turkalo






Sappho II in 2016 with the left tusk broken © Andrea Turkalo



Sappho II in 2022, the left tusk has grown but it lost the right one © I.Yankois pour le Yang Center/WWF

The Dzanga Sangha Wildlife Veterinarian who oversees the running of the 'One Health' Program returned to the Lwiro Primate Rehabilitation Centre in DRC to complete his training through the centre's Capacity-Building Program for African Vets for another three months. This is still in the context of the Wildlife Conservation Network Veterinary Scholarship that he received thanks to his dedication and demonstrated exceptional promise for lifelong commitment as wildlife veterinarian and conservationist.

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

Species	Minimum	Average	Maximum
	1	80	146
	0	2	28
	0	4	6

Discover the Biodiversity of the DSPA



@ Miguel Bellosta

Scientific name	<i>Merops breweri</i>
English name:	<i>Black-headed Bee-eater.</i>
Taxonomy:	Class : birds Order : coraciformes Family : meropidae Genus : merops Specie : <i>M. breweri</i>



The Black-headed Bee-eater is found in tropical forests in Central and West Africa. It has black head, green back, wings and tail, and buff breast and belly. Both sexes are identical.

It is an insectivore that captures its prey (wasps and bees, dragonflies, beetles etc.) in flight by springing from a branch (as in the photos). They are often seen alone or in pairs; they sometimes gather in small groups when not nesting.
For the habitat (of this site):

The black-headed bee-eaters frequent the edges of the forests, the sparse plots in the course of regeneration, the plantations, the surroundings of the clearings and the dwelling places located not far from the forests. They are found more particularly near rivers and streams, in small, wooded islands or on well-vegetated banks. They also appreciate tree galleries and swampy woods and nest in places bordering dry savannahs.

Antipoaching

The guard patrols have continued to work normally and it should be noted that it has been a fairly quiet month in terms of poaching activities.



Furthermore regular patrols, the rangers continue their training© Aaron Porter

44 regular patrols and 4 patrols from the tri-national anti-poaching brigade were conducted. In total 1.483 rangers/days, 2.037 km traveled on foot and cover an area of 1.700 km². This resulted in the seizure of 5 manufactured 12-gauge shotguns, 2-gauge cartridges, and 20 kg of meat. In addition, 2,977 metal snares were dismantled.

This month neither elephant carcasses nor pangolin scales were found.
5 people were arrested, sensitized and released.

Community Development

This month the Ndima-Kali Association organized three summer camps for indigenous youths, marking the participation of 104 girls and 100 boys.

The summer camp was used as an opportunity to try out a mobile school in the forest with the Ba'Aka children. We observed that the children liked the teaching sessions and were very active during the lessons in the forest. This will be tried out again in the other villages that will host the next summer camps in the forest.



Home school in the forest © Martial Betoulet

We celebrated the International Day of Indigenous Peoples 2022, under the theme "The role of Indigenous Women in the transmission of traditional knowledge"



Celebrating the Indigenous People day © Christian Bassoum



Leocadi Mandende, an indigenous Ba'Aka woman in Monasao received training to become a midwife and in August, she assisted in 6 births.



Leocadi, was training as midwife in Belemboke © Melania G. Jimenez



And we can see the result of this training © Melania G. Jimenez

Main DSPA Health Data Number of patients

Structure	Number of patients
Monasao Health Post	364
Belemboke Health Post	506
Mobile Clinic	159
Total	1029

Park Administration

Just like the previous months, no flight was made between Bangui and Bayanga this month as the jet fuel crisis in CAR continues. However, this time, the aviation company can find fuel but the cost of chartering a plane is almost double the normal cost, which will make it difficult for tourists to arrive.

UNDP has confirmed its approval of the new project in DSPA, and the funds will probably be received next month to start implementation.

The building that will house the new one health laboratory and the hospital is now finally completed and only awaiting the equipment to become functional. Both the Helmholtz Institute for One Health (HIOH), and the CURE project have informed us that the material/equipment has been ordered and ready for shipping.



The new building is already finishing and waiting for the equipment © Luis Arranz

We participated in a workshop organized by the FTNS from 23 to August 26 in Bertoua, Cameroon. The goal of this meeting was a revision of the procedure manual to improve the collaboration with the FTNS Executive office and facilitate monitoring and evaluation and capitalization of the results obtained in the field on conservation, eco-development and cross-border cooperation.

The APDS delegation that took part in this workshop is made up of the Deputy Director, the Administrative and Human Resources Manager, the Administrative and Financial Director and the dedicated FTNS Accountant.

Tourism and Marketing

As a result of the fuel crisis and challenges of chartering flights between Bangui and Bayanga, we received tourists coming through Cameroon



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