

Lopé-Chaillu-Louesse Forest Landscape

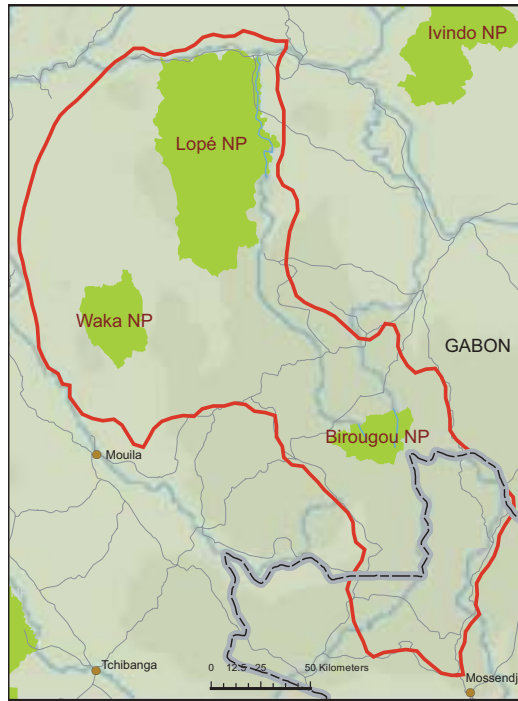
The Lopé-Chaillu-Louesse Landscape extends from the geographical center of Gabon at Lopé to 50 km into ROC. It contains ancient savannas about 40,000 years old, a highly diverse Pleistocene refuge, the Chaillu Massif with its wealth of endemic plants and animals, and vast Marantaceae forests to the north, which have the highest recorded mammalian biomass of any tropical rain forest. Prior to creation of Lopé, Waka, and Birougou National Parks in August 2002 the entire area was scheduled for logging. Now these three protected areas are of key importance for biodiversity conservation, but numerous, often large villages and logging concessions represent a challenge for natural resource managers. The integration of remaining Ba'bongo pygmy populations, hunter-gatherers who have lived in relative balance with the forest for millennia, is a high priority.

Sustainable Resource Management

Lopé, Waka, and Birougou National Parks must be managed within the framework of subsistence hunting, industrial logging, and the economic development of Gabon. The limits of Waka and Birougou have been demarcated, as has that of southern Lopé. Consultation meetings have been held with each logging company (NSG, Leroy, IFL, EGG, Bordamur, and SBL) adjacent to the three national parks. Recommendations for the content of an MOU with Bordamur have been made. Plans for temporary closures of logging roads and sites for barriers on active logging roads have been drafted. Negotiations are under way to ensure a smooth transition from industrial logging in the NSG concession near Lopé when the timber company leaves. Reduced-impact logging studies are under way in the SBL concession. Socio-economic research on subsistence and commercial hunting and on the forest use of the Ba'bongo pygmy are ongoing and will guide sustainable resource management decision making.

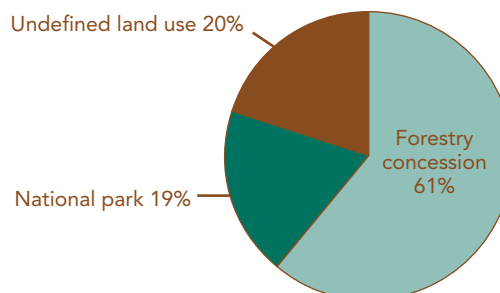
Natural Resource Governance

WCS has been participating in regular discussions with CNPN and Ministry of Water and Forests officials over management of protected areas and logging concessions, including the process of defining buffer zones, and controls over resource extraction. No ratified sustainable management plans yet exist for areas outside the parks, and concessions are "managed" for timber extraction only. Similarly, local-level land tenure plans for subsistence use have yet to be developed. All existing environmental NGOs operating in and around the three national parks have been contacted and meetings have been held. An article was published in the national newspaper, l'Union, about World Environment Day activities in Lopé National Park, as well as national radio and TV broadcasts. The Lopé outreach and environmental education team has visited every village in the periphery of the park. Their major focus is on developing sustainable subsistence hunting and fishing practices. Preliminary ground-truthing of village/hunting camp locations and roads around and in Waka and Birougou National Parks has now been completed.



Natural Resource Monitoring Institutionalized

Workplans for socioeconomic and biological surveys have been drafted for both Waka and Birougou; staff have been recruited and trained. A biological monitoring plan for Lopé National Park has been finalized, team members have been recruited and trained, and data collection has begun. Research/monitoring continues in Lopé for buffalo, elephants, leopard, great apes, and mandrills. Lopé National Park Training Center construction is complete, including housing for staff, office space (including a library and computer center), and two dormitories with a capacity for 32 students. A Training Center Director has been hired, courses developed, and the first training sessions have taken place for National School of Water and Forests students, university students, and young Gabonese biological technicians. The MIKE program of CITES held a regional data management and analysis workshop for Central African nationals, the results of which were disseminated at the 13th Conference of the Parties to CITES in Bangkok, Thailand.



Landscape Highlights

Surface Area: 34,859 km²

Partners: CIRMF, CNPN, ECOFAC, ELF, European Union, London Zoological Society, MINEF, Missouri Botanical Garden, WCS

National Parks: 3, covering 6,730 km² (19%)

Biodiversity (N species)

Plants: > 1,500

Mammals: > 84

Birds: > 400

Reptiles: TBD

Amphibians: TBD

Threatened Species

Animals

- Forest elephant
- Western gorilla
- Chimpanzee
- Sun-tailed guenon
- Mandrill

Plants

TBD

Major Threats to Landscape

Direct

- Illegal hunting
- Unsustainable industrial logging

Indirect

- Lack of clear management systems for NPs and reserves
- Weak capacity
- Lack of alternative protein and work for local people
- Lack of wildlife management in national forestry policy
- Absence of legal structure for NP management authority in Gabon

Key Interventions

- Threats assessment
- Zoning and management planning
- Wildlife management systems development and implementation in protected areas
- Setting up of effective monitoring systems and GIS databases
- Environmental education