



BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER JANUARY FEBRUARY 2025

Dear Friends of the Lac Télé Community Reserve,

The year 2025 is beginning with a period of uncertainty following the abrupt termination of funding from the US federal government. Although this decision has led to a significant reduction in our budget, it has not dampened our commitment. Thus, in January and February, we continued our actions in the field in favour of local communities, ecological monitoring and other projects that you will discover in this newsletter.

An adjustment strategy is underway to ensure optimal continuity of activities, a strengthening of our local partnerships and a diversification of our funding. More than ever, we remain mobilised to bring the Reserve's conservation and development missions to life.

With conviction,

Dr. David Brugière & Fabien Nzolani Silaho

WCS-MEF Coordination

Lac Télé Community Reserve (RCLT)

KEY DATES & HIGHLIGHTS

- **15 January - 02 February 2025:** implementation of an awareness campaign on MPox zoonosis in eight (08) villages in the Reserve;
- **25 January 2025:** start of construction work on the boundary wall of the Reserve's base camp in Epéna;
- **02 February 2025:** launch of the 2025 waterbird census campaign along the Likouala-aux-herbes river and its tributaries;
- **31 January 2025:** presentation by our researcher Bola Madzoké of a paper at the annual conference of the International Society of Tropical Foresters, Yale University, USA;
- **21 February 2025:** launch of the campaign to distribute tillage equipment to cocoa producers in the Reserve.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION



Support for the training of community teachers

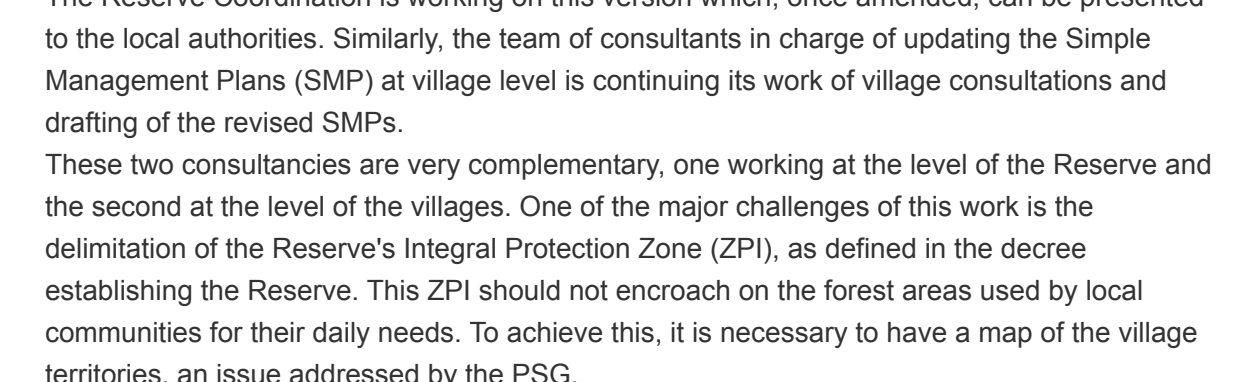
The majority of teachers in the villages of the Reserve are community workers recruited locally. However, the isolation of the villages and the difficulties of communication complicate relations with their supervisory hierarchy. It is in this context that the Reserve organised, in February, two missions to transport these teachers to a village where they were able to meet their school district inspector and their educational adviser. During the working day, the content of the school programmes and the teaching methods were discussed. The Reserve was represented by our agent in charge of environmental education.



Distribution of agricultural equipment to cocoa producers

The campaign to distribute agricultural equipment to cocoa producers in the Reserve began on 21 February 2025 in the villages of Koundoumou and Ibolo. Thirty-five producers received a set of tools including a machete, a file, secateurs, a shovel and a pair of boots. In addition, each village group received collective tools including watering cans, rakes, a tape measure and scales. During this mission, our experts were able to see that work on setting up the nurseries had begun. The distribution of the rest of the equipment and the beans for the nurseries will take place in March and April 2025.

GOVERNANCE



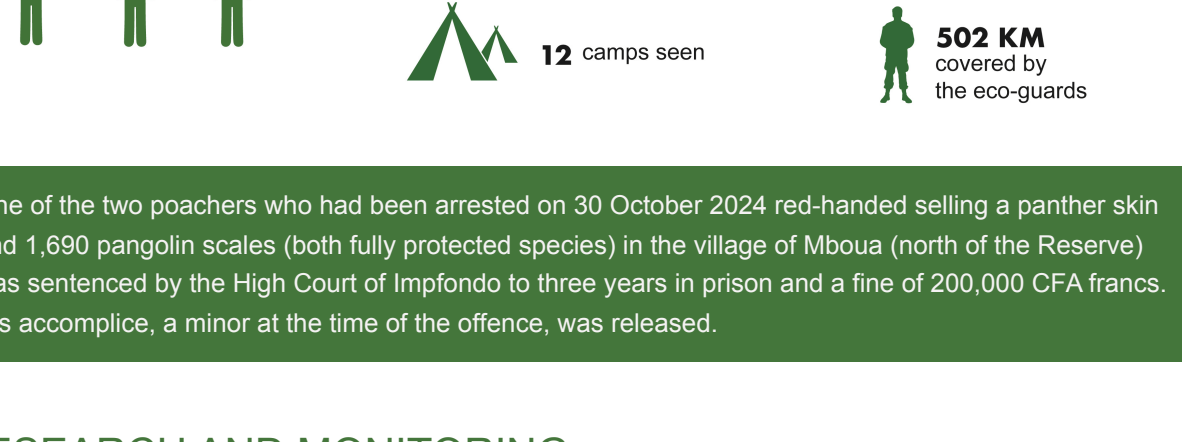
Work on the development of the Reserve's governance and management framework documents is continuing. After completing the public consultations in the villages of the Reserve in mid-December 2024, the consultants in charge of supporting the development of the Development Plan (DP) produced a second provisional version of the DP in February 2025.

The Reserve Coordination is working on this version which, once amended, can be presented to the local authorities. Similarly, the team of consultants in charge of updating the Simple Management Plans (SMP) at village level is continuing its work of village consultations and drafting of the revised SMPs.

These two consultancies are very complementary, one working at the level of the Reserve and the second at the level of the villages. One of the major challenges of this work is the delimitation of the Reserve's Integral Protection Zone (ZPI), as defined in the decree establishing the Reserve. This ZPI should not encroach on the forest areas used by local communities for their daily needs. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a map of the village territories, an issue addressed by the PSG.

Regarding the decree establishing the LTRC, the Director of the WCS Congo programme sent a letter on 25 February 2025 to the Minister of Forest Economy requesting the establishment of a commission to review the decree. The aim is to amend certain articles to give local communities a greater role in the governance of the Reserve.

ANTI-POACHING



One of the two poachers who had been arrested on 30 October 2024 red-handed selling a panther skin and 1,690 pangolin scales (both fully protected species) in the village of Mboua (north of the Reserve) was sentenced by the High Court of Impfondo to three years in prison and a fine of 200,000 CFA francs. His accomplice, a minor at the time of the offence, was released.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING



Annual waterbird count

For the 26th consecutive year, the waterbird census of the Reserve was carried out in February 2025 along the Likouala-aux-herbes and two of its tributaries, the Bailly and the Batanga, according to a new protocol tested and finalised in 2024. A total of 5,499 birds belonging to 17 families were counted, a similar figure to last year. The three dominant species are the African cormorant, the cattle egret and the anhinga. A new species, already known but never observed during the census, was recorded this year: the grey plover. Unfortunately, the Botongo nesting box, which in 2024 was home to a large mixed colony of anhinga and purple heron, burned down and was abandoned by the birds. This event once again illustrates the devastating effect of bush fires lit by local populations on biodiversity.



International Conference on Forest Governance

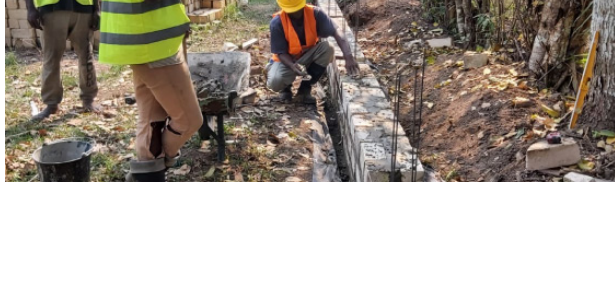
Mr Bola Madzoke, a researcher at the Reserve since 2002, represented the Reserve at the 31st annual conference of the International Society of Tropical Foresters, which was held from 31 January to 1 February 2025 at Yale University in the United States. The theme of the conference was the governance of resilient tropical forest systems. He presented the governance arrangements for the Reserve's local communities. He also explained how the Reserve had drawn on these traditional mechanisms to develop natural resource management tools, such as fishing and fire management. We would like to thank Yale University for covering Mr Bola's travel and participation expenses for this important event.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION



Move to a new office in Impfondo:

In January 2025, the WCS office in Impfondo moved to more functional premises. A 12,500-litre tank, funded by ECF, has been installed there to secure the fuel supply. The office, which is staffed by a lawyer, is strengthening legal and logistical monitoring with the decentralised state services.



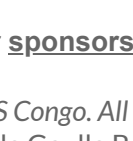
Construction of a boundary wall around the Epéna work site:

At the end of January 2025, construction began on a perimeter wall at the Epéna work site. A 2-metre-high solid wall will be erected at the back, while a half-wall with railings will secure the front. This infrastructure will replace the old fence and will provide greater protection for the property and equipment at the work site.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Although known in the Likouala department, the grey-faced pratincole (*Glareola cinerea*) was observed for the first time on the banks of the Likouala-aux-herbes during the annual waterbird census carried out in the Reserve in February 2025.



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151 Av Ch de Gaulle Brazzaville,
BP 14537 République du Congo

congo.wcs.org

comcongo@wcs.org

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