



Forest Elephants at Dzanga Bai

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WCS IN DZANGA BAI, CAR

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- Cameroon
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- Kenya
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- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe
- Regional Africa

The Dzanga Clearing is a natural forest clearing located in south western Central African Republic. It is an extremely important site for wildlife conservation as it attracts more elephants and other species of forest animals than any other clearing in the region. On any given day between 40 and 100 elephants can be observed, coming in search for minerals which lie beneath the surface of the clearing. Other species of animals observed in the clearing include: sitatunga, bongo, giant forest hog, red river hog, and forest buffalo.

In 1990, the first long term study on forest elephants was started at Dzanga. Now in its 18th consecutive year, this study has been collecting data on forest elephant demographics, feeding ecology, and social and reproductive behavior. More recently research on forest elephant bioacoustics for use in monitoring and censusing forest elephant populations has been carried out. More importantly the daily surveillance and monitoring is providing permanent protection for one of the most important sites for forest elephants in the Central African region.

Key conservation issues

1. Protection of one of the most important forest elephant populations in the Central African region.
2. Control of increased logging in areas of high forest elephant density.

The Human Aspect

The region around the Dzanga clearing has been logged in the past and is scheduled to be logged again. The local population consists of mostly immigrants who originally started to move into the area in the early 1970's. This immigration has widely influenced wildlife populations as poaching is widespread. The immigration coupled with the civil unrest creates a difficult atmosphere in which to do conservation.

Highlights

Learn more about Dzanga on Andrea's blog on wildlife direct <http://dzangaforestelephants.wildlifedirect.org>

Over 3400 individual elephants identified

Over 5000 elephants estimated to visit the clearing

Habitat Types

- forest
- swamps
- forest clearings

Wildlife Present:

- forest elephants
- sitatunga
- forest buffalo
- giant forest hog
- red river hog

WCS Involvement

- since 1990

Partners

- USFWS
- Dzanga Sangha Project (made up of the Central African government, WWF , and GTZ)

Other WCS projects in Country/Region

- WCS in Congo
- WCS in DRC
- WCS in Cameroon
- WCS in Gabon





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Threats

1. Civil unrest: Vast areas of the Central African Republic are ungovernable due to rebel and bandit activity compounded by the continued unrest in neighboring Chad and Sudan. This has led to refugee problems and a proliferation of arms in the CAR. If left unchecked this could effect the situation in the Dzanga area, which up until now has been a relatively secure area of the country.
2. Poverty: Economics plays a huge role in whether conservation is successful or not. Wildlife products such as bush meat are perceived as economic opportunities and anti-poaching is not a national priority of the government.

WCS Activities

1. Monitoring and surveillance of the Dzanga Clearing
2. Collaboration with the Nouabale-Ndoki Project in the monitoring and surveillance of clearings in the adjacent Republic of Congo.
3. Continued training of research assistants in monitoring and surveillance of forest clearings.
4. Participation in an environmental education program which includes local school children.
5. Compilation of a forest elephant lexicon to be used in the acoustical monitoring of forest elephants.

Important Next Steps

1. Assure continued monitoring of Dzanga as well as other clearings in the area.
2. Secure permanent funding for the Dzanga Forest Elephant Study.

The daily surveillance and monitoring is providing permanent protection for one of the most important sites for forest elephants in the Central African region.

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Mission

The Wildlife Conservation Society's International Conservation program saves wildlife and wild lands by understanding and resolving critical problems that threaten key species and large, wild ecosystems around the world.

WCS Strategies

- Site-based conservation
- Research
- Training and capacity-building
- New model development
- Informing policy
- Linking zoo-based and field-based conservation

Support this Project!

Contributions to this project can be sent to the WCS Africa Program in NY (address above)

February 2008



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