



Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas

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Newsletter February 2021

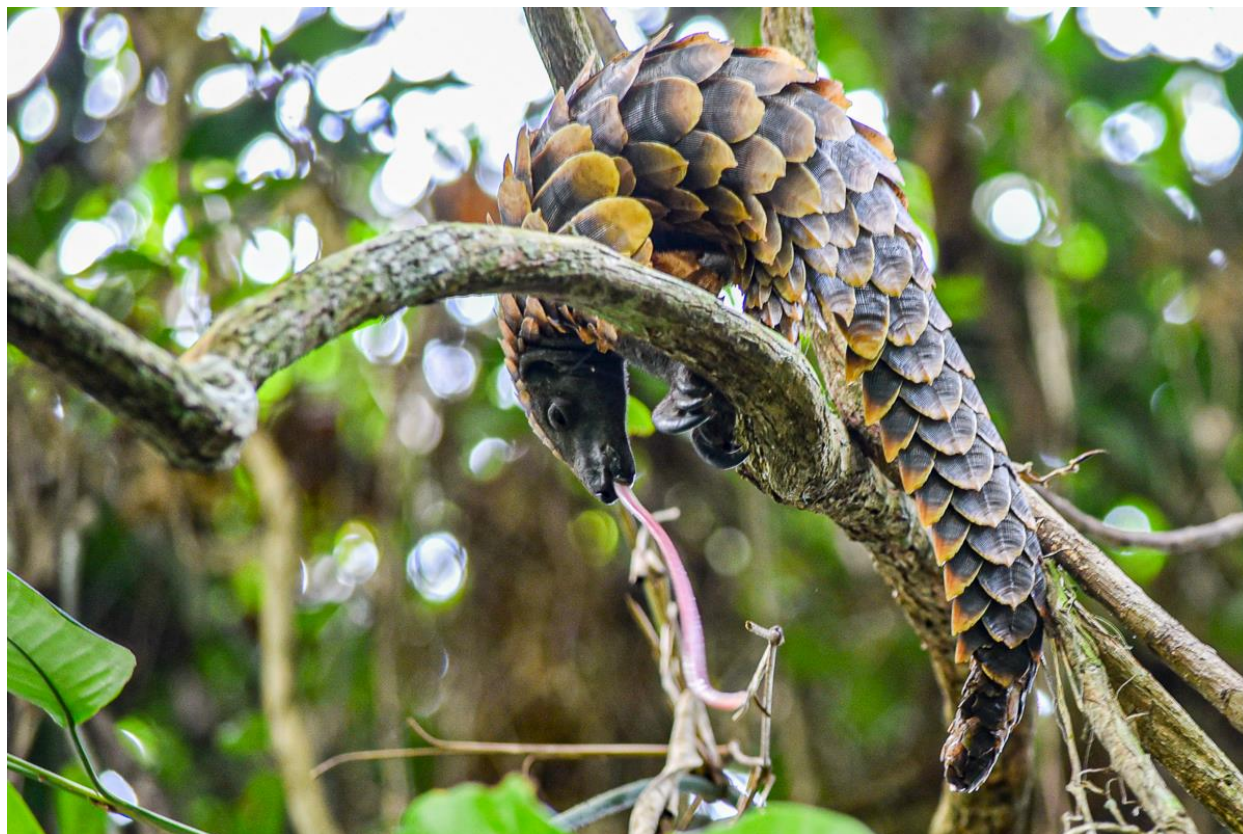
20th February 2021 - World Pangolin Day



sacharuna

Wildlife

The pangolin has never been a particularly eye-catching species, unlike others such as elephants, gorillas or whales, or even a well-known one. However, over the last few years this has changed to the point where every year, the third Saturday of February has been declared World Pangolin Day.



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Unfortunately, the reasons for this new status are not ones you would consider optimistic. On the one hand, they have been blamed as the cause for the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, information which has not been confirmed so far. On the other hand, due to another piece of information that has spread (which on this case has been confirmed to be 100% false), some people believe it's scales have medicinal properties, which have caused this animal to be the most trafficked mammal in the planet.

All eight extant species of pangolins, ranging across Africa and Asia, are threatened with extinction, and it is estimated that between **400,000 and 2.7 million pangolins in central African forests** are victims of illegal wildlife trade each year. Despite being nationally protected, all four African pangolin species found in the Central African Republic are still being sold as meat in markets and trafficked out of the country to neighboring ones, Cameroon and Democratic Republic of Congo notably.

Pangolins have also become a symbol of the complexity of species conservation. Integration of pangolin conservation with partnerships and collaborations that benefit all the different actors in society, nature and ecosystem are key and have never been so necessary to ensure their survival!

The annual World Pangolin Day is an opportunity to raise awareness about these charismatic animals and speed up conservation efforts.

Even though this is an animal that is difficult to observe in the wild, thanks to some of our trap cameras we can show a collection of videos. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZibFwWULEI>



Since 2015, Drs. Klara Petrzekova (Institute of Vertebrate Biology, Czech Academy of sciences), Andres Gomez (Minnesota University) and their team have been studying the microbes that live in the guts of gorillas, mangabeys, BaAka and Bantu people co-existing in Dzanga-Sanga Protected Areas (DSPA).

Our guts are full of trillions of microbes; mainly bacteria, viruses and others, which are collectively referred as the gut microbiome. While only a few of these microbes can cause disease, most actually contribute to maintaining a good immune system, metabolism and even mental health.

However, the beneficial activities of these microbes are significantly dependent on our diets. The most recent published work shows that BaAka people, who are mostly hunter-gatherers, share similarities with gorillas in their gut microbiomes.

Based on the results from this study, we can see how diets affect the gut microbiomes and health of humans and animals at DSPA and worldwide.

You can find the study in <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33361321>

Two others articles (in Czech) have been published on this

https://www.idnes.cz/brno/zpravy/primatolozka-klara-petrzelkova-vyzkum-gorily-strava-stredoafricka-republika.A210205_155903_brno-zpravy_krut&h=298DE98295B4F00B2A7108F6903B624D

<https://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-koronavirus/671249/podcast-gorily-muze-zabit-i-ryma-novy-koronavirus-se-ve-volne-priode-u-lidopu-zatim-nesiri.html>

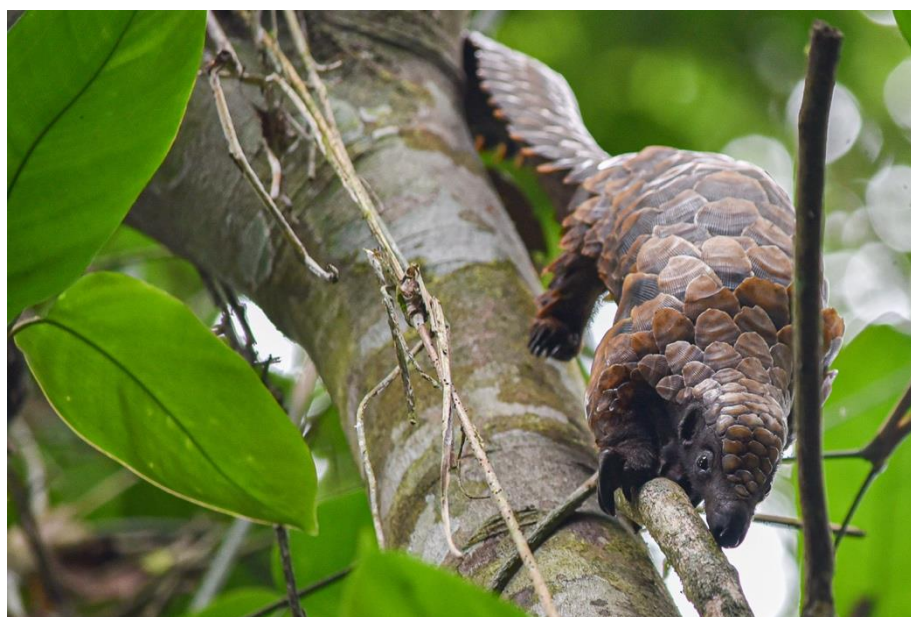
Podcast: Gorily může zabít i rýma. Nový koronavirus se ve volné přírodě u lidoopů zatím nešíří



After signing an agreement with Cornell University, a member of the elephant listening project has arrived in order to continue the field work that was interrupted last year on March due to all project members exiting the park following the breakout of the COVID pandemic.

A new study led by a San Diego Zoo Global scientist on the unique social character of forest elephants was published in the journal Animal Behaviour. The research was based on intensive long-term monitoring of the elephant population in Dzanga bai <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003347220303304?via%3Dihub>

Discover the Biodiversity of the DSPA



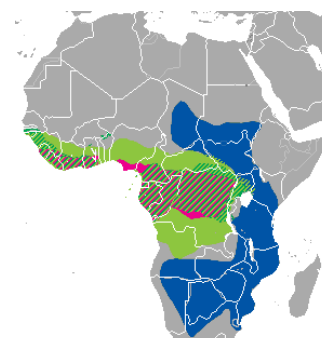
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Scientific name: Pholidota

English name: Pangolin

Taxonomy: Class: mammals
Order: Pholidota
Family: Manidae

Sub genus *Smutsia* – African, terrestrial
Sub genus *Phataginus*- African, arboreal



Wikipedia

The main characteristic that this mammal possesses is that it is covered in big scales over the majority of its body. Their size varies depending on the particular species, ranging from 30 cm to over 1 meter. When they are born, their scales are initially soft, and they harden progressively as the animal grows.

They are toothless but they have a sticky tongue as long as their body that reaches inside ant and termite nests.

Although they possess strong paws ending in claws that allow them to break termite nests, their main defense mechanism is curling up into a ball.

Pangolin mums carry their pup on the base of their back.

It's a very ancient species – Evolved around 80 million years ago.

CAR is one, if not the only one, of the few countries in Africa where the four African species live and Dzanga-Sangha Special Reserve is home to three of these four species.

Giant Pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*) - Largest living pangolin species, weighing up to 35 kg and terrestrial.

White-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*)_Most frequently encountered pangolin in the area, semi-arboreal and nocturnal.

Black-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyla*) Or long-tailed pangolin, with notably 47 tail vertebrae, is arboreal and the only diurnal pangolin.

Anti-poaching

DSPA ecoguards helped rescue a Ba'Aka girl kidnaped near Bayanga: On the evening of January 24th a group of three Ba'Aka children, all girls, returning from Bayanga to their home in Moussapola (situated 4 km away) was attacked by a man who hit one of them and kidnaped another, taking her with him into the forest. The other two girls quickly raised the alarm and the police solicited our help to locate her



Rebeka Epoumba (Photo published with parental authorization) © Nuria Ortega

The ecoguard Rapid Response Unit immediately searched the area and rescued the girl. She was taken to the hospital for examination and when it was confirmed that she had suffered no injuries or physical abuse, she was brought to the Human Rights Center which will follow up the incident

It is worth mentioning that the guards worked as if their own lives depended on it and once the operation was concluded and the girl was finally safe and unharmed, they celebrated in a way they rarely do. This helps to further prove that having a group of professional and well trained guards helps with more than just Protected Area conservation.

36 regular patrols and 3 BLAB patrols. In total 1.236 rangers/days, 1.3311 km traveled on foot and covering an area of 1.620 km². No one bi or tri national patrol because of the COVID 19. This resulted in the seizure of 4 manufactured 12-gauge shotguns, 6 homemade 12-gauge shotguns, 1 hunting gun and 65 gauge cartridges. In addition, 815 metal snares were dismantled and 1 kilogram of pangolin scales were confiscated.
16 poachers, arrested for minor offenses, was sensitized and released
15 kilograms of elephant meat and a 2 kg tusk were confiscated in the North of DSPA

Community Development

After 6 months of rearing fish under natural conditions, one of the fish ponds sown in Babongo within DSPA was emptied. A considerable quantity of the fish was sold locally, while the rest was transported to neighboring villages.



Freshly caught fish ©Nuria Ortega

As part of agricultural production in schools, an educational and recreational activity to help maintain biodiversity, the practice of hut gardens was implemented by the students of the Joli soir B school in Bayanga; a way for the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas to introduce the future generation to alternative activities to excessive hunting.



Students learning agricultural activities ©Franck Mavinga

In order to promote the sustainability of partner projects, particularly in the context of access for minority groups to quality education and adequate health care, a capacity building workshop on administrative and financial issues was held for the benefit of said partners from 15 to 18, 2021 in Bayanga. A total of 10 people was registered for this training.



©Nuria Ortega

About health, not one COVID 19 case was detected and for the second month in a row and due to security reasons, we have preferred that the Mobile Unit doesn't work.

Main DSPA Health Data Number of patients

Structure	Number of patients
Lindjombo Health Post	60
Monasao Health Post	211
Belemboke Health Post	359
Bayanga health post	40
Mobile clinic	
Total	670

Park Administration

The state of emergency has been decreed for another six months in the entire Central African Republic. Roads connecting Bangui with Cameroon and Bayanga are still dangerous making it insecure to travel safely by car through them. Luckily for us, we are not greatly affected by this as DSPA is situated near the border with Cameroon, where it is possible to obtain certain necessary products such as fuel.

The end-of-day curfew is still in place, now at 20'00 h, but things are slowly returning back to normal.

The heads of the different departments in DSPA, such as LE, Community conservation, Tourism and Administration, along with the Deputy Director, participated in two meetings held in Ouessou by the FTNS.

One was an orientation workshop for the implementation of 2021 work and budget plans for FTNS funding in the three parks of the Sangha Tri-national

The other one was the 35th meeting of the Tri-national Planning and Execution Committee known as CTPE (Comité Tri-national de Planification et Exécution)



Participants at the meeting @Albert Christian Ndadet

The financial agreement with FTNS was finally signed and the first set of funds was transferred, allowing us to restart some of the activities and construction plans that had been halted.

Due to the unconventional year we've had, leading to difficulties to continue working as usual, we have asked the EU for a three-month extension period to further implement planned activities before conducting an audit and presenting the reports for 2020.

Tourism and Marketing

After being closed for a year and expecting to reopen before long if the current situation allows for it, the Doli Lodge is being prepared to once again open for business.



During the storms, some trees could fall over the bungalows ©Nuria Ortega



©Nuria Ortega



Arrivals and departures



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Micheal BOUNGALO, Water and Forestry Engineer, has arrived in Bayanga to work as a consultant for the "ELEPHANT LISTENING" project in collaboration with the University of CORNEIL in the USA.