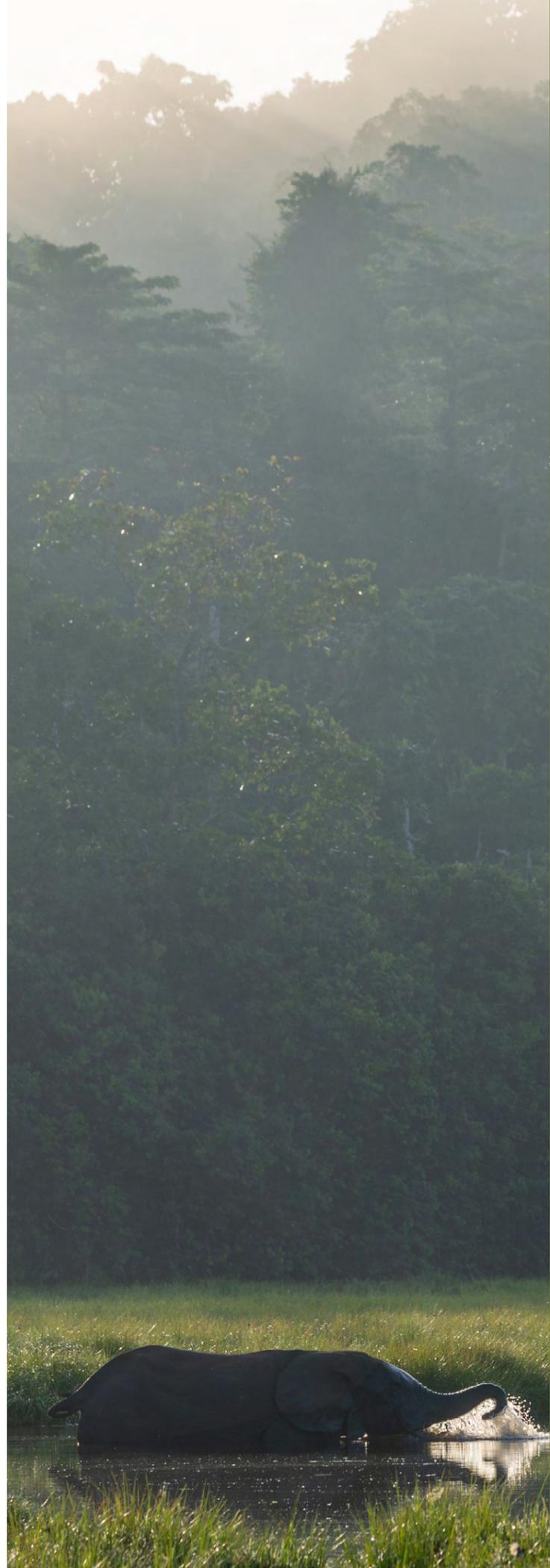


NOUABALÉ-NDOKI NATIONAL PARK 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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ABOUT THE PARK

Created in 1993, Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park is one of the most intact tropical forests in the Congo Basin, home to a crucial population of large, iconic and endangered mammals such as western lowland gorillas, chimpanzees and forest elephants. Located more than 900 km north of Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo, the Park is a high-integrity, wild, isolated forest covering more than 4,000 square kilometres.

Nouabalé-Ndoki is home to precious biodiversity, numerous rare botanical species, ancient Sapelli trees, and some of the world's most trafficked species, such as pangolins and African grey parrots. In 2017, it was estimated that more than 10,000 elephants and 30,000 great apes lived in and around the Park.

The park borders Lobéké National Park in Cameroon and the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas in the Central African Republic, forming the Sangha Tri-National (TNS), a 25,000-square-kilometre UNESCO World Heritage Site dedicated to wildlife conservation, home to no fewer than 116 species of mammals and 429 species of birds

The inhabitants of the areas surrounding the Park are the main beneficiaries of the positive effects of conservation, in terms of access to education, healthcare and stable employment. A significant number of people from the neighbouring villages of Bomassa and Makao work for the Park as guides, trackers, research assistants, eco-guards, drivers, accountants, etc.

These communities played a key role in the research and mapping work that led to the creation of the Park in 1993. This involvement in conservation from day one has been passed down from generation to generation, as has the exceptional knowledge of this ecosystem that Indigenous Peoples pass on from father to son.

This unique expertise has enabled the Park to create permanent research sites in the heart of the forest. At the Mondika, Mbeli Baï and Goulougo research sites, scientific data on the ecology and behaviour of different species has been collected continuously for over 20 years.

These long-term research sites have enabled the training of dozens of researchers from Congo and around the world and have led to major advances in our understanding of these ecosystems.

The habituation to human presence of four groups of western lowland gorillas and a community of chimpanzees allows for direct observation of these primates, many aspects of whose behaviour remain to be discovered and understood.

The Park's long-term commitment to the communities, for the benefit of wildlife and science, guarantees a sustainable future for this unique place and its inhabitants, in order to protect and promote one of the last wild places in the world.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION



• Improving food security for communities

Following the success of **community fields protected by solar-powered electric fences** in Bomassa, the approach was extended in 2025 to the village of Kabo. The communities now have 20 hectares of **secure agricultural land** on which to grow essential crops such as cassava and bananas. This initiative is a response to recurring conflicts with elephants, whose large numbers had severely limited food production and threatened **local food security**.

• Strengthening health services

The services provided by the Bomassa and Makao health centres have been expanded to **systematically include vaccinations for newborns and pregnant women**. The results achieved at the Bomassa CSI have boosted public confidence to such an extent that residents of Kabo now travel there to be vaccinated. In Makao, health workers also carry out vaccination missions in Bangui Motaba, **ensuring extensive and equitable health coverage**.

• Advancing education and academic success

The Park continues to support primary schools in Bomassa and Makao, as well as the secondary school in Makao. The schools have received **donations of teaching and office supplies**, including notebooks, books and essentials, while teachers' salaries and allowances have been paid regularly. The Park also facilitated the travel of 17 pupils sitting the **Primary School Certificate** exam, including 11 girls, all of whom passed and obtained their CEPE.



Supporting village micro-projects and the local economy

Several community micro-projects have been supported through the **provision of materials and equipment**, including sewing machines and fofou milling machines. These investments aim to **stimulate a local economy** based on conservation, encouraging sustainable production and consumption models around the Park, while **developing local skills, services and sustainable income**.



Awareness days dedicated to biodiversity and emblematic species

The international awareness days dedicated to pangolins, forests, biodiversity and great apes, organised throughout 2025 between Bomassa and Makao, attracted a **large audience**, including boys and girls, Bantu and indigenous people. International Biodiversity Day saw the **highest turnout** with 474 participants. World Pangolin Day brought together nearly 200 participants.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

In 2025, the CoCo team strengthened its approach to community engagement by giving it a more structured framework, through collective working sessions that clarified priorities, particularly in terms of local governance, and consolidated links with communities and authorities.

This dynamic supported the advancement of interconnected projects in key areas such as community tourism, the Village Development Fund, training, income-generating activities, agriculture, livestock farming, education and health, while enabling lessons to be learned in the field to gradually improve and harmonise intervention practices.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

3084



free consultations at the Bomassa and Makao health centres.

494



pupils enrolled in primary schools in Bomassa and Makao, including 84 indigenous girls and 77 indigenous boys.

966



vaccines administered: 100% of newborns in Bomassa and Makao have received their vaccines.

20



hectares of fields protected in Kabo by electric fences to reduce human-elephant conflict and enhance food security.

96%



success rate in end-of-year exams at the Makao school, 79% at the Bomassa school.

400+



citizenship applications and birth certificate requests submitted for local communities and Indigenous Peoples (Ba'aka) of Sangha and Likouala.

16



scholarships awarded to high school and university students from Bomassa and Makao.



The health centres in Bomassa and Makao operated regularly, mainly treating cases of malaria, flu-like syndromes and skin diseases. The Park regularly supported community awareness campaigns on childhood vaccination and family planning, thereby strengthening prevention and access to health information.

Credit: © Ediane Mboussa/WCS

ANTI-POACHING EFFORTS



Enhanced technological monitoring tools

The use of EarthRanger has been enhanced through the integration of SMART data collected by patrols. All field information and **real-time updates** are now accessible from the control room on a single platform. This centralisation provides teams with a more comprehensive view of operations, improves **route optimisation** and enhances the ability to respond to threats, in preparation for a future fully integrated conservation system.

Fires in the Ndoki wetland

In early March 2025, **several fires were detected** east of the Ndoki River, between Ndoki 1 and Ndoki 2, in a **context of exceptional drought** making the wetland highly vulnerable. A rapid response unit based in Bomassa was deployed with air support to contain the fires. The teams carried out **community prevention actions**, identified multiple outbreaks suggesting arson, and coordinated the response with the CIB to secure sensitive infrastructure.

Capacity building for women ecoguards

On International Women’s Day, ecoguards representing three Congolese national parks (Odzala-Kokoua, Conkouati-Douli and Nouabalé-Ndoki) gathered in Oyo for a **three-day workshop**. The meeting provided an opportunity to strengthen their skills in using EarthRanger and other conservation technologies, while promoting the **sharing of experiences and best practices** in law enforcement and wildlife protection.



Anti-poaching intelligence and coordination

Counter-Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) teams **monitored 12 active poaching networks** in the Ndoki-Likouala landscape, including Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, Lac Télé Community Reserve and the Peripheral Ecosystem Management Project, as well as several major cities in the country, with **27 alerts sent to LAB services**. Operational coordination was strengthened through strategic meetings, joint briefings and a training workshop attended by 17 agents. After a temporary suspension of funding, activities resumed in March.

Upgrading the communication and tracking system

A consultant maintained and updated CODAN base stations and antennas in the control rooms at Bomassa, Kabo, Makao and Epena/ Lac Télé, as well as at three research sites in the park. **Radios were standardised and connected** to the control rooms, enabling real-time tracking. Five vehicles were also equipped with CODAN GPS, strengthening operational coordination.



ANTI-POACHING EFFORTS

Poaching, mainly of elephants, remained low within the park, with only one carcass recorded, despite the reduction in resources and ecoguards. However, increased hunting activity on the periphery points to growing levels of pressure.

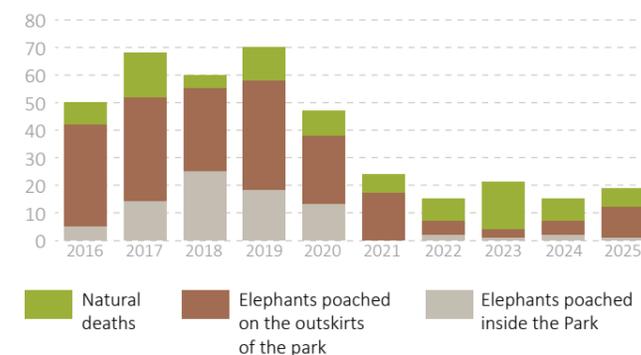
In light of this situation, a review of the intervention strategy has been initiated, favouring a targeted approach combining deterrence, surveillance and appropriate interventions, while emphasising the urgent need to increase staffing levels.

Twenty elephant carcasses were discovered during patrols in and around the park:

- 12 carcasses were victims of poaching, including one in the park
- 8 died of undetermined natural causes.

One case of poaching was confirmed inside the Park, highlighting the persistence of the threat.

At the same time, the Elephant Listening Project (ELP) acoustic units recorded a significant increase in gunshots in the south of the Park and on its outskirts, confirming increased pressure and the need for continued heightened surveillance.



THE YEAR IN FIGURES

35%

of the Park’s surface area and 20% of the periphery covered by patrols.



118

illegal hunting and fishing camps destroyed by ecoguards.



55

hunting weapons and ammunition seized by ecoguards.



06

ivory tusks weighing a total of 21.57 kg were collected from the dead elephants.



3720 KG

of bushmeat seized from illegal hunting, a decrease from 2024 but a sign of persistent pressure.



195

patrols carried out over 43,323 km, representing a surveillance effort of 9,255 man-days.



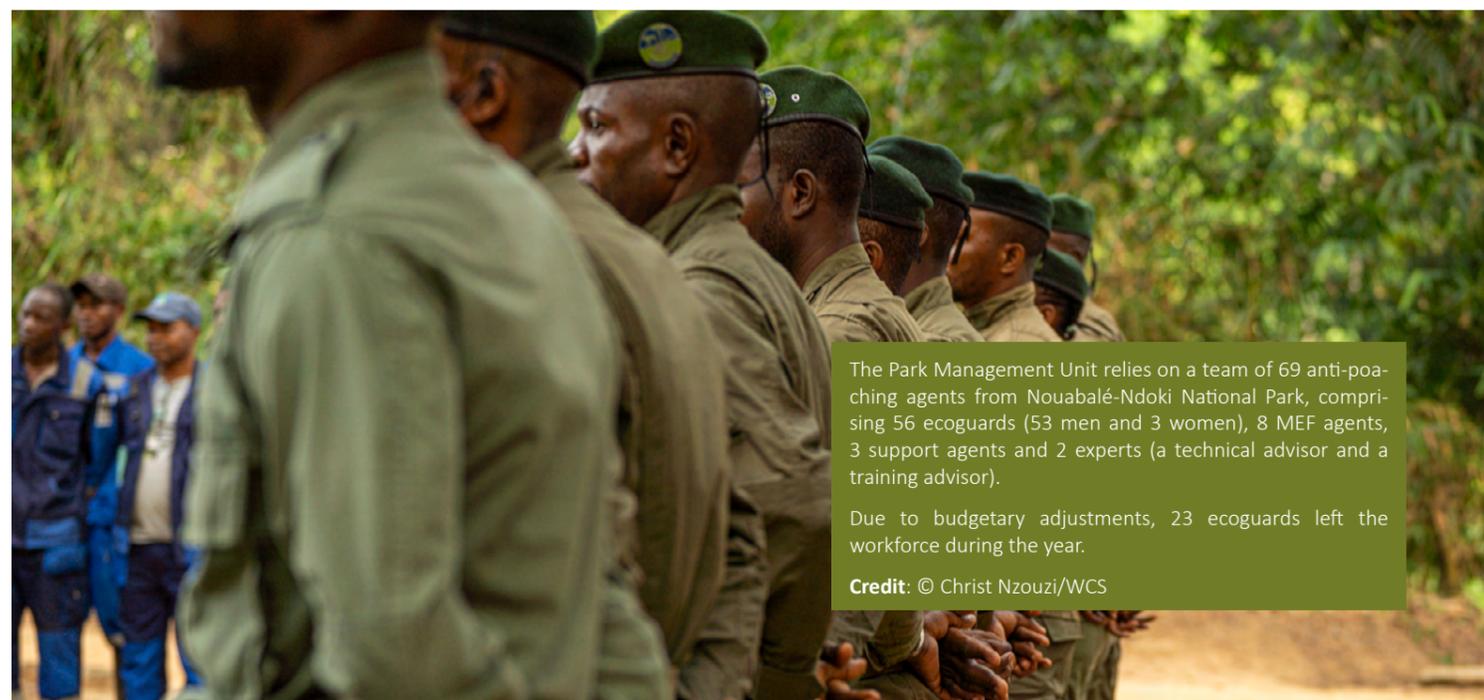
120

individuals apprehended, including 25 arrested for serious offences and brought before the courts.



4 107

metal cables seized by ecoguards, including 389 found inside the Park.



The Park Management Unit relies on a team of 69 anti-poaching agents from Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, comprising 56 ecoguards (53 men and 3 women), 8 MEF agents, 3 support agents and 2 experts (a technical advisor and a training advisor).

Due to budgetary adjustments, 23 ecoguards left the workforce during the year.

Credit: © Christ Nzouzi/WCS

RESEARCH & BIOMONITORING



The **death of silverback Buka**, attributed to old age after negative health tests, led to the disintegration of his group.

Two gorilla groups are now being monitored in Mondika: the fully habituated Métété group and a group currently undergoing habituation. Gorilla monitoring totalled **2,280 hours of observation**, an average of approximately 190 hours per month. **747 behavioural observations** and **225 health observations** were recorded.

The team also participated in technical and health training sessions, as well as capacity-building programmes.



Baseline studies on visitor numbers at Mbeli Bai continued uninterrupted, with an average of 30 days of data collection per month, totalling **3,353 hours of observation**.

The stability of the team, despite the reduction in staff numbers, has enabled the **resumption of scientific exchanges with Dzanga Bai** in order to strengthen the monitoring of elephant populations. Targeted training, support in first aid and biomonitoring, and international scientific collaborations have also strengthened the capacities of the site.



PERMANENT RESEARCH SITES IN NOUABALÉ-NDOKI NATIONAL PARK



The chimpanzees of Goulougo were monitored for an average of 23 days per month and the gorillas of the Loya group for 19 days per month, totalling **3,296 hours of observation**.

The teams collected thousands of **behavioural, health and biological data points**, as well as 474 samples. Phenological monitoring continued in parallel. **Eleven training sessions** reinforced the technical, scientific and operational skills of the research teams.

Wildlife Health Program (WHP)

- 19 people were trained in the use of the Biomeme portable PCR thermocycler, which **speeds up Ebola screening** on animal carcasses.
- Teams carried out more than 3,700 **health scans** on gorillas and chimpanzees and collected 516 **biological samples** for parasite and pathogen analysis.
- The first joint tri-national **'One Health' awareness mission** in the TNS landscape was carried out as part of enhanced coordination around **seven priority diseases** (Ebola, mpox, anthrax, cholera, yaws, yellow fever and COVID-19).
- **Eleven African grey parrots** were cared for at the **Bomassa rehabilitation centre**, with a survival rate of 73% and 64% successfully released. A subadult fish eagle was also released. However, the deterioration of the infrastructure highlights the need for a **complete renovation** of the centre, scheduled for 2026.

Elephant Listening Project (ELP)

Covering an area of 1,250 sq km, the ELP project passively monitored elephants and illegal hunting using 52 acoustic units deployed in the forest.

- **9 automatic weapon shots detected;**
- 803.5 km covered in six months;
- 88 acoustic units visited and checked.

Most of the shots were recorded during periods of reduced patrols, confirming the **critical role of continuous surveillance** in deterring poaching and protecting elephants.

In December, the team relaunched its **regional training workshop** on passive acoustic surveillance, strengthening the capacities of researchers from three Central African countries.

RESEARCH & BIOMONITORING

Data collection continued efficiently at the Park's three research sites, with regular monitoring of all gorilla and chimpanzee groups. The support of the ELP team ensured uninterrupted demographic monitoring at Mbeli Bai.

This momentum led to the publication of seven scientific articles, illustrating the productivity and adaptability of the teams and the strength of collaborations with international institutes and universities, despite the reduction in staff numbers at the sites.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

7404

visits to Mbeli Bai recorded, including 2,946 elephants, 988 gorillas, 1,063 sitatungas and 2,407 buffaloes.



31

new births observed within the groups monitored at Mbeli Bai, including 4 elephants, 16 gorillas, 6 sitatungas and 5 buffaloes.



47

the estimated age of silverback Buka, who died in 2025 in Mondika, of natural causes.



12

carcasses of different species tested for Ebola, anthrax and Mpox, with all results negative.



08

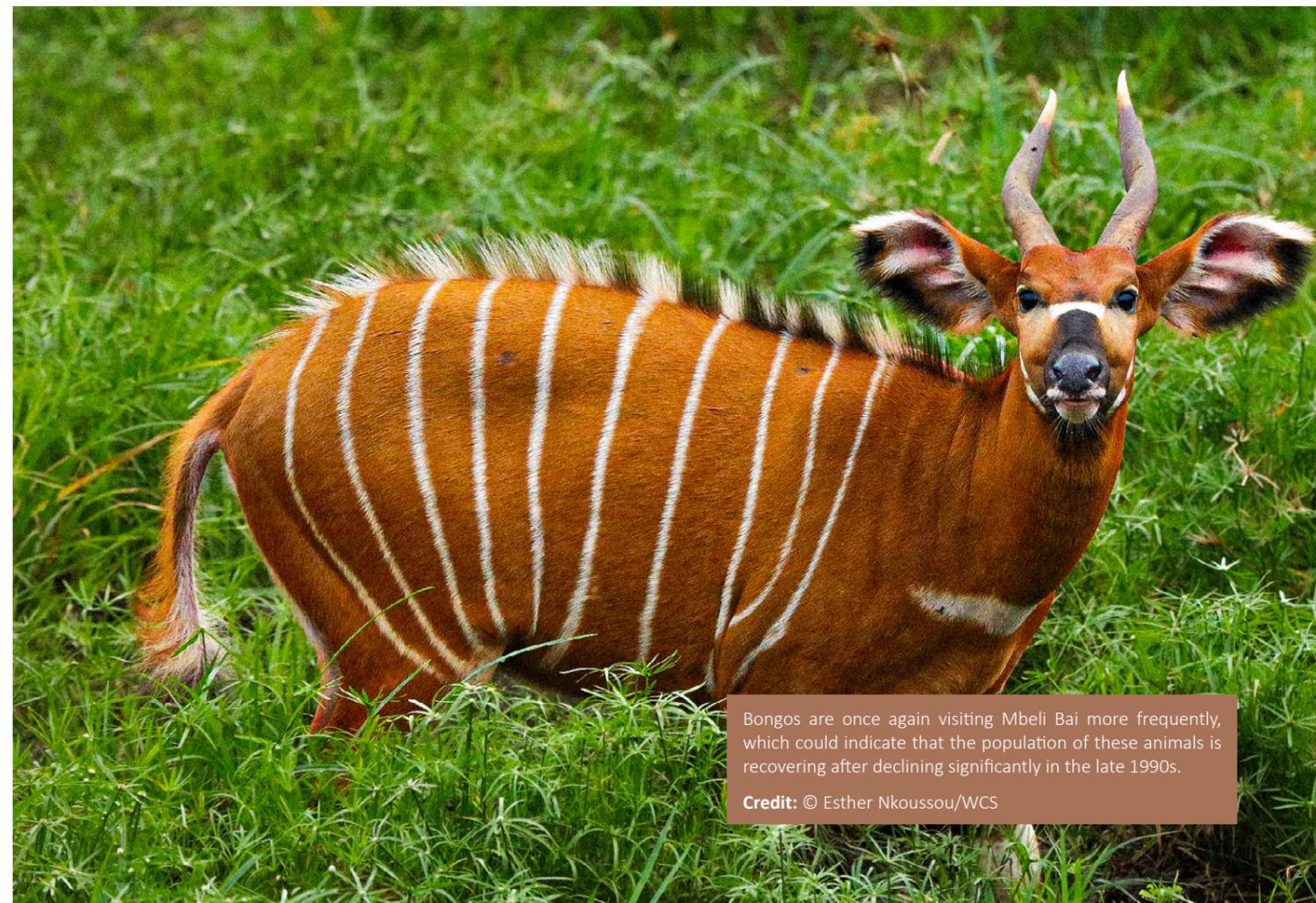


scientific collaborations with research institutes and universities continued, enhancing the quality and diversity of work in the Park, including One Health research with the Helmholtz Institute (HIOH), monitoring of botanical plots with Dr David Harris, partnerships with Cornell University as part of the Elephant Listening Project (ELP) and with Lincoln Park Zoo at the Goulougo and Mondika sites.

11



individuals identified so far in the group of gorillas undergoing habituation in Mondika, including one silverback, four blackbacks, two females, two juveniles and two infants.



Bongos are once again visiting Mbeli Bai more frequently, which could indicate that the population of these animals is recovering after declining significantly in the late 1990s.

Credit: © Esther Nkoussou/WCS



Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park covers a tropical forest of high ecological integrity, making it an essential site for biodiversity conservation and climate regulation.

Credit: © Thomas Nicolon/WCS



Silverback Buka died in February 2025 at an estimated age of 47. A full necropsy was performed, with samples tested for three major diseases (Ebola, anthrax and Mpox), all of which were negative.

No internal trauma was observed and, given his advanced age and significant weight loss, the probable cause of death is related to ageing.

Credit: © Scott Ramsay/WCS

THIS YEAR'S PUBLICATIONS



SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHIMPANZEES AND GORILLAS

For more than 20 years, researchers have observed chimpanzees and gorillas in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. The study reveals that these two species do not just encounter each other by chance: they develop repeated and peaceful social interactions, such as play, co-feeding and spatial tolerance. These lasting interspecific relationships challenge the idea of strictly separate social lives and highlight the complexity of forest ecosystems.

[Read](#)



SOCIALITY AMONG WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLAS

A study conducted on four groups of western lowland gorillas in the Ndoki landscape shows that these animals form numerous non-aggressive social relationships within and between groups, with very few conflictual interactions observed. Youngsters and males are generally more social, and friendly behaviours (play, proximity) predominate. These findings enrich our understanding of the social behaviour of this endangered species.

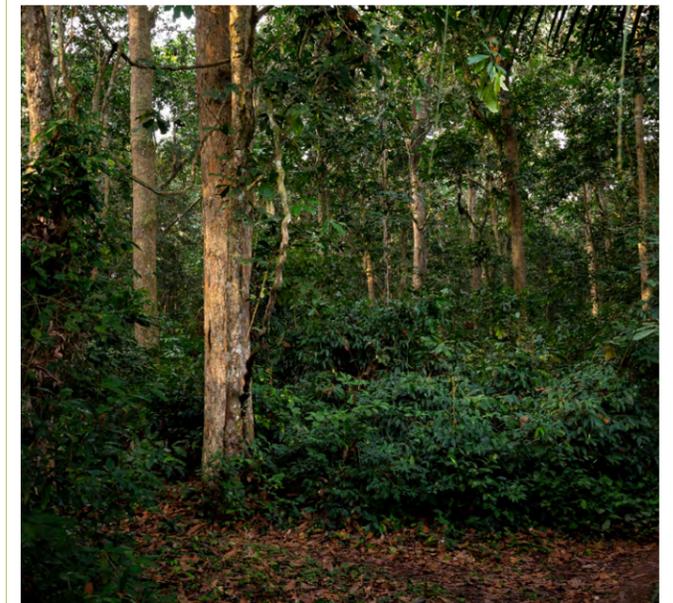
[Read](#)



FOREST ELEPHANTS: BEHAVIOUR IN THE FACE OF DANGER

African forest elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) adjust their behaviour when exposed to danger signals linked to human activities, such as gunshots. Around Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, their presence temporarily decreases after these disturbances, while nocturnal vocal activity increases. These responses suggest a capacity for behavioural adaptation, with potential consequences for the species' use of space and ecological role.

[Read](#)



MAPPING THE MONODOMINANT FOREST OF *GILBERTIODENDRON DEWEVREI*

A study using satellite imagery and field data mapped the monodominant forest of *Gilbertiodendron dewevrei* across the Sangha Tri-national Park (Congo, Cameroon, CAR). Using a random forest algorithm trained on more than 1,300 reference points, the authors distinguished this forest type from the surrounding mixed forests with good accuracy. This work spatialises the extent of this key forest for conservation in Central Africa.

[Read](#)

SUPPORT SERVICES



• **Logistics and mobility**

1,329 missions were carried out in 2025, including 1,224 by road and 105 by river, **ensuring the continuity of the Park's operations** within a constrained budgetary context.

With a 25% reduction in the volume of missions compared to 2024, priorities were **refocused on essential field activities**, enabling strategic patrols to be maintained.

71,800 litres of fuel (diesel and petrol) were mobilised, despite recurring national shortages.

- 76 maintenance operations were carried out;
- 2 old vehicles were completely refurbished;
- 2 new cars were added to the Park's fleet.

The strategic routes to Djeke and Ndoki were regularly cleared, ensuring permanent accessibility to key sites and continuity of operations.

• **Infrastructure and energy transition**

More than 80% of the park's infrastructure remained fully functional, ensuring a stable working environment for the teams.

- major renovations in Bomassa and Makao;
- modernisation of the Goulougo facilities;
- reinforcement of the Bomassa solar system with an additional 6 KVa station (30 panels, 32 batteries).

100% of the buildings at the Bomassa base are now powered by a solar installation, with a battery system ensuring continuity of service in the event of a generator failure.

• **Purchasing, stocks and equipment**

515 orders processed and 171 food deliveries **ensured continuity of operations** in the field.

The training of 13 agents and the **introduction of a digital tracking tool** improved traceability, secured stocks and strengthened logistical responsiveness across all bases in the Park.



Financial administration and governance

Twelve financial reports were produced and sent to donors, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the year.

In light of banking difficulties, the MTN payment system, already in operation, was fully mobilised to secure payments and maintain team stability.

Two meetings of the Nouabalé-Ndoki Foundation Board of Directors were held in 2025:

- 21st Session (25 February 2025, Ouesso): presentation of the provisional PTAB for 2025;
- 22nd Session (26 September 2025, Ouesso): approval of the revised budget for 2025 and presentation of the provisional PTAB for 2026.

SUPPORT SERVICES

In 2025, the administration and logistics departments ensured the continuity of field activities, rigorous management of financial resources, maintenance of infrastructure and support for staff.

More than 1,300 missions, 500 logistics orders, 12 financial reports and an infrastructure functionality rate of over 80% illustrate this commitment.

Investments in solar energy, internal training, and staff health strengthened the Park's operational resilience.

This administrative and logistical foundation made it possible to secure technical results and conservation impacts throughout the year.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

65



training and capacity-building sessions organised, totalling 7,967 person-hours.

49



agents, including 34 trackers, trained in first aid, enhancing human safety.

76



technical inspections and maintenance operations carried out on the entire fleet of vehicles in the Park.

90%



of the Park's staff underwent their annual medical examination.



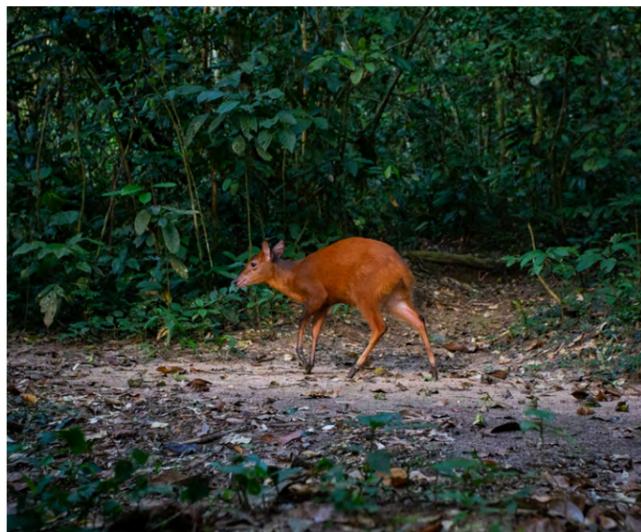
The Park Management Unit mobilised a workforce of more than 175 agents, spread across the Bomassa and Makao bases and the field sites. Essential functions were maintained thanks to optimised human resources management.
Credit: © Scott Ramsay/WCS

MEDIA

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE CONGO'S TROPICAL FOREST

Published by **The Guardian**, this photo gallery, created by Will Burrard-Lucas in collaboration with the WCS, reveals the elusive wildlife of Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. Thanks to high-definition camera traps installed throughout the park for over a year, rarely seen species are brought to light: leopards, African golden cats, pangolins, forest buffalo, duikers and mongooses. These striking images offer an intimate glimpse into the hidden biodiversity of the tropical forest and illustrate the essential role of research and conservation in protecting these ecosystems, which are among the richest and most threatened in the world.

[Read](#)



BBC Wildlife Magazine also devoted eight pages to Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park through the work of Will Burrard-Lucas. The report highlights the scientific and ecological importance of the Park, as well as the key role of WCS and BaAka trackers in protecting this high-integrity forest in the Congo Basin.

[Read](#)



NOUABALÉ-NDOKI TOLD TO YOUNG AUDIENCES

The Park has benefited from a series of reports by journalist Bruno Quattrone published in newspapers aimed at young French readers, including *Le Petit Quotidien* and *Mon Quotidien*.

The articles highlight the exceptional richness of its biodiversity, the major ecological role of the forest elephant, ongoing efforts to combat poaching, and innovative solutions for coexistence between communities and wildlife, including the installation of electric fences adapted to Bomassa. The Elephant Listening Project (ELP), which uses a network of acoustic sensors to study and protect elephants, is also presented as an example of innovative research conducted to contribute to the preservation of the Park's forest and its biodiversity.

[Read](#)



GORILLAS SCRATCH THE GROUND IN SEARCH OF TRUFFLES, NOT INSECTS, AS LONG ASSUMED.

Gorillas scratch the ground not to find insects, but to find a deer truffle (*Elaphomyces labyrinthinus*), revealing a previously unknown feeding behaviour.

This discovery was documented by Gaston Abea, the first indigenous researcher from Ndoki to become the lead author of a scientific article, based on more than ten years of observations. The behaviour could have social implications depending on the group.

[Read](#)



LISTENING TO ELEPHANTS

Écologie 360 magazine featured a report on the ELP programme carried out in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. Launched in 2017, this innovative system uses around 50 acoustic sensors deployed across 1,250 sq km to track the movements of forest elephants and detect any gunshots, helping to adapt anti-poaching strategies.

[Read](#)

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The Park's tourism sector has been severely affected by funding cuts, leading to the suspension of training, capacity-building activities and two major infrastructure projects (Ngolio camp and Mbeli Bai observation platform). An information meeting was organised with local communities to explain the reasons for this suspension.

In this difficult financial context, the tourism team has embarked on a strategic reorientation, favouring an approach that is less dependent on large investments and more focused on community involvement.

The Village Development Fund has been identified as a key lever for supporting local development, with several meetings organised in Bomassa and Makao and numerous proposals for income-generating micro-projects submitted.

At the same time, efforts have continued to mobilise new funding, in particular through the submission of proposals to donors for future infrastructure and tourism development projects.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

134

tourists visited Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park and its surroundings.



243

TNS tourist badges issued to tourists to enable them to travel without a visa within the tri-national area.



Cultural promotion and community partnerships

The Park supported the Lih Ngolio cultural association during its participation in the 4th edition of the Baaka-Bantu festival (Festi-BaBa) at Lobéké National Park in Cameroon.

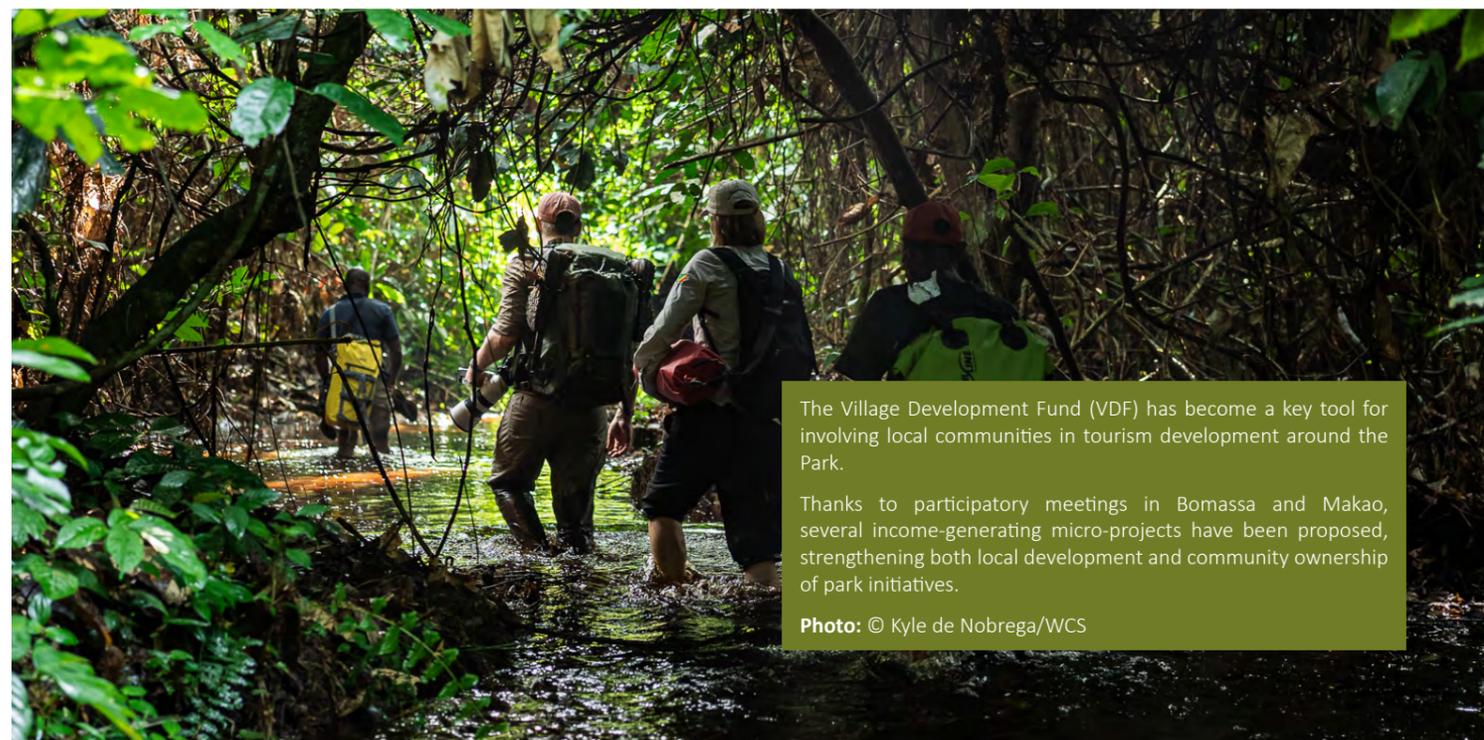
Thirteen members were accompanied to the event, where Lih Ngolio won the conservationist award. This participation also raised the profile of the partnership between local communities and the NNNP, notably through interviews given to two Cameroonian television channels.



Visibility and tourism promotion in the NNNP

The tourism team has raised the Park's profile through targeted participation in national and international events. At FITUR in Madrid, tourism products from the PNNN, TNS and Congo were presented to around 50 visitors, with discussions held with travel agencies and national authorities.

In Brazzaville, the Nabemba Tourism Expo provided an opportunity to promote sustainable tourism and position the Park at the heart of regional discussions.



The Village Development Fund (VDF) has become a key tool for involving local communities in tourism development around the Park.

Thanks to participatory meetings in Bomassa and Makao, several income-generating micro-projects have been proposed, strengthening both local development and community ownership of park initiatives.

Photo: © Kyle de Nobrega/WCS



THANKS

The conservation of Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park is the result of the work of multiple partners, with crucial support from our donors, including:

L'Agence française de développement

Arcus Foundation

Bezos Earth Fund

Birdlife International

Cologne Zoo

Columbus Zoo

Cornell University

Dutch Gorilla Foundation

Elephant Crisis Fund

Global Earth Fund

La Fondation pour le Tri-National de la Sangha

Global Environment Facility

Harvey Bookman Foundation

Lincoln Park Zoo

Rainforest Trust

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

Rotterdam Zoo

Saint Louis Zoo

L'Union Européenne

United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and

Rural Affairs

United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development
Office

United Nations Environment Programme

United States Department of State- Bureau of International
Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

National Institutes of Health University of Miami

Washington University

WildCat Foundation

Zoo Berlin

Throughout the year, the actions carried out were made possible thanks to the constant commitment and support of all partners, both public and private, national authorities, donors, local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

Their trust and active involvement are fundamental to conservation, local development and the sustainability of the actions carried out in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park.

Credit: © Thomas Nicolon/WCS

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