

Sangha Trinational & Odzala National Park

USFWS supports a 5 year, \$10 million cooperative agreement to protect forest elephants, great apes and other wildlife.



Above: Forest elephants gather in the Dzanga-Sangha forest clearing to take advantage of mineral-rich soils.
Credit: Dirk Byler/USFWS



The Sangha Trinational, or *Trinational de la Sangha* (TNS), is the first three-country transboundary area

to become a World Heritage Site and is one of the largest blocks of pristine tropical lowland forest in the world. TNS is home to a multitude of species including forest elephants, central chimpanzees, and western lowland gorillas. TNS is made up of three contiguous national parks - Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in the Republic of Congo, and Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic. Odzala-Kokoua National Park in Northern Congo is also connected to the TNS landscape through intact forested areas that serve as important corridors for wildlife. In addition to harboring huge swaths of globally important wildlife, TNS acts as a buffer against climate change by serving as a sink for carbon dioxide, and provides critical ecosystem services and resources for local communities.

Threats to Biodiversity in TNS

Poaching of elephants for ivory

The illegal ivory trade is the single most important threat to the survival of elephants in TNS. The growing demand for ivory, the ease and facility of large-scale transport, the emergence of heavily armed and well organized criminal syndicates and underlying corruption, coupled with the inability to adequately protect elephant populations on the ground add to the perfect storm of potential extinction of forest elephant populations in TNS and Central Africa as a whole.

Commercial bushmeat trade

The commercial bushmeat trade is the over-hunting of wildlife for meat and income. Primates, duikers, and other large-bodied species tend to be the most heavily exploited bushmeat species. With logging and other industries opening up new roads into once pristine areas, the commercial bushmeat trade has emerged as a severe threat for many species.

Commercial logging

Logging is a major threat to wildlife

populations in TNS as the national parks within TNS are almost entirely surrounded by large logging concessions. Many of the concessions are adopting sustainable management standards, but the indirect effects of logging, or the opening of roadways and informal human settlements with increased market access is corresponding to the rise in the commercial bushmeat and ivory trade.

Mining

TNS has already witnessed increasing human settlements associated with gold mining. These new settlements are being established in virgin forest areas and their rapidly growing human populations are putting pressure on already threatened natural resources.

Disease among great apes

Great apes and humans share nearly 95% of genetic material; therefore, disease transmission between humans and apes is almost inevitable. The Ebola virus disease (EVD) is one of the deadliest diseases for great apes and humans in this area. In 2005, EVD killed an estimated 5,000 gorillas in an area of 1,042 square miles within Odzala-Kokoua National Park.

Since 1990, USFWS has invested nearly \$6.9 million, which has been leveraged by \$7.7 million in matching funds, to protect endangered great apes, elephants, and other species in the Sangha Trinational landscape.



A young gorilla plays with its mother in Bai Hoku, TNS. Credit: Dirk Byler/USFWS

The first grant USFWS awarded in the TNS Landscape was in 1990 to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to support elephant anti-poaching efforts.

Cooperative Agreement for TNS & Odzala National Park

In FY 2013, USFWS entered into a 5-year, \$10 million cooperative agreement in collaboration with African Parks Network (APN), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), to build on more than 20 years of work in TNS and Northern Congo. The overall goal is to maintain the ecological integrity and connectivity and the wealth of wildlife in the TNS and Northern Congo forest landscape.

The objectives of this agreement are:

- Extend the protected area network and improve effectiveness of existing protected areas.

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September 2014



- Strengthen and monitor law enforcement to reduce illegal killing of wildlife.
- Develop a better understanding of large mammal population abundance and distribution through professional surveys in key areas.
- Identify and implement Ebola virus disease intervention strategies to minimize impact of outbreaks as well as increase the knowledge of disease transmission among great ape populations.

Goulougo Triangle Great Ape Conservation Project (GTAP)

USFWS has supported the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) work in the Goulougo Triangle of TNS for more than a decade. Since 2001, USFWS has awarded \$705,000 to WCS for GTAP, which has been leveraged by \$672,220 in additional matching funds. GTAP has helped to conserve chimpanzees and gorillas through conservation research, greater protection of vital ape populations and their habitats, and support for building local capacity to create and implement conservation programs. In January 2012, the President of the Republic of Congo granted protection status to the Goulougo Triangle because of the work of GTAP.

Ebola (EVD) monitoring program

USFWS has supported efforts to monitor EVD in TNS since 2006. USFWS awarded WCS \$490,000 for this program, which has leveraged \$413,000 to monitor the disease. This project has successfully established a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary program to monitor and protect great apes against diseases such as EVD and works to engage local professionals at all levels.

Great ape habituation & ecotourism program

USFWS has supported WWF to carry out a great ape habituation and ecotourism program at Dzanga-Sangha Special Reserve, a part of TNS, since 2007. USFWS awarded \$257,584 to WWF for this program, which has leveraged \$381,511 in matching funds. By focusing on the tracking and viewing of western lowland gorillas through this project, WWF aims to

generate revenue for the reserve and local communities, and to raise awareness and support for western gorilla conservation.

Elephant bai monitoring

USFWS has been supporting elephant protection and monitoring at the Dzanga-Sangha forest clearing in TNS since 1994. USFWS awarded WCS \$698,024 for this project, which has leveraged \$820,834 in matching funds. This is the longest ongoing study of forest elephants and is the first site where researchers have the ability to systematically study and monitor elephants on a regular basis. The presence of the permanent research camp about one mile from the clearing has reinforced conservation by deterring poachers. Furthermore, this clearing has become a popular tourist destination, generating income for the local population.

Elephant protection and monitoring

To improve the conservation of forest elephants in the Sangha Trinational an integrated program has been developed that includes anti-poaching, mitigation of human-elephant conflict, targeted research, and ecological monitoring in and around Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. It relies on building the capacity of Congolese researchers and protected area managers.

Great Apes Public Awareness Project (GAPAP)

USFWS has been supporting the International Conservation and Education Fund's (INCEF) work in TNS since 2005. Through six grants, USFWS has awarded INCEF \$438,860 for this project, which has leveraged \$593,288 in matching funds. INCEF established this program in villages in northern Republic of Congo. GAPAP has been key to educating rural populations about gorilla and chimpanzee conservation and how to recognize and prevent EVD epidemics among human populations. Since its inception, GAPAP has reached more than 250,000 people living in areas with big populations of western lowland gorillas and chimpanzees.