



## BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER MAY-JUNE 2025

### Dear Friends of the Lac Télé Community Reserve,

Our efforts to improve the well-being of local communities continue with the launch of two new activities for their benefit.

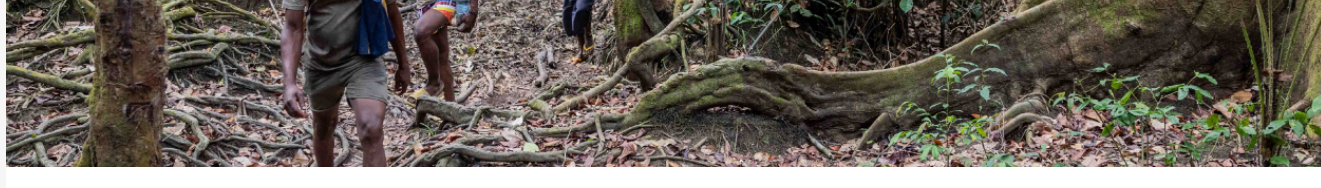
Poultry farming and beekeeping, which have been practised for decades in the Reserve, are now receiving renewed support. In response to repeated requests from communities, we have called on Congolese expertise to strengthen these practices and support their development.

In addition, as in 2022, we conducted a census of the small population of hippopotamuses in the south of the Reserve. Listed as 'vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List, this species is the subject of special attention. This census will contribute to the IUCN's global database and update the species' distribution map.

**Dr. David Brugière & Fabien Nzolani Silaho**

WCS-MEF Coordination

Lac Télé Community Reserve (RCLT)



## KEY DATES & HIGHLIGHTS

- **11-12 June:** workshop organised in Epéna by UNEP and WCMC on options for the sustainable protection and management of peatlands
- **12 June:** start of the mission to support the development of beekeeping in eight villages in the Reserve
- **24-25 June:** participation of LTCR anti-poaching officials in the regional refresher workshop on the implementation of judicial procedures
- **30 June:** launch of the second phase of tree pruning work on the Epéna-Impfondo road in the presence of the sub-prefects of Epéna and Impfondo and the Secretary General of the Likouala Prefecture

## COMMUNITY CONSERVATION



### Launch of community support for beekeeping.

In northern Congo, natural honey is traditionally harvested by cutting down the tree on which the hive is located, a particularly destructive method. To change these practices, in early 2025, the Reserve signed a service contract with the Ya Diyi agro-pastoral cooperative to support the development of beekeeping in the Reserve. This service will cover eight villages and will be spread over a year. An initial field mission began on 12 June 2025, enabling the selection and training of beneficiaries in the selected villages. Ten training modules were delivered, including wild swarm capture, apiary creation and monitoring, and honey harvesting and processing. The next mission, scheduled for August 2025, will distribute beekeeping equipment and provide training on its use. Illustration:

© S. Ramsay/WCS

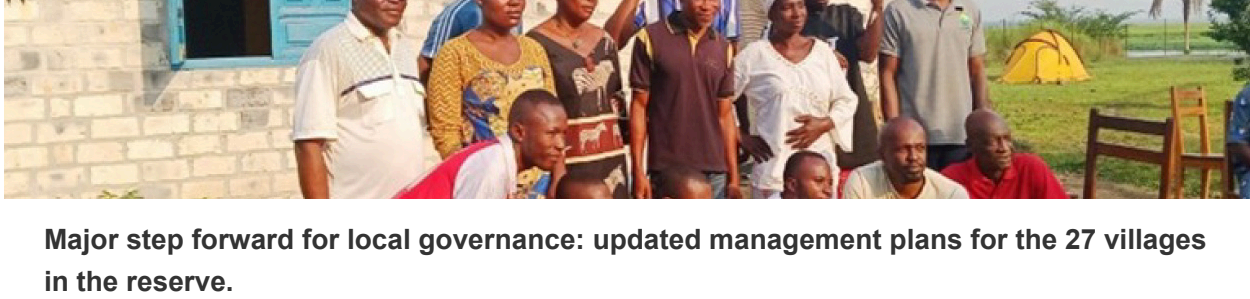


### Training in poultry farming

Many villagers are interested in chicken farming, particularly the Sasso breed, a fast-growing broiler chicken. The Reserve therefore organised a training course on breeding techniques for this breed in Epéna in early June 2025. Delivered by the technical assistant of the WCS-Congo poultry farming programme, the training course was attended by around 20 participants from various villages in the Reserve. A demonstration chicken coop was built in the Reserve's base camp for the occasion (photo). Five training modules were delivered, covering the different stages of Sasso chicken rearing, feeding, biosecurity, and the diagnosis and treatment of the main diseases.

Photo: © D. Bakoula/WCS

## GOVERNANCE



### Major step forward for local governance: updated management plans for the 27 villages in the reserve.

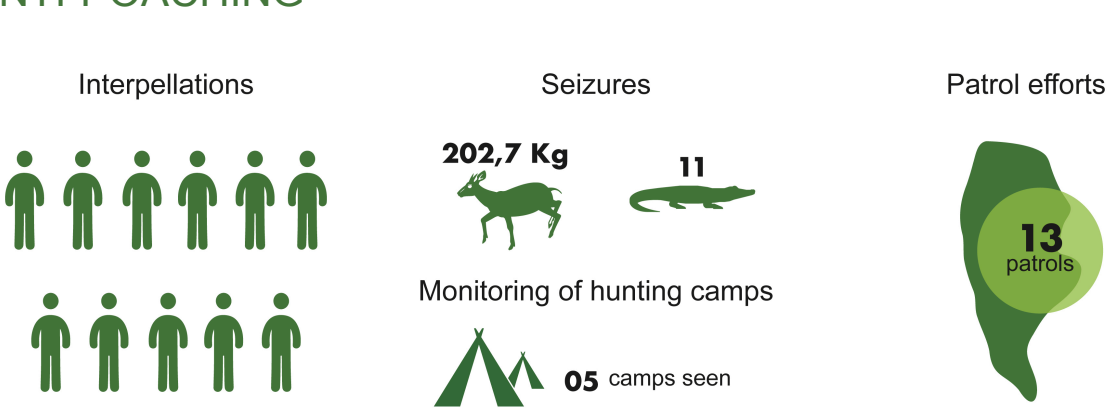
With the support of two consultants from the reserve, a first draft of these plans was developed after several weeks of fieldwork. Initially drafted in 2005 and 2006 with the participation of village chiefs, elders and other resource persons, these plans are essential reference documents for guiding the activities supported by the Reserve.

The draft versions have been reviewed by the Reserve team. The next step will be to return to each village to validate the plans and zoning, including the boundaries of the terroir and internal zones, where communities have expressed a desire to define them. These management plans are key tools for strengthening community governance and sustainable management of village territories.

### Launch of support for communities in beekeeping

In northern Congo, natural honey is traditionally harvested by cutting down the tree that supports the hive, a particularly destructive method. To change these practices, in early 2025, the Reserve signed a service contract with the 'Ya Diyi' agro-pastoral cooperative to support the development of beekeeping in the Reserve. This service will cover eight villages and will be spread over a year. An initial field mission began on 12 June 2025, enabling the selection and training of beneficiaries in the selected villages. Ten training modules have been delivered, covering topics such as capturing wild swarms, setting up and monitoring apiaries, and harvesting and processing honey. The next mission, scheduled for August 2025, will distribute beekeeping equipment and provide training on how to use it. © D. Bakoula/WCS

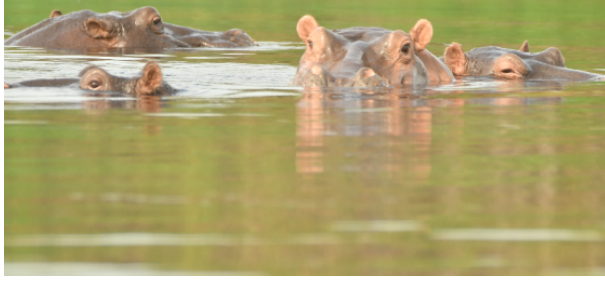
## ANTI-POACHING



A new patrol leader, Mr. **Havy Fellini MAVOUNGOU**, has been appointed by ACFAP and joined the reserve team in June. This follows the departure of Mr. **Romual TCHICAYA**, who has been called to other duties. We warmly thank Mr. **TCHICAYA** for his professionalism, enthusiasm and support for the smooth running of the Reserve's anti-poaching service.

On 24 and 25 June, the sworn officers, the unit head and the LAB support officer participated in a skills-building workshop on judicial procedures and human rights, organised in Ouesso by WCS Congo.

## RESEARCH AND MONITORING



### Hippopotamus population census mission

From 13 to 15 June, the Reserve organised a hippopotamus population census mission on the Likouala-aux-Herbes and its tributaries. This aquatic mammal is endangered in Congo, and the Reserve is home to a small population that moves with the seasons and the river's water level. The mission counted a total of 13 individuals (a group of 11 and two solitary individuals) located in the extreme south of the Reserve, between the localities of Bouanela and Mongouma Moké. This figure is the same as in the previous census in 2022. No newborns were detected. The hippopotamus population in the Reserve is therefore stable. Numerous 'slips' were observed on the banks of the Likouala, indicating that hippopotamuses graze at night in the savannahs bordering the river. Photo:

© R. Mobongo/WCS



### Development of the Reserve's Research Strategy

Although the Reserve has had a research department since its creation and work has been ongoing for many years, it did not, until now, have its own research strategy. Following internal work by research department staff, in collaboration with other departments, a preliminary version of the strategy for the period 2025-2030 has been drawn up. The aim of this strategy is to improve knowledge of biodiversity and document overall changes. It is based on two complementary approaches: ecological studies and the ecological monitoring system. The latter involves monitoring, at regular intervals, a set of 52 indicators grouped into 18 environmental parameters. This strategy is part of the Reserve's management plan, of which it is a thematic extension. © WCS

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION



### Completion of the perimeter wall

Thanks to funding from the Elephant Crisis Fund, we have been able to improve security at our base by reinforcing the perimeter wall to prevent stray animals from entering and reduce the risk of theft. Two new gates have been installed, allowing for stricter control of access to the base. Photo: © B. Romeo/WCS

### Tree pruning

In May, strong winds threatened to knock down a tree on the guest house. To avoid any damage, we called on three members of the indigenous communities who cut down the tree, bringing it down without damaging any structures.

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Brice Itoua, a resident of the village of Djeke, poses with a dwarf crocodile (Osteolaemus tetraspis) in the swamps of the Lac Télé Community Reserve (LTCR). The Congo dwarf crocodile (Osteolaemus tetraspis) is a partially protected species. In the Reserve, eco-guards monitor entry and exit points to seize any crocodiles that are smuggled in. The LTCR is an important stronghold for this species, but intensive hunting could have a negative impact on its population. This photo, taken by photographer Thomas Nicolon, was a finalist in the Big Picture Photo Award and will be awarded at the Siena Photo Awards in September 2025, in the 'Fascinating faces and characters' category.

Photo: © Thomas Nicolon/WCS



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