



**LAC TÉLÉ  
COMMUNITY  
RESERVE**

# **LAC TÉLÉ COMMUNITY RESERVE**

**2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

## TABLE OF CONTENT

03	About the Reserve
04	Community conservation
06	Anti-poaching efforts
08	Research and monitoring
13	Governance
14	Support services
16	Media
17	This year's publications
19	Thanks



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## ABOUT THE RESERVE

The Lac Télé Community Reserve (RCLT) is distinguished by a mosaic of closely linked ecosystems, shaped by water and the natural dynamics of the Likouala basin. Its landscape is dominated by permanently flooded forests, which cover nearly half of its area, as well as seasonally flooded forests. These areas are complemented by flooded savannahs and dry forests, forming a remarkable ecological balance. The aquatic network structured around the Likouala-aux-Herbes and its tributaries — the Batanga, Bailly and Mandoungouma — forms the backbone of this territory.

Flooded and seasonally flooded forests are peat forests characterised by soils rich in organic matter. These ecosystems play a strategic role in carbon sequestration and contribute significantly to global climate regulation. The water cycle is central to these ecosystems: during the heavy rainy season, from October to December, rising water levels and river flooding inundate around 90% of the Reserve, permanently shaping the landscape and ways of life.

Due to its ecological importance, the RCLT is recognised as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is home to exceptional biodiversity, including large populations

of western lowland gorillas, common chimpanzees, waterbirds and forest elephants. Beyond its biological richness, the Reserve provides essential ecosystem services for both local communities and the international community, particularly through the mitigation of climate change effects.

The RCLT covers the districts of Epéna and Bouanela and comprises 27 villages, with an estimated population of around 20,000 inhabitants. Livelihoods are largely based on the sustainable use of natural resources. Fishing, hunting and gathering forest products provide food for households, while the sale of fish, bushmeat, non-timber forest products and wood generates income. Fishing plays a central role in the local economy: fish from the Reserve supplies several urban markets in the Republic of the Congo, notably Brazzaville, and is also exported to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, cocoa cultivation on family plantations provides a complementary source of income for many households.

The Lac Télé Community Reserve is an area where biodiversity, climate and local development are closely linked, illustrating the importance of concerted and sustainable management for the benefit of present and future generations.



COMMUNITY CONSERVATION



• Expansion of the community solar lighting programme

In 2025, the solar electrification programme for villages, launched in 2024 with the support of local authorities and village chiefs, continued.

Seventeen villages received support during the year, with the installation of 87 solar street lamps and floodlights, bringing the total number deployed between 2024 and 2025 in the two districts of Bouanéla and Épéna to 149.

• Supporting pupils in the Reserve

A capacity-building mission trained 29 teachers in key teaching tools and the management of administrative documents and school reports.

Food aid was provided to the Épéna preschool, benefiting 30 children, and the RCLT financed the purchase and distribution of school kits for 4,704 pupils from 27 primary schools (17 in Épéna and 10 in Bouanéla).

• Rehabilitation of access roads

For the second consecutive year, the Reserve Coordination supported the rehabilitation of the crucial Épéna–Ngounda road section:

- **March and April:** Epéna–PK38 axis, with the support of locally recruited day labourers;
- **June to August:** Boléké–Ngounda axis, rehabilitation of 16 km, following mobilisation of the authorities and communities in the districts concerned.



Promoting sustainable beekeeping in eight villages

Responding to the felling of trees for artisanal honey harvesting, in 2025 the RCLT relaunched its support for modern beekeeping in eight villages. A mission carried out from June to July assessed progress, raised awareness among communities and trained 60 beekeepers in modern techniques.

In December, a full range of equipment (hives, smokers, protective clothing) was distributed, accompanied by technical guidance on setting up apiaries and trapping bees.



Beginning of support for poultry farming

In 2024, an analysis confirmed the potential for poultry farming in the Lac Télé Community Reserve, despite practices that were still relatively unstructured. In 2025, training organised in Epéna helped to build the capacities of 18 farmers, particularly in the rearing of Sasso breed pullets.

A prototype chicken coop was presented and a roadmap was approved to structure the sector in a sustainable manner.



Structured revamp of the cocoa industry

Support for cocoa farming has been structured around technical training, field support and marketing assistance in the Lac Télé Community Reserve.

Six missions have helped to strengthen producers' capacities, set up community nurseries and support the re-densification of plantations.

- 13 localities covered;
- 204 producers trained (including 20 women);
- 160 direct beneficiaries supported;
- 60 new producers identified;
- 1,900 cocoa pods, 33,000 phytocells and 16 watering cans distributed.

A partnership with the PARSA project and the identification of local buyers have strengthened market access and the sustainable structuring of the sector.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

The CoCo department's actions involve local communities in the conservation of the Reserve while contributing to improving their living conditions through an integrated approach based on four main strategic priorities:

- Contributing to the well-being of local communities by supporting improvements in living conditions and access to basic services;
- Supporting sustainable natural resource management in order to reduce pressure on wildlife and ecosystems;
- Raising awareness of biodiversity protection through information, education and community mobilisation activities;
- Supporting the development of income-generating activities as sustainable economic alternatives to practices that are incompatible with conservation.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

87

solar street lamps and floodlights deployed in 17 villages, helping to boost local trade and security.



4 704

pupils received school kits in 27 primary schools in the districts of Bouanéla and Epéna.



30

children receiving food aid, in support of the Epéna preschool centre.



1900

cocoa pods were distributed to support the re-densification of cocoa plantations in the Reserve.



29

teachers trained with support from RCLT: a ten-day teaching skills development course in the Epéna school district.



18

villages covered by mobile medical missions providing consultations along the north and south routes with the NGO ASLAV, thanks to the support of the Reserve.



1900+

people were provided with awareness-raising sessions on conservation, public health and sustainable natural resource management issues.



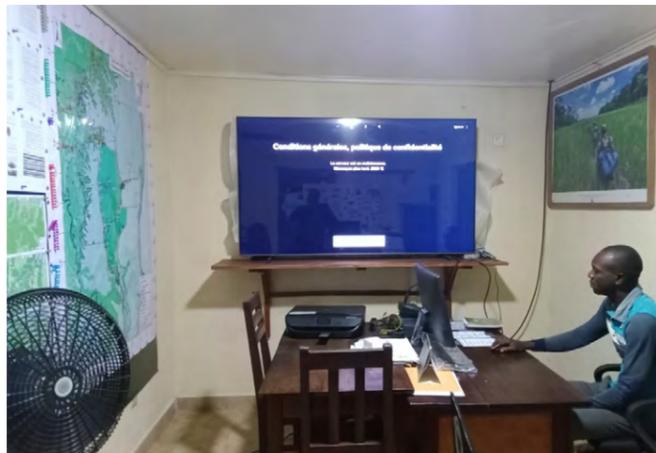
Awareness-raising remains a key lever for strengthening communities' environmental awareness and promoting sustainable practices in the Reserve.

The approach combined community meetings, school interventions and exchanges with local leaders during three campaigns:

- **Campaign 01:** bush fires, mini fishing charter, zoonotic diseases  
396 participants, inc. 69 indigenous people.
- **Campaign 02:** zoonoses, habitat protection, illegal fishing  
788 participants, inc. 128 indigenous people.
- **Campaign 03:** mini community charter and climate issues  
108 adults and 639 pupils.

Credit: © T.Nicolon/WCS

ANTI-POACHING EFFORTS



• Capacity building

All eco-guards participated in **four refresher training sessions**. The topics covered during these sessions included:

- Operational intervention techniques;
- Weapons handling;
- Management and handling of animal carcasses;
- First aid;
- Respect for human rights.

Particular emphasis was placed on respect for human rights, ensuring professional, proportionate and community-friendly interventions, while strengthening the credibility and ethics of the conservation system.

The Operational Support Officer received **two additional training courses**:

- Control room management and development of security protocols;
- Radio communication for emergency management.

• Analysis of four years of operation of the PK38 fixed station

With the support of the Ecological Research and Monitoring Service, an **analytical assessment was carried out** of the four years of monitoring at the PK38 fixed station, installed in 2021 on the Epéna-Impfondo axis:

- 547 seizures recorded, representing 5,921 kg of biomass;
- 16 species from five biological groups;
- The dwarf crocodile dominates the seizures (47% in number; 49% in biomass).

Statistical analyses show a **significant decrease in the total number of seizures** (191 in 2021 compared to 103 in 2024) and in the biomass intercepted. However, seizures of dwarf crocodiles have increased, while **their average weight is gradually decreasing** (-517g/year), which is a worrying sign for the structure of the populations.

Although the overall trend is downward, its interpretation remains cautious: a real decline in hunting, circumvention of the checkpoint, or variable effectiveness of controls. **Persistent non-compliance with the closed hunting season** highlights the need for a stronger awareness-raising and enforcement strategy.

Procurement of materials and equipment

As part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen operational capabilities, the RCLT has received equipment designed to increase the effectiveness of interventions, the safety of teams and the quality of operational monitoring.

- Operational outfits;
- Portable GPS and Delorme devices;
- New screen for the control room;
- Updated map of the Reserve for better management of operations.

Integrated into the EarthRanger system, which has been in use since September 2024, this upgrade has optimised patrol planning, enabled real-time tracking of units and improved responsiveness during interventions.

Strengthening wildlife law enforcement

In 2025, the judicial system combined measured enforcement, rigorous case monitoring and capacity building for the actors involved:

- **37 people arrested** for minor offences, all given warnings and then released;
- **4 arrest warrants** issued by the Public Prosecutor's Office, the execution of which met with local opposition;
- **52 visits by the lawyer** to Impfondo Prison to monitor detainees;
- **24 institutional exchanges** with magistrates and law enforcement agencies.

# ANTI-POACHING EFFORTS

Despite the reduction in staff numbers caused by the sudden withdrawal of American funding in 2025, the anti-poaching campaign continued its efforts to protect wildlife through intelligence gathering, mobile patrols (river, motorised and foot patrols) and checks at fixed posts.

The organisation remained structured around:

- strategic management (Warden and CTP);
- operational command (2 patrol leaders, 4 unit leaders);
- technical support (SMART focal point and legal advisor);
- technical support from Bomassa (PNNN).

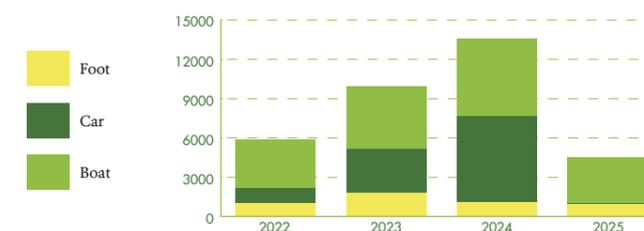
In 2025, the patrol system evolved in a context of service restructuring and staffing adjustments. This phase led to a more targeted organisation of interventions and a strategic refocusing of teams on key priorities in the field.

During the year, **27 patrols were carried out**, covering a total area of 1,034 km<sup>2</sup>, including 20.4% of sensitive areas. The operational effort represented **1,918 man-days**, reflecting the teams' ongoing commitment.

This momentum illustrates a year of constructive reorganisation, aimed at consolidating the foundations of the system and gradually strengthening its operational effectiveness.

PATROL EFFORTS

Distances covered (in kilometres)



## THE YEAR IN FIGURES

**22,8 %**

of the Reserve's surface area, or 1,034 km<sup>2</sup>, and 20% of sensitive areas covered by patrols.



**365**

days of monitoring at the fixed checkpoint PK38 to limit the illegal trade in wildlife products.



**781 kg**

of bush meat from illegal hunting seized.



**52**

metal cables seized by the ecoguards.



**61**

patrols carried out, including 30 mobile patrols and 31 fixed patrols.



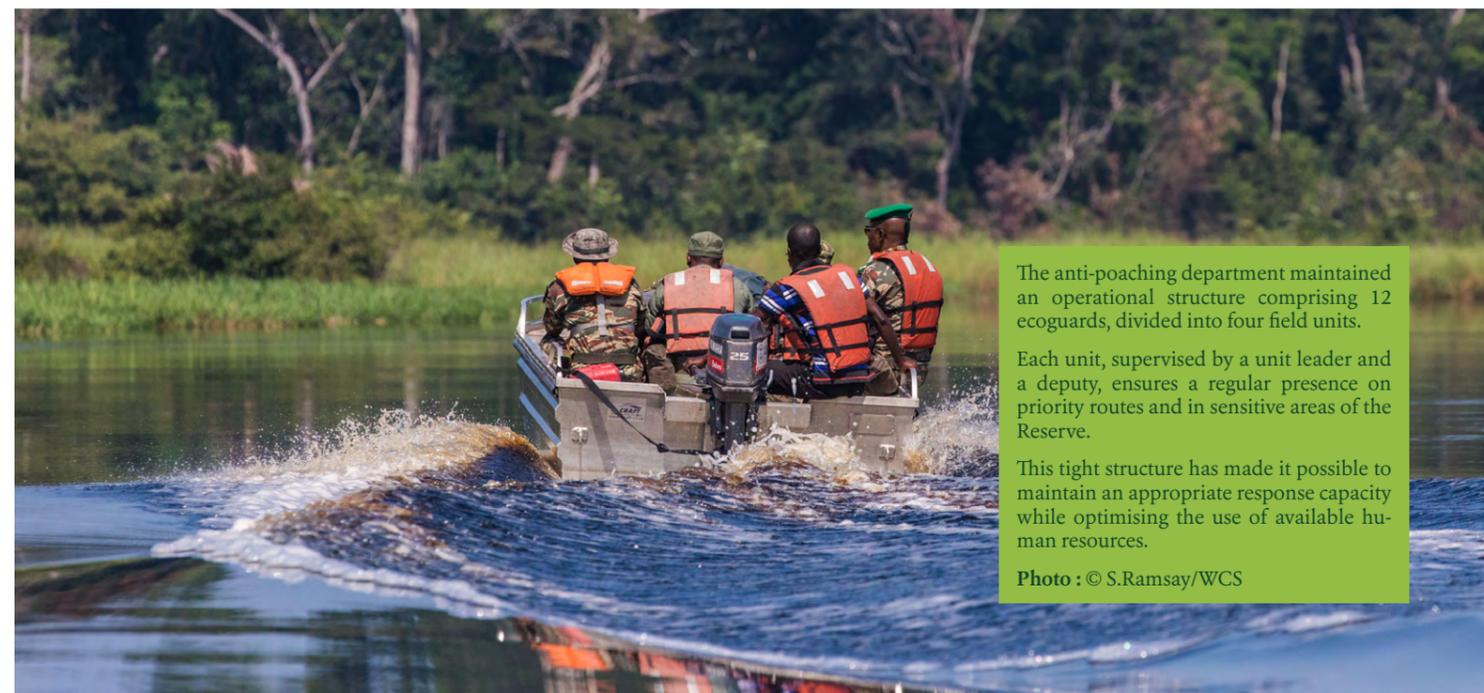
**37**

people apprehended, and 35 reports filed.



**01**

poached elephant carcass discovered.



The anti-poaching department maintained an operational structure comprising 12 ecoguards, divided into four field units.

Each unit, supervised by a unit leader and a deputy, ensures a regular presence on priority routes and in sensitive areas of the Reserve.

This tight structure has made it possible to maintain an appropriate response capacity while optimising the use of available human resources.

Photo : © S.Ramsay/WCS

RESEARCH AND MONITORING



Gorilla surveying using a drone

A survey of western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*), conducted by the University of California, was carried out in the forests of Impongui using a drone equipped with a thermal camera. During nearly 400 km of flights over the dryland forest, 54 sites were located, totalling 211 nests. Field inspections confirmed that the majority were attributable to gorillas.

The estimated average density is 5.25 individuals per sq km, reaching 15 individuals/km<sup>2</sup> in the most concentrated areas. In contrast, in the swamp forest, only one nest was detected, probably due in part to the denser canopy, which limited the effectiveness of thermal detection.



• Survey of hippopotamuses

The second triennial survey confirms the presence of a **small, stable population of hippopotamuses** in the Bouanela Basin, while highlighting growing conflicts with local communities.

- Monitoring carried out over 178 km of the Likouala-aux-Herbes;
- 13 adult individuals recorded (as in 2022);
- No young observed;
- High concentration around Mougouma Moke.

• Sharing knowledge

Presentation of **findings on greenhouse gas fluxes and peatland ecosystems** in Epéna at the General Assembly of the European Geosciences Union, in partnership with the University of Tartu and Marien Ngouabi University.

Participation in the **31st Annual Conference of the International Society of Tropical Foresters** at Yale University.

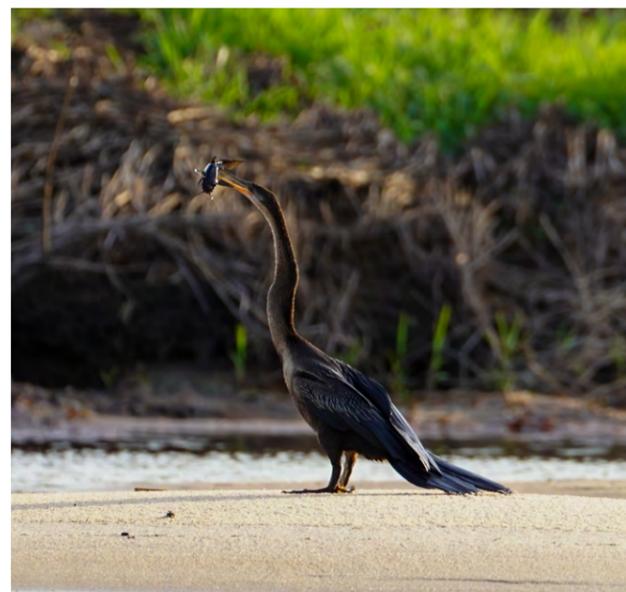
Presentation in Hanoi on the **integration of SMART and Earth Ranger tools** in the Ndoki-Likouala landscape.

• Survey of small primates and ungulates

The monitoring system put in place has made it possible to update knowledge on the abundance and distribution of small primates and ungulates:

- **74 transects covered**, representing 976 km (553 km in flooded forests and 423 km in dry forests);
- 122 camera traps installed throughout the study area;
- Confirmation of a **high diversity of primates**, including the red colobus, agile mangabey, grey-cheeked mangabey, putty-nosed monkey, moustached guenon, crowned guenon and swamp monkey;
- Observation of carnivores such as the honey badger and leopard;
- **Notable abundance of rodents**, particularly giant rats and atherures.

These preliminary results confirm the area's rich wildlife and reinforce the **need for regular monitoring to guide management decisions** and balance local use with sustainable conservation.



Annual waterbird survey

Monitoring of waterbirds in the Reserve in 2025 confirms the **overall stability of the population** while refining spatial analysis thanks to the new transect methodology.

- 138 transects sampled, covering 414 km of waterways;
- 5,499 individuals recorded;
- 49 species belonging to 17 families;
- **68.2% of the population consisting of 5 dominant species**;
- 75.5% of species sedentary, confirming the dominance of a resident population;
- Trend for 2024–2025: -1.5% in numbers, but +5 species.

Monitoring breeding colonies provides additional insight: 92 active nests spread across three sites, mostly attributed to *Anhinga rufa*. The **destruction of a nesting site in Botongo** and the vacancy of Likonda highlight the local vulnerability of certain sites.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

In 2025, the Research and Monitoring Service carried out several strategic activities to update data on the status and dynamics of biodiversity and habitats in the Reserve:

- Monitoring waterbird populations, key indicators of wetland health;
- Monitoring hippopotamuses, an emblematic species of aquatic ecosystems;
- Monitoring small primates and ungulates to assess trends in terrestrial populations;
- Analysing the impact of fires, with a particular focus on protecting gallery forests;
- Counting fishing camps along the Likouala-aux-Herbes River to measure human pressure;
- Hydrological and meteorological monitoring, including regular water level readings to build a reference database.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

5 499

water birds observed and counted, belonging to 17 families and 49 species.



122

camera traps set up across the study area for small primates and ungulates.



106

large active fishing camps identified along a stretch of about 327 km.



3

students, two Congolese and one American, supported in their academic work, from bachelor's degree to PhD.



Monitoring of hippopotamuses in the Bouanela basin reveals ongoing tensions with local communities, particularly in Mougouma Moke.

Damage to pirogues, fishing gear and crops directly impacts local livelihoods.

This situation highlights the urgent need to implement mitigation measures.

Photo: © Roger Mobondo/WCS



The census of fishing camps along the Likouala-aux-Herbes reveals sustained and structured human occupation along 327 km of river, with 106 active sites.

The predominant presence of oil palms confirms the long-standing nature of these activities and highlights the challenges of participatory management of fishery resources.

Photo: © C.Nzouzi/WCS



## Development of the 2026-2035 Research Strategy

The year 2025 was marked by the development of the ten-year research strategy of the RCLT (2026-2035). It is based on four strategic axes:

- Increasing knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystems through surveys and targeted ecological and socio-economic studies;
- Establishing an integrated ecological and socio-economic monitoring system to document changes and evaluate the impacts of human activities and natural dynamics;
- Strengthening local and institutional capacities by involving researchers, students, Reserve agents and local communities in research programs;

- Disseminating and promoting the results at different scales to ensure their appropriation by communities, their use by managers and their contribution to public policies and scientific debates.

Three complementary modalities are used to implement this strategy:

- The research led by the Research and Monitoring service, and the WCS network;
- Research partnerships with national and international institutions;
- Outsourced research on topics requiring specialized expertise.

A structured system of monitoring and evaluation will make it possible to measure the effectiveness and relevance of research, with periodic evaluations and a participatory and adaptive approach.



## Impact of fires and protection of gallery forests

In 2025, a monitoring of the condition of the gallery forests bordering the Likouala-aux-Herbes was carried out by the consulting firm FRM (Forest Resources Management), with the support of WCS. This spatial monitoring covering the period 2000–2024, has made it possible to establish an accurate diagnosis of the state of these critical ecosystems covering nearly 70,000 ha, or 16% of the surface of the RCLT. The analyses reveal a deforestation affecting 24 to 25% of riparian linear zones (more than 108 km cumulative on both banks) and a degradation affecting an additional 11 to 14%. In parallel, approximately 195 ha show encouraging signs of regeneration, constituting nuclei of resilience to be preserved.

The study also shows that nearly 90% of surfaces burned at least once between 2000 and 2024, with peak fires in February and March. No significant correlation has been established between the presence of fishing camps and fires, suggesting a dynamic mainly related to the natural vulnerability of riparian savannas.

These results provide a solid scientific basis to guide the priorities: protection of sensitive sectors, strengthening dry season monitoring, preservation of regenerating areas and planning of restoration actions in consultation with communities, in order to sustainably consolidate the ecosystem services of the Likouala-aux-Herbes corridor.

Credit: © T.Nicolon/WCS

# GOVERNANCE

The dialogue platform between the RCLT and the notability of Epéna, operational since January 2024, continued its role as a permanent framework for consultation in 2025. Composed of three notables (President, Secretary, Communication Officer) and key representatives of the Reserve (Warden, CTP and two agents from the Community Conservation service), it aims to ensure regular information, gather recommendations and debate community issues.

### In 2025:

- 3 meetings were held;
- Several themes related to the management of the Reserve and the life of communities were discussed;
- The collaboration framework was maintained despite availability constraints.

## • Workshop with the Reserve Coordination and the Local Management Committee

The Local Management Committee (CLG) of the RCLT, created in 2015 and formalized in 2020, represents the 27 villages of the Reserve. To consolidate its role as a permanent framework for consultation between the communities and the Coordination, a two-day workshop was held on December 6 and 7, 2025 in Bouanéla, at the initiative of the CLG Executive Office, with the technical and financial support of the WCS.

This workshop aimed to take stock of the implementation of previous recommendations, analyze the difficulties encountered in the execution of activities and define clear priorities to improve the functioning of the CLG and the Natural Resources Management Committees (CGRN). The objective was to strengthen their role as a permanent dialogue platform and operational tool serving local governance.



More than 150 participants took part in the exchanges, representing all 27 villages, alongside local authorities and decentralized state services. The quality of the discussions and the relevance of the proposals formulated confirmed the strong community mobilization and the central role of the CLG in participatory governance and concerted management of the Reserve.

## • Development and validation of the Reserve Management Plan

The year 2025 marks a decisive step forward in the process of adopting the Development Plan (PA) for the Lac Télé Community Reserve. After several unfinished attempts since the first versions developed with the support of IUCN (1996–1999) and then of WCS from 2001, the process finally resulted in an official validation at the departmental level.

Following the consultancy mission entrusted to the BRLi firm in 2024, a first version of the PA was produced and submitted for public consultations in the 27 villages. The contributions of the communities, particularly on the aspects related to community conservation and the Integral Protection Area, have made it possible to enrich and refine the document.

The revised version, finalized in 2025, was validated on December 12, 2025 in Impfondo by the competent authorities. This step paves the way for the submission of the document at national level in 2026. The valida-

tion of the PA constitutes a structuring step for the governance, strategic planning and sustainable management of the Reserve, by providing the RCLT with a formal and shared reference framework.



## • Simple Management Plans Update

The updating of the Simple Management Plans (PSG) marked a structuring advance for community governance of the Reserve. The 27 riverside villages, already equipped with PSG developed more than twenty years ago, have benefited from a comprehensive review process to integrate recent socio-economic, institutional and environmental developments.

After a consultancy mission launched in September 2024, public consultations were conducted in all the villages between November 2024 and January 2025, allowing to gather the opinions of the communities and to formalize the exchanges through minutes. The final consolidated versions were produced in 2025, incorporating adjustments related to zoning, customary rules and sustainable natural resource management modalities.

The decisive step was taken in October 2025 with the official approval of the 27 PSG by the administrative and customary authorities. This valida-

tion confirms the communities' adherence to the updated management framework and strengthens the legitimacy of local natural resource governance mechanisms within the Reserve.



SUPPORT SERVICES



• **Infrastructures and headquarters security**

All the bases of the Reserve, notably in Épéna, have benefited from **significant infrastructure works**. These investments were aimed at strengthening safety, improving working conditions and optimizing the logistics organization.

- Renovation of the quarantine zone for seized live animals;
- Construction of a 502 m fence wall around the headquarters;
- Installation of two new secure portals;
- Preventive pruning around buildings;
- Tiling of all the buildings;
- Refurbishment of the food store and separation of the logistics office;
- Acquisition and installation of two fuel tanks:
  - 12 m<sup>3</sup> (diesel) in Impfondo ;
  - 4 m<sup>3</sup> (petrol) in Épéna ;
- Construction of a tank protection hangar;
- Installation of fire extinguishers in all bases;
- Reinforcement of security at the Impfondo office (installation of barbed wire);
- Improvements at the base of Mboua: garage hangar, shower, cleaning and reinforcement of the fence.

• **Transportation and equipment**

New assets have been acquired to support field missions, secure energy supply and improve team mobility:

- 1 generator 44 kVA;
- 1 generator 3 kVA;
- 1 outboard motor 40 Hp.

• **A new office in Impfondo**

At the beginning of January 2025, the WCS office in Impfondo moved to a **new premises, more functional and in better condition** than the previous one. On this occasion, a fuel tank financed by our partner ECF was installed in the yard to avoid supply shortages. The Impfondo office ensures **proximity to the decentralized services of the State** and plays a logistical relay role.

- SMART and EarthRanger Training
- One Health
- Review and validation of the “participatory diagnostic and cartographic inventory of the forest landscape of Lac Télé”
- Management of a control room and development of security protocols
- Leadership (Elevate)
- Electricity and technical maintenance
- Harmonisation of financial procedures
- HF and VHF radio training for emergency management
- Operational intervention, handling animal carcasses, First aid, Respect for human rights and first aid
- Passive acoustic monitoring

These training courses benefited 38 cumulative participations of RCLT agents during the year 2025 (some people having taken part in several sessions).

**Workshops, Trainings and Capacity building**

A total of 18 sessions were organized in 2025 at the local, national and international levels (Ouesso, Impfondo, Épéna, Bomassa, Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Kigali).

The themes addressed included:

- Country meeting + leadership training
- Peatland management, wildlife trafficking and transboundary cooperation in the Congo Basin
- Sasso poultry farming line
- Sustainable peatland management and local and indigenous community livelihoods
- Implementation of judicial proceedings
- Capacity building for anti-poaching efforts
- Fiscal evaluation year 2025

SUPPORT SERVICES

As of December 31, 2025, the Lac Télé Community Reserve had a total workforce of 53 agents, combining state staff and contractual personnel, reflecting an operational arrangement mainly supported by the partnership with WCS Congo.

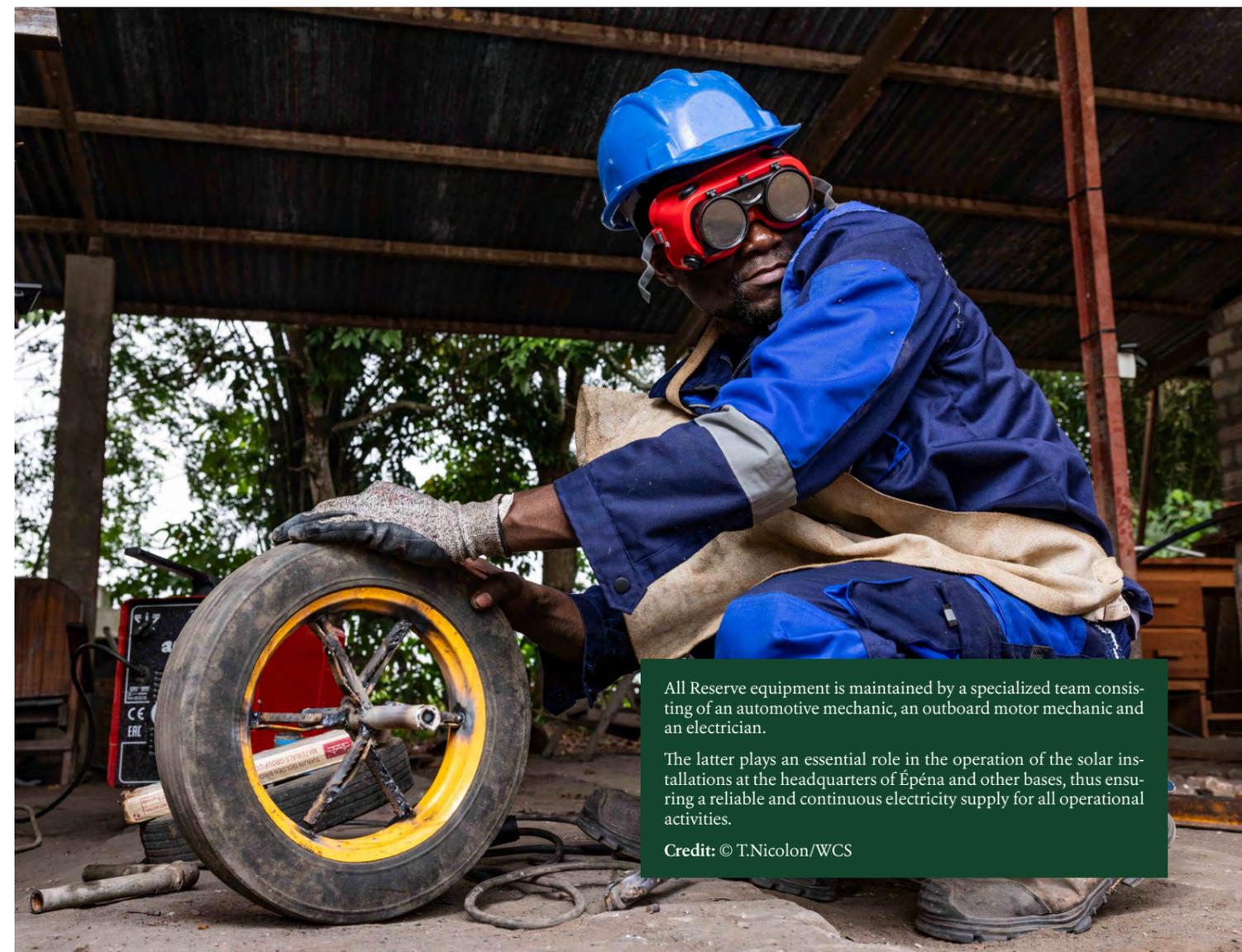
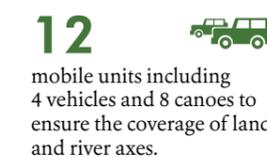
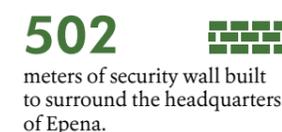
The logistics service is the most important pole with 25 agents, nearly half of the total workforce.

Distribution of staff:

- 3 agents assigned by the MEF;
- 50 contract agents recruited by WCS Congo.

This configuration highlights the strategic weight of operational support functions in the daily operation and security of the Reserve's activities.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES



All Reserve equipment is maintained by a specialized team consisting of an automotive mechanic, an outboard motor mechanic and an electrician.

The latter plays an essential role in the operation of the solar installations at the headquarters of Épéna and other bases, thus ensuring a reliable and continuous electricity supply for all operational activities.

Credit: © T.Nicolon/WCS

## MEDIA

### • THE LAC TÉLÉ COMMUNITY RESERVE: IN THE HEART OF THE FLOODED FORESTS OF CONGO

In the Lac Télé Community Reserve, research has highlighted a unique ecosystem, marked by the alternation of floods and savannah fires, hosting exceptional biodiversity, including one of the highest densities of gorillas in Central Africa. They also revealed the presence of immense tropical peatland storing more than 30 gigatons of carbon, giving the Congo Basin a key role in regulating global climate.

The Réserve is finally distinguished by an innovative model of community governance combining conservation, sustainable resource management and local development.

Published in *Le Courrier de la Nature* (n°344, February 2025). [Read](#)



### • THE ENIGMAS OF LAC TÉLÉ: BETWEEN MYTHS AND SCIENCE

The mysterious Lac Télé, isolated in the heart of the marshy forests of the Lac Télé Community Reserve, has been intriguing for decades and was long considered a possible meteorite crater.

A mission carried out in 2024 have identified many species of reptiles, amphibians and fish, some of which are potentially new to science, while environmental DNA analyses confirm a biodiversity that is still largely unknown. Beyond its scientific interest, the lake constitutes a major ecological and economic stake for local communities, notably through fishing and dwarf crocodile monitoring.

Published in *Espèces* (n°55, March-May 2025). [Read](#)



### • LAC TÉLÉ : EXPEDITION TO THE HEART OF A SCIENTIFIC MYSTERY

Lake Télé fascinates with its isolation and perfect circular shape. Located in the heart of the Lac Télé Community Reserve, this 23 sq km lake, long considered a possible meteorite crater, is rather tectonic according to recent research.

A scientific expedition conducted with the support of the WCS has made it possible to survey reptiles, amphibians and fish in this area still little studied. The results are remarkable: 35 species of reptiles identified, including several potentially new to science, as well as many fish species identified through genetic analyses and environmental DNA.

Published in *Terre Sauvage* (n°442). [Read](#)



## PUBLICATION

### THE PRIMATE COMMUNITY OF THE LAC TÉLÉ COMMUNITY RESERVE, REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Through more than 6,000 days of recording by 83 camera traps installed in nine flood-prone clearings, scientists were able to identify eight primate species, including the western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*), the chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes troglodytes*) and the swamp monkey (*Allenopithecus nigroviridis*), an emblematic species of the flooded forests of the Congo Basin.

Among the most striking observations, it is noted that gorillas appear almost exclusively during the second half of the year, when the clearings are invaded by water. Conversely, agile mangabeys (*Cercocebus agilis*) and swamp monkeys are much more present at the beginning of the year, during drier periods. These seasonal variations in appearance show how much behaviors are related to local environmental conditions.



The research team also highlights that human pressure can disrupt this wildlife: “We found a significant positive correlation between the frequency of primate visits and the distance between clearings and villages”.

More than 5,000 photos revealed human presence in the clearings, often near villages. It is precisely in the clearings furthest from dwellings that primates are most active.

[Read](#)

The data collected on great apes, small primates, ungulates and waterfowl indicate overall stability of populations. Studies on mammals and avifauna have also provided a better understanding of recent drivers of variation, including the effects of climate change and habitat disturbance.

Credit: © C.Nzouzi/WCS



## THANKS

In 2025, the RCLT consolidated and strengthened its actions in conservation and sustainable development. Relations with local communities have improved, facilitating patrols and the anti-poaching efforts, while community projects have increased adherence to conservation objectives. The ecological monitoring confirmed an overall stability of wildlife populations and enriched the understanding of ecosystems.

In 2026, the focus will be on consolidating achievements and ensuring the sustainability of actions, with the essential support of financial partners.

The RCLT expresses its deep gratitude to all of its partners and to all those contributing to the pursuit of conservation and community development missions for the benefit of local populations and future generations, and in particular to its funders for their constant support and whose support remains essential:

Ballmer Group

Bezos Earth Fund

Elephant Crisis Fund

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

L'initiative Germanique pour le Climat (IKI)

Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)

United Nations Environment Programme (PNUE)

