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Salonga National Park



Conserving Africa's largest forest

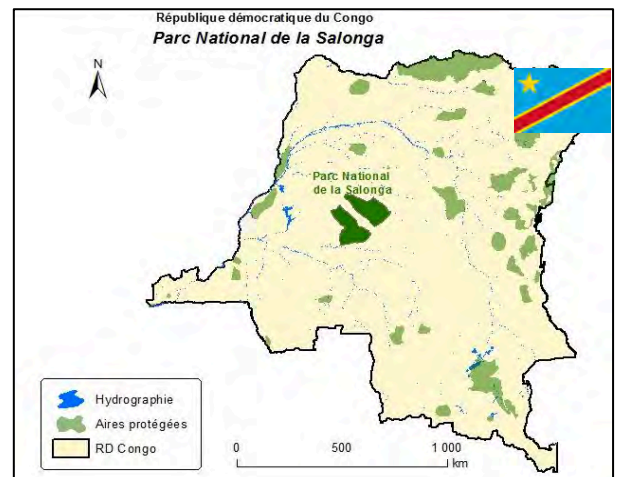
The Salonga National Park was created in 1970 and spans an area of 33,350km². This makes it the largest forest national park in Africa and the second largest tropical forest park in the world. The park consists of two large blocks ("north" and "south") separated by a corridor of about 45 km wide to where part of the population initially residing within the park was relocated.

Due to its size the park is divided in six administrative sectors: Monkoto, Mondjoku, Washikengo, Yoketelu, Anga, Mundja, while the park covers four provinces of the DRC: Tshuapa, Mai Ndombe, Sankuru and Kasai. Salonga's headquarters are localized in Monkoto in Tshuapa Province.

Since 2005 the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has been working in collaboration with the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) and its partners, to support the Salonga National Park and its periphery (the landscape surrounding the park).

Despite these efforts, both parties recognized that the parks values were still seriously threatened and therefore a more ambitious programme was required.

WWF and ICCN therefore committed themselves to set up a joint management of the park, which was formalized through the signature of a co-management agreement in August 2015. The overall objective of this agreement is to maintain the biodiversity and ecological services provided by the Salonga National Park through improved management and the establishment of a Public-Private partnership.



Salonga Facts

Creation: in 1970

UNESCO status:

- World Heritage site (1984)
- Endangered site (1999)

Size: 33,350km²

- Largest forest national park in Africa
- Second largest tropical forest park in the world

Emblematic fauna:

Bonobo, Forest Elephants, Congo Peacock

Main threats: Ivory and bushmeat poaching

Ecoregion: Central Congolian Lowland forest



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Biodiversity value

Given the size of the park, the diversity of plant and animal species is considerable with 51 species of mammals, 129 species of fish and 223 species of birds. Several of those species are internationally endangered, particularly the forest elephant and the bonobo. Other large mammals are the leopard, nine kinds of antelopes including the bongo and 5 duiker species, giant pangolin and hippopotamus.

It also holds one of the most diverse primate communities in Africa including the endangered Golden-bellied mangabey (*Cercocebus chrysogaster*), Thollon's red colobus (*Piliocolobus tholloni*), Angola Pied Colobus (*Colobus angolensis*), Allen's Swamp Monkey (*Allenopithecus nigroviridis*), De Brazza's Monkey (*Cercopithecus neglectus*) and the Black Mangabey (*Lophocebus aterrinus*).

The birds are not yet well known, but the endemic Congo peacock (photo below) can already be considered an important attraction for bird lovers.

Due to its high biodiversity and its relatively untouched forests, the park's forest ecosystems and its water regime are still functioning unaltered. Environmental services provided by these ecosystems to the communities living around the park as well as to the entire Congo Basin, are therefore considerable, especially in terms of carbon storage, climate regulation and water, fish and (bush)meat production.



Threats

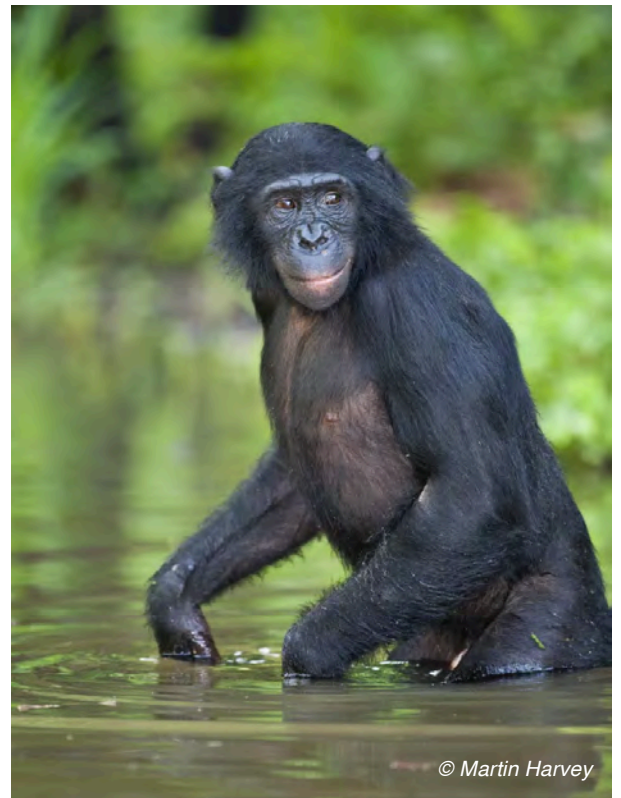
Despite the park's enormous size and apparent inaccessibility, and the fact that it has been largely untouched by civil wars and security issues, the 'bushmeat' species (monkeys, ungulates) and elephants are highly threatened by heavy poaching.

Even if the needs of the human population in the vicinity of the park can still be considered as 'low impact' due to low population densities, coupled with the huge demand for food in urban centres as far as Kinshasa, have driven bushmeat hunting and fishing in Salonga to critical levels. Additionally, elephant poaching has in recent years once more become a highly lucrative business, prompted by the skyrocketing ivory prices on international markets. Insufficient management capacity, corruption, and the virtual lack of infrastructure have made it extremely difficult for park authorities and their partners to efficiently tackle these challenges.

Since 1999, Salonga is on the list of endangered World Heritage Sites.

Way Forward

Thanks to the management agreement signed between ICCN and WWF several donors have engaged in funding Salonga. This will result in an increasing annual budget for Salonga up to around \$5 million as from 2017. This increased funding mainly from the EU, KfW and USAID will contribute to the recruitment and training of staff, improved infrastructure and logistics to ensure the Park's protection, while also ensuring improved and alternative livelihoods for the people in and around the park.



Salonga's Vision

- The park is removed from WHS list in danger
- Salonga remains for ever the largest intact forest block in Africa, with thriving wildlife
- Innovative governance and PA management systems ensure full engagement of local communities and government
- Innovative funding mechanisms ensure long term sustainability

Partners of the Salonga National Park

Because of its isolation, impact of park management has been very low since its creation until recently.

It was not until the 2000s that the Salonga began to receive significant support from its parent government and technical and financial cooperation partners including USAID-funded, EU, KfW and WWF.

Key international technical partners are:



Key financial partners are:



More information on:

<http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/>
<http://www.iccn-conservation.org/>