



Three Year Performance Report: Oct. 01, 2003 – Sept. 30, 2006

Project / Sub-Project Number	Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment
Agreement	Cooperative Agreement 623-A-00-03-00064-00 under leader with Associate Award LAG-A-00-99-00048-00
Landscape	Dja Minkebe Odzala (Ivindo Sector)
Reporting Period	October 01, 2003 – September 30, 2006
Date Submitted	October 31, 2006
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Introduction

Ivindo National Park is a site based conservation project concentrating on the protection of the rich mammal, bird and flora biodiversity in an area, which for the most part, is pristine tropical rainforest. The park also includes some exceptional natural sites, including several bays and the three most impressive waterfalls in the equatorial forests of Africa. This report focuses on WCS activities in the Gabon segment of the WWF-lead “TRIDOM” Landscape.

WCS established a permanent team in the Langoué area in Ivindo National Park over five years ago, shortly after a spectacular bay was discovered during the Megatranssect expedition. Initial observations made by Mike Fay, which suggested that the site was of key importance for gorilla and elephant conservation, have been confirmed by continuous observations by field teams over the last five years. Baseline data on elephant identification and gorilla frequentation has been collected since 2001 (before the creation of INP). Other research include: large mammal surveys, leopard identification using camera traps, a bongo study, butterfly surveys (10 new species to date), vegetation studies (in collaboration with Missouri Botanical Gardens), tree phenology, archeology, vegetation recognition studies using satellite imagery, a pilot study on sitatunga, socio-economic studies, ESRI-funded mapping work, bio-acoustic monitoring of elephants, genetic studies of duikers, identification of YAWS-infected gorillas, a tourist itinerary study, a study of red river hog and a forthcoming study of dwarf crocodiles.

Capacity building includes the training of research assistants for the collection of data, eco-guard training and the supervision of the team responsible for keeping the access roads open.

Significant Accomplishments during the reporting period:

Significant progress has been achieved over the past 3 years in the development of this newly created National Park thanks to CBFP funding. CBFP in Ivindo NP has allowed the project to expand activities already underway. It has allowed us to develop relationships and synergies with other partners in the region (IRET, CIFOR, FIGET and some of the logging companies) that might otherwise have been overlooked. We are permanently searching for additional complimentary funds in order to leverage with a CBFP match.

- Key Park personnel have been put into place, including the Project Director, the Conservator, a social science technical advisor, a Gabonese high-level counterpart to WCS and a GIS technician.
- Research assistants have been selected and trained for the Langoué bai monitoring.
- The social science technical advisor was identified and recruited 2 research assistants.
- A WCS delimitation team was selected, trained and equipped, and the boundaries of Ivindo National Park have been marked in their entirety with paint and signs.
- A biological monitoring leader was identified and trained at the WCS training center in Lopé. The other members of the team were recruited and equipped, sampling design established, and data collection began.
- A WCS base including accommodation and offices with communications, storage facilities and a vehicle maintenance area was built in proximity to the Ivindo railway station.
- The Project has established a second base in Makokou, the provincial capitol to facilitate activities of the social science teams along the Booué-Makokou road and to provide accommodation and office space for the Park Warden.
- The Project assisted the CNPN in the acquisition of the old Rougier logging camp at Massouna 2000, which was refurbished during the reporting period for use as a training center and base for eco-guards.
- Equipment needs were evaluated, an international order placed and now all is on site (vehicles, boats & engines, camping equipment, office equipment etc).
- All forestry concessions peripheral to the NP have been visited. Some of these concessions have been abandoned. MOUs have been established with Rougier Gabon, the largest of the concessions.
- A road maintenance team has been trained and equipped to maintain the 60 kilometers of the abandoned forestry road to Langoué bai for the ongoing data collection by the Langoué research team, as well as facilitating the access for tourists and visiting scientists.
- In collaboration with local authorities, a selection for future eco-guards was conducted in Makokou, the provincial capitol. 20 candidates were selected after undergoing physical & intellectual screening.
- A team of WCS experts in eco-tourism visited Ivindo NP three times during the reporting period, and have begun to develop plans for future tourism activities within the Park.
- There has been a progressive increase in the numbers of visitors to Ivindo, stimulating revenue for the park wardens' functioning costs by park entry fees which were initiated by WCS in August of 2005.
- Following a proposal to the Association Française de Développement, Ivindo & Langoué hosted 2 consultants & a member of AFD in November 2005, to gather information on how best to invest in the infrastructures for improving tourism possibilities in INP.

- Ivindo hosted the visit of the WCS Field Veterinary Program for public awareness campaigns regarding the threat of avian influenza and Ebola for the local population, as well as more specific health issues for the WCS staff.
- Ivindo National Park hosted the premier French television company for the filming of a documentary.
- Ivindo National Park hosted a National Geographic television cameraman for the filming of a documentary.
- In collaboration with CIRAD and the IRET research station at Makokou, INP hosted the visit of a French student to explore possibilities of new tourist itineraries in the park.
- Lobbying of the railway company, SETRAG, has resulted in Ivindo being included in the Express train schedule. During the school-holiday period (1st July – 31st October 2006) there is now one train per day to and from Libreville stopping at Ivindo.
- The management team (including the Conservator and representatives of WCS socio-economic team) continue to hold meetings with the Governor and other regional authorities to inform them about the Park and its boundaries.
- Under the auspices of a CNPN-hired moderator, the Project Direction (Park Warden, Project Director, and WCS-Gabon Director of Projects) met in Makokou in February 2005 and prepared the log-frame for Park management which provides a 15 year vision for activities and land use planning.
- The Ivindo and Mwagna guide book, which was initiated by WCS, has been completed, published and is available for sale.

Langoué bai monitoring

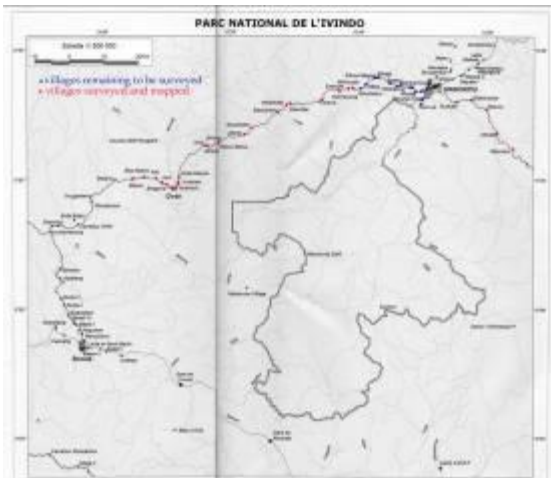
Longitudinal monitoring of Langoué Bai is continuing as for the past five consecutive years. In the past 365 monitoring days, there were 4902 elephant visits to the bai. Of these 60% were identified, bringing the recognizable total of elephants to 1023. The maximum number of elephants at one time in the day totaled 37, but this can rise to 56 at night. With the birth of a calf, the 2 groups of buffalo now total 14. Sitatungas are omnipresent in the bai, with a maximum day sighting of 35 individuals. Gorilla frequentation in the bai peaks from January to August, averaging 100 visits per month. This drops to half that number from September to December. Of the 33 individuals regularly using the bai 8 are solitary males, 2 groups of 11 consisting of a dominant silverback with females and offspring, and 1 group consisting of a silverback who, due to the disappearance of the mother, has adopted 2 juveniles. A group of 82 Red River Hog visited the bai as well as 1 Giant Forest Hog.



Socio economic monitoring

The social science technical advisor was identified and recruited 2 research assistants. They were trained at the WCS training facility in the Lopé and sampling design established. Data collection began in October 2004 in the heavily populated areas to the north of the park. The logistics for their studies have been facilitated with the purchase of 2 bicycles and a 4-wheel drive vehicle. 4 field assistants were identified in the study villages and subsequently recruited and trained in data collection. The social science team leader, Paul Telfer, assisted by the 2 team leaders are currently pursuing two different activities. The team has been divided into two groups to facilitate the logistics. The first group, consisting of one team leader and two assistants are performing the Intensive Phase of the Parks and Population study financed by the Mac Arthur Foundation. The second group consists of one team leader and one field assistant who are performing participatory mapping in the villages with primary access to the Ivindo River and Ivindo National Park. With the aid of an eco-guard trainee this team is verifying the village land use activities by making excursions to the sites and taking GPS readings. This team also performs outreach activities in and around Makokou that consist of sensitization and the development of an environmental education program in the Makokou and village schools. The social science team in collaboration with WWF and the Park Wardens from Ivindo, Minkebe and Mwagna National Parks, continue to facilitate the World Environment Day activities in Makokou to increase community awareness about the Parks and promote natural resource management in general. This activity is ongoing and increasingly important each year. This year a football match was added to the numerous other activities.

Villages visited



Participatory mapping



Ivindo delimitation

Forestry incursions were revealed during the demarcation of the National Park. Evidence of these incursions were transmitted to the appropriate government agencies who levied dissuasive fines on the companies concerned. To date there have be no new incursions by forestry companies.

Park signs



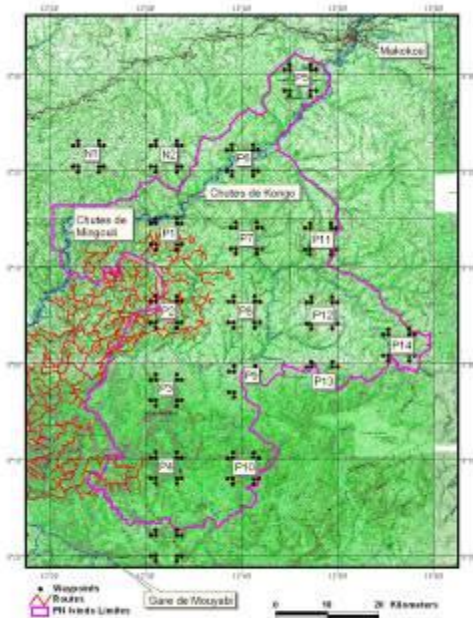
Delimitation by painted trees



Biological Monitoring

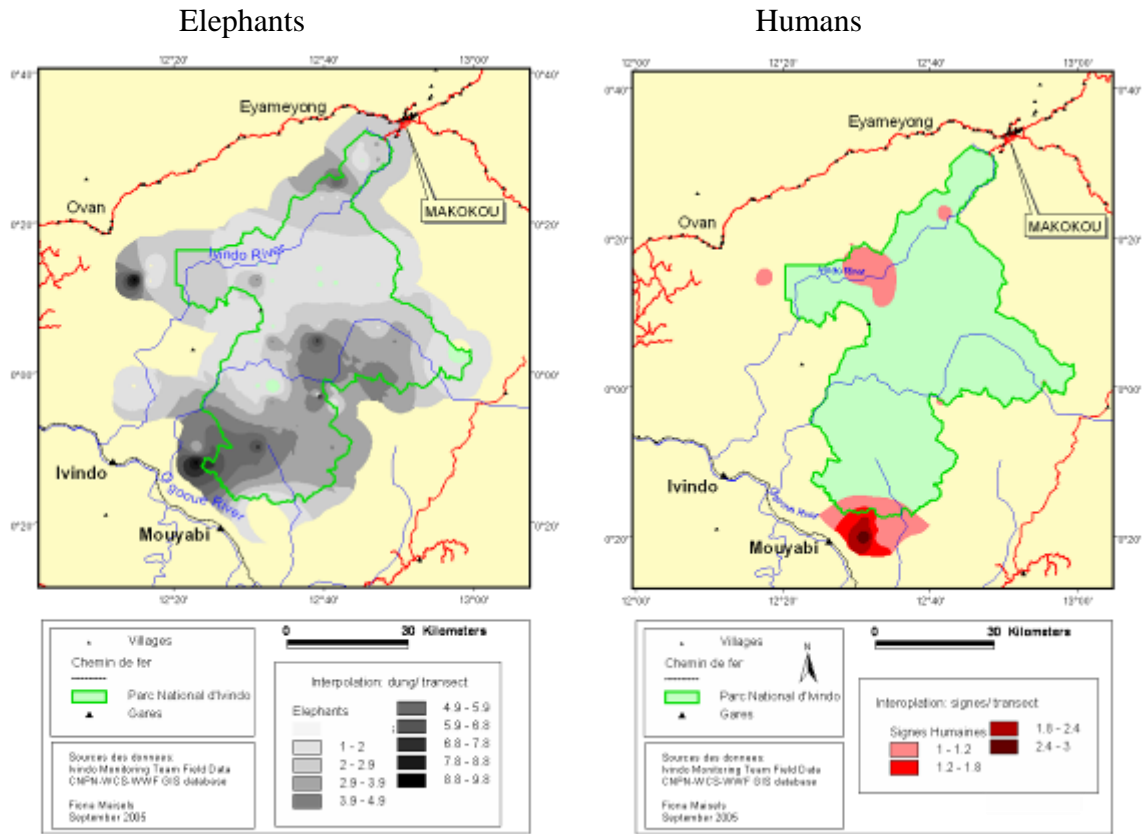
A biological monitoring leader was identified and trained at the WCS training center in Lopé. The other members of the team were recruited and equipped, sampling design established, and data collection began. They have now completed a full circuit of the transect quadrants within and around the Park which will serve as baseline data for the long term monitoring of the Park and its buffer zones.

Monitoring quadrants



Monitoring Team





This data collection has been instrumental in leveraging funds from USFWS as well as private foundations.

The WCS base at Ivindo

From the base at Ivindo, terrestrial access to more than 80% of the national park is possible, using the abandoned Rougier forestry roads. NB the southern part of Ivindo NP is detached from the national road network by the Ogooué and Ivindo rivers, and access is only feasible by railway or aircraft.

Ivindo accommodation/offices

Storage facilities/maintenance area



Road maintenance

The road maintenance team, apart from maintaining the 60 kilometers of road to Langoué, are also responsible for re-opening the other abandoned forestry roads within the park which are maintained when necessary to facilitate access for eco-guard patrols, biological monitoring, visiting research teams, tourist circuits and film crews.



Eco-guard trainees

The candidates that passed the physical and intellectual screening, subsequently participated in a 6 week competitive training course in the recently renovated ex-forestry camp of Massouna 2000, which is now within the boundaries of the Park. They were trained in essential subjects for their future employment – navigation, camping skills, Gabonese legislation, first aid, health, conflict resolution, fauna, mission reporting, and paramilitary discipline & team sports. After a brief rest period, the 14 who successfully passed the course have returned to the Park to assist the monitoring team to hone their navigational skills & improve their knowledge of the Park until a legal statute has been obtained for them for anti-poaching missions. The eco-guard trainees are continuing their reconnaissance patrols of the park as well as conducting public awareness, particularly during environmental day, and sensitizing the populations in villages around INP. Their logistics are facilitated by the WCS team. They are waiting their forthcoming change of status to be integrated into a legalized law-enforcement group.

First aid training



Navigation patrol training



Eco-tourism

Tourists began to visit Langoué Bai as of January 2004, in a very rustic camp that had been built to test the potential for tourism there. The work on the new camp for the researchers and visitors was finally concluded in November 2005. The new installations have already received tourists and WCS visitors who are impressed by the comfort. Langoué camp is now fully operational for tourism which is definitely on the upswing with visits from several tour operators, for the most part British. Mistral Voyages no longer has a monopoly for tourist reservations at Langoué. SCD (*Société de Conservation et Développement*) and Eurafrique are now sending clients to Langoué bai. Ivindo NP hosted a visit by Wilderness Tours, the South African eco-tourism investor. This coincided with the visit of Rombout Swanborn of SCD, another potential investor.

Office, kitchen, dining area



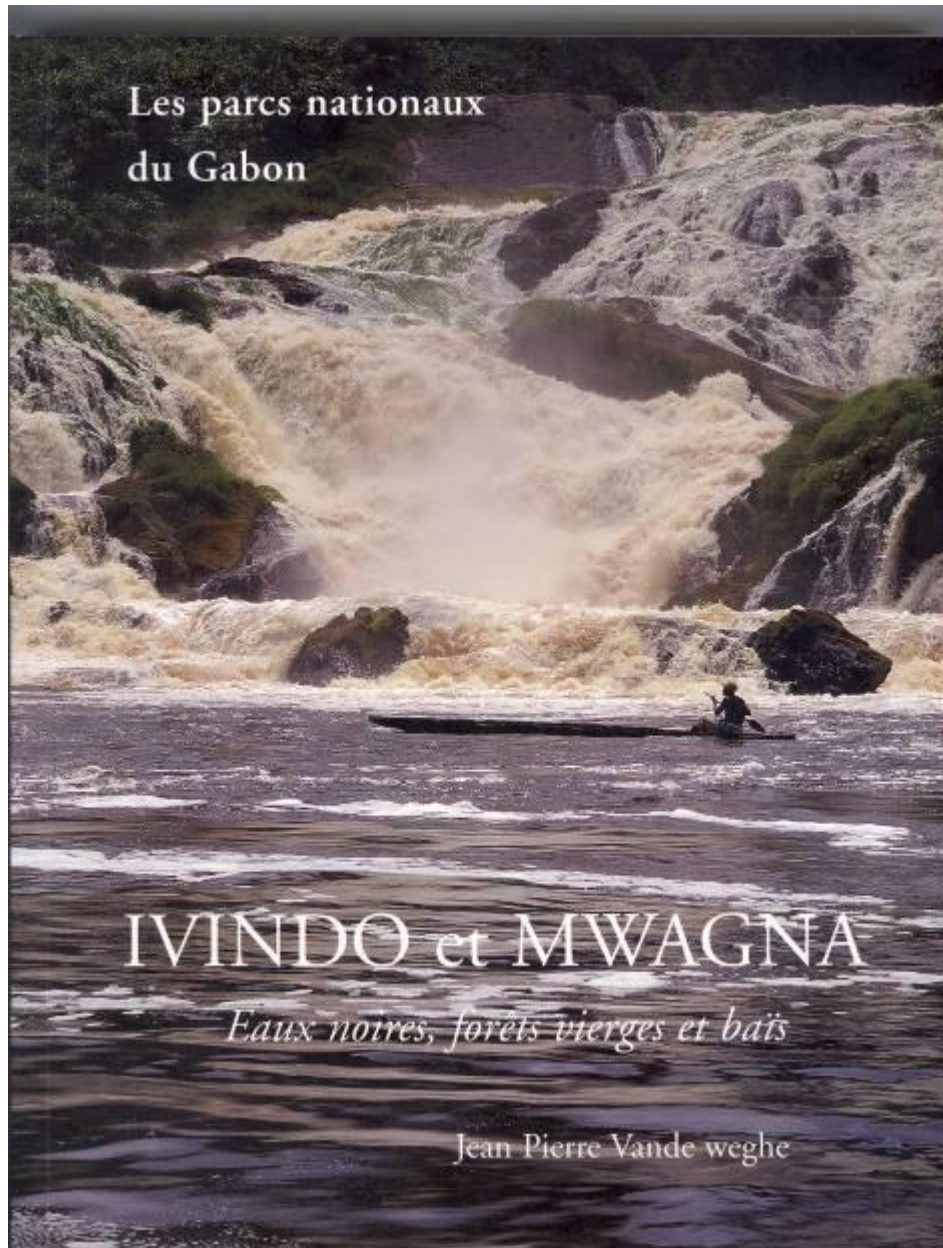
Lounge



There has been a progressive increase in the numbers of visitors to Ivindo, stimulating revenue for the park wardens' functioning costs by park entry fees which were initiated in August of 2005 by WCS. 159 tourists visited Langoué between the 1st of January and the 30th of September 2006 representing 534 nights. An average of 3 to 4 nights per person. Compared to 2005 for the same period Langoué received 68 visitors for 220 nights. An increase of more than 100%.

Publication

A synthesis of all biological and socio-economic information available for the park has been completed by M. Jean Pierre Vande weghe in preparation for the writing of a management plan. One spin-off is the Ivindo and Mwagna guide book, which has been completed, published and is available for sale. A 5-year plan of operations for the park was finalized under the leadership of the CNPN.



Conclusion

Globally the WCS Ivindo NP project has been successful in implementing the planned activities that contribute to the CARPE strategic objective.

Entering the third phase of CARPE the Ivindo national park is well established in the Landscape and relatively well known. Logging companies working in the periphery are generally supportive of the park. Traditional resource users active in the northern sector of the park have been identified and engaged – but significant challenges remain both within the park, and in surrounding CBRNM zones identified for action in the next phase of CBFP-CARPE.

It is apparent that for conservation efforts to make any impact on an area, a reliable long-term funding source is essential. CBFP contributions have provided this basis as well as providing the means for leveraging additional funds from private donors.

The baseline data collection conducted by the monitoring teams in CARPE II will provide the necessary information for developing management strategies for the national park as well as its peripheral zone to initiate a land use plan.

Lessons learned

The Gabon has no history of National Parks, until the creation of 13 existing parks 4 years ago. Therefore there are no experienced Gabonese national park managers. Mentoring, capacity-building and sensitization will be necessary at all levels for some years to come to achieve conservation and natural resource management goals.

Recommendations

It has become apparent, by the behaviour of several park wardens, that they have little or no comprehension as to why CARPE/USAID funding is managed by established conservation NGOs. We recommend that a greater effort is made early in the next phase of CARPE-CBFP to obtain national buy-in and to explain what can and cannot be done with US government funding.