



Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas

www.dzanga-sangha.org



Ngbanda and Mbossa, PHP gorilla trackers ©Andrea Sotto Mayor

Newsletter July 2025



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Spotlight on the Primate Habituation Program (PHP)

Since the beginning of July, the Limo group has been officially open to visitors, and we are already seeing them return from their encounters with this new gorilla group, wide-eyed and smiling, deeply moved by the experience. It is a great joy for the entire PHP team to have successfully habituated a new gorilla group to human presence in just two years, thereby revitalizing our ecotourism activities that benefit local communities. This success is due solely to the work and skills of our teams in the field, 80% of whom are Ba'aka trackers.



Limo ©Andrea Sotto Mayor

After the loss of the Mata and Mayele groups in 2022, followed by the death of Makumba in 2024, it took a lot of courage on the part of PHP members to successfully habituate new groups. It took an average of three to five years to habituate the previous gorilla groups, and during this period, the first year is always the most difficult. However, the experience and perseverance of the teams in the field enabled us to continue the activities of the PHP and thus the DSPA.



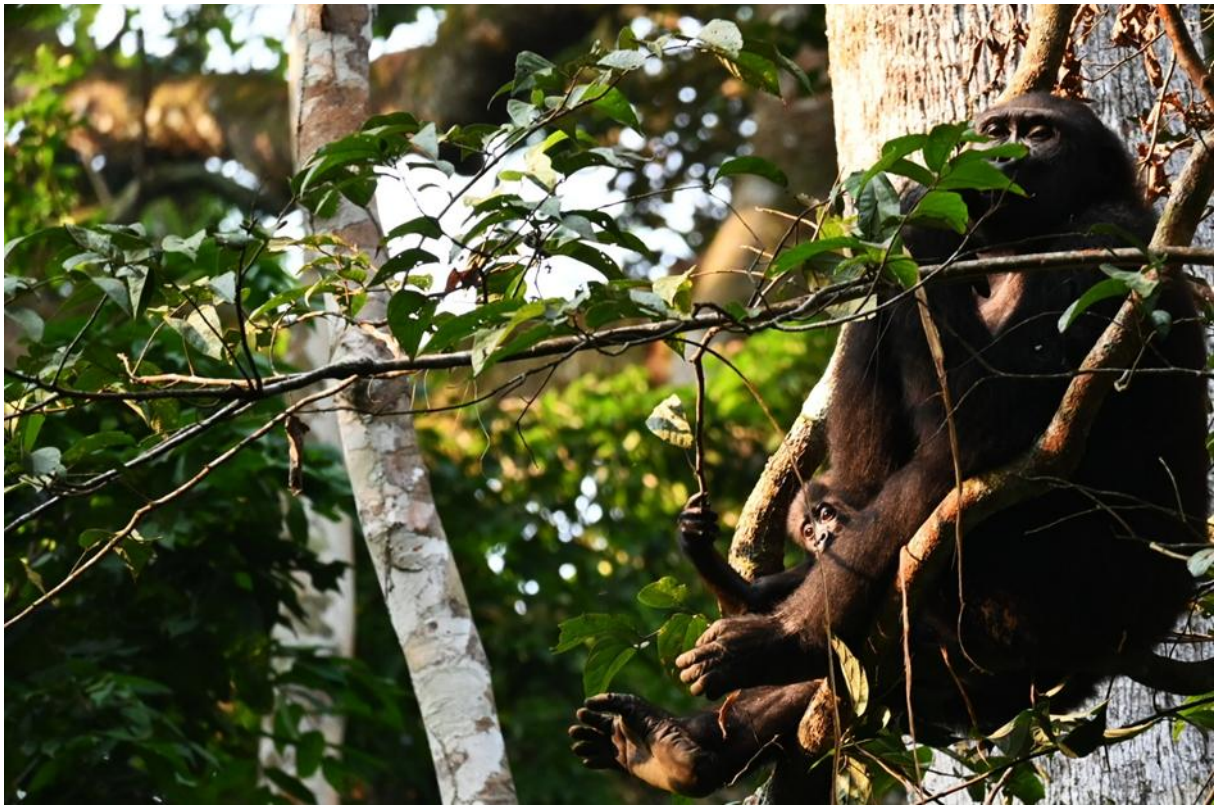
10 of the Baaka Trackers with 2 research assistants ©Andrea Sotto Mayor

After several months tracking the Limo group, as it became easier for us to observe the individuals, we noticed that some females reacted to our presence with a certain curiosity, which usually takes longer to appear.

As time went by, we were able to identify some of the females in Limo's group as originating from the previous habituated group (Mata and Makumba). Because these females had not been disturbed by our presence for very long, Limo quickly adopted a calm behavior when we were close to the group, and is gradually beginning to ignore us completely.

Under these conditions, we assessed that Limo's group was ready to receive a small number of visitors for a short period of time during the day.

While it was a promising start, the first few months of following them were not without difficulty. Successfully tracking a group of wild gorillas that flee long distances after each of our encounters is really no easy task. We have to anticipate their movements, identify their territory, and recognize the group's tracks without confusing them with another group, even before we have been able to observe the individuals in the group. This requires constant effort, tracking them from morning to night and being attentive to any clues that might bring us closer to the group. It is undoubtedly thanks to the incredible knowledge of our Ba'aka trackers that we were able to do this, not only with Limo's group, but also with two other groups that are currently being habituated.



Mio and her baby Epangue ©Andrea Sotto Mayor

Wildlife

In the month of July we registered 13 new calves at Dzanga Bai. Some of them were a few months old, while others were just 1-2 days old. A highlight was the visit to the clearing of three newborns on the same day, the calf of Phyllis II, and the calves of Placida and of her daughter Placida V.



Phyllis II with her newborn. ©ELP for the Yang Center/WWF.



Phyllis's II newborn and her entourage, uncles, aunts and sisters. ©ELP for the Yang Center/WWF.






Placida with her newborn. ©ELP for the Yang Center/WWF.



Placida V, daughter of Placida, with her newborn, the same age as her own little sibling. ©ELP for the Yang Center/WWF.

Dzanga Bai data collected in collaboration with the Elephant Listening Project: presence of mammals at the clearing based on the number of individuals counted every 60 minutes from 11:00 to 16:00 each day of the month.

Species	Minimum	Average	Maximum
	15	61	112
	0	6	30
	0	6	11



Discover the biodiversity of DSPA



©Yoann Galeran

Class: Insecta

Order: Lepidoptera

Family: Saturniidae

Genus: Imbrasia

Species: Imbrasia oyemensis

The palm caterpillar, locally called makongo, plays a vital role in community livelihoods throughout the Congo basin. Each year during the August and September season, these caterpillars are harvested in abundance from the Sapelli tree (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*), also known as mboyó. Their collection is a cultural and communal activity that provides households with both an important source of protein and income.



Antipoaching

Graduation of a New Generation of Rangers

This July marked the conclusion of the 2025 Ranger recruitment and training process at the DSPA.

After three months of intensive selection process and training, 42 recruits officially graduated and joined the Ranger force. The training, conducted at the Kongana training facility and led by our long-standing **partner Chengeta Wildlife**, combined law enforcement techniques, human rights, field skills, and community-based conservation practices.

On July 26th, the graduation ceremony took place in Bayanga in the presence of local authorities, community leaders, families, and partners. This promotion was named **“Promotion Makumba of the Director Luis Arranz”**, paying tribute both to Makumba, the iconic western lowland gorilla who has symbolized conservation at Dzanga-Sangha for decades, and to Director Luis Arranz, whose legacy and continued dedication have shaped the DSPA.



Graduation's Ceremony @Yoann Galeran



©Yoann Galeran



Scene of joy and reunion at the end of the ceremony ©Yoann Galeran

July Patrol Highlights from Dzanga-Sangha

In July, a total of 30 regular patrols were conducted, involving 66 rangers, who completed a total of 1,426 rangers/days, covering 3,278 km on foot.

These efforts led to the seizure of 13 firearms (including 11 homemade weapons and 2 hunting rifles), as well as 41 rounds of hunting ammunition.

A total of 1,984 wire snares and 180 kg of bushmeat (from 45 pieces) were also seized.

One carcass of a poached elephant and one carcass of a young elephant that died from natural causes were discovered during patrols.

Six awareness-raising sessions were conducted with local communities in the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas.

Community Conservation

Empowering indigenous Ba'aka Youth: Ita Ti Doli Scolaire Internships

As part of the broader effort to promote inclusive education and indigenous participation in conservation, a new program targeting Ba'aka secondary school students has been launched; the Ita Ti Doli Scolaire internships. In collaboration with the Community Department and the Dzanga Forest Elephant Project eight Ba'aka students have been selected for internships at Dzanga Bai, designed to deepen their engagement with conservation through hands-on learning.



Jean-Christian (left) from Belemboke and Loche (right) from Yandoumbe with their finished research projects on activity patterns of elephants at Dzanga Bai and number of males and females visiting the clearing each day. ©ELP for the Yang Center/WWF.



The students spend 10 days at the Dzanga research camp, visiting the clearing every day. They learn about forest elephants and conservation and wrap-up their stay with a 3-day study carried out by themselves, which includes study design and data analysis. The immersive experience at Dzanga also gives them an insight into tools for nighttime data collection, as well as the discovery of their surrounding forest through sound, both activities also presented to the trackers and ecoguards interested in our work.

These internships serve a dual purpose: they encourage continued education through park-sponsored scholarships, and they lay the groundwork for recruiting future Ba'aka researchers into the Dzanga Forest Elephant Project. By investing in the academic and professional pathways of indigenous youth, this initiative reinforces our commitment to long-term, community-based conservation.



Hugette (left) from Belemboke and Clarissa (center) from Nguengueli at the clearing where they spent 10 days learning about forest elephants and conservation. ©ELP for the Yang Center/WWF.

Main DSPA Health Data Number of patients

Structure	Number of patients
Monasao Health Post	216
Belemboke Health Post	631
Community consultation	547
Total	1394



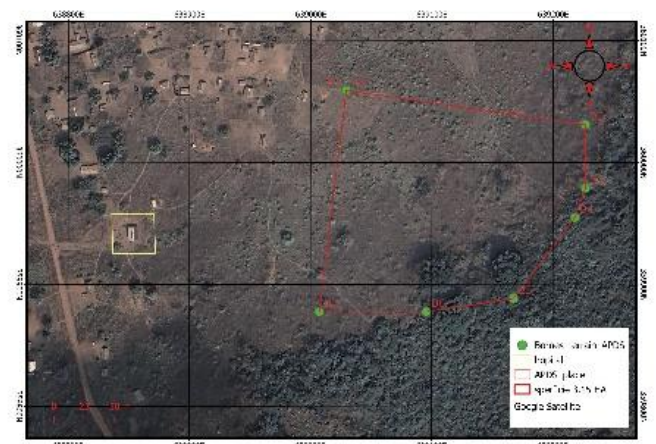
Nutritional assesment station ©Colombe Irahali

Park Administration

Monasao: An Operational Base for the Periphery

In a major development for future operations, DSPA has officially secured a piece of land from the Yobe-Sangha commune. This strategic site will allow the creation of a permanent, functional base in Monasao to host staff, equipment, and serve as a launchpad for a wide range of activities across the DSPA periphery.

A new phase of reforestation and landscape restoration has officially begun in the Monasao area. This initiative aims to strengthen community resilience within the periphery of the DSPA.



Site selection analysis for agroforestry beneficiaries, and new piece of land in DSPA periphery



Building on Local Realities and Lessons Learned

The new phase was launched with a feedback session reflecting on the previous cycle of the project. This allowed the team and community members to identify key challenges such as plot maintenance, replanting needs, and firebreak management while also highlighting best practices to shape the next steps.

Community-Based and Rigorous Beneficiary Selection

The selection process began with inclusive community consultations (CLIP) in the villages of Monasao, Médao, and Nguenguéli. A total of 329 participants from Ba'Aka, Bilo, and Peul communities took part. A provisional list of beneficiaries was published and is now undergoing field verification.



Community consultation ©Bovys Bobele

Laying the Foundations for Sustainable Agroforestry

Local seed collection efforts have begun, targeting native species (*Sapelli*, *Essessang*), fruit trees (avocado, citrus), and soil-restoring trees (*Dabema*, *Acacia*). International sourcing will be considered if needed to complement local collections.

At the heart of the project is a new 2-hectare nursery site in Mona-Sao. Currently, 78 seedling beds are under construction, with 2,693 *Sapelli* pots and 176 *Yembé* already planted. This nursery will become the operational hub for future reforestation and agroforestry activities in the region.



Early phase of the nursery ©Emile Mejubit

Supporting Local Pastoralists

In parallel, assessments have started with pastoralist communities in the Monasao region to evaluate livestock conditions and animal health. The aim is to identify possible areas of support such as veterinary services and improved livestock management to complement agricultural activities and promote integrated land use planning.



Meeting with the pastoralist in DSPA periphery ©Souleyman Singa



Tourism and marketing

In this edition, you'll find a fascinating article in the link below by a traveler who explored Dzanga Sangha in 2025:

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Central-African-Republic-trip-report.pdf>

Arrivals and departures



ALI-ROBOAM Placide have joined the DSPA team and will work at the Tourist information Center.

- *This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of WWF CAR and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*