

The Dzanga-Ndoki National Park is located in the southwestern extremity of the Central African Republic. Established in 1990, the national park is 1,143.26 square kilometres (441.42 sq mi).[1] The national park is split into two non-continuous sectors, the northern Dzanga sector (or Dzanga Park) 49,500 ha (122,000 acres) and the southern Ndoki sector (or Ndoki Park)[2] 72,500 ha (179,000 acres). Notable in the Dzanga sector is a gorilla density of 1.6/km<sup>2</sup> (4.1/sq mi), one of the highest densities ever reported for the western lowland gorilla.[3]

Between the two sectors of the national park stretches the Dzanga-Sangha Special Reserve 335,900 ha (830,000 acres). The national park and the special reserve, each with its own protective status, are a part of the Dzanga-Sangha Complex of Protected Areas (DSPAC).[4][5]

Along with the adjacent Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in Republic of the Congo and Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Dzanga-Ndoki National Park forms the Sangha Trinational protected area, which was awarded World Heritage Site-status in 2012 [6]

Geography[edit]

The Dzanga-Sangha National Park is located in the extreme southwest of the Central African Republic in a triangular-shaped part of the country. The main river running through this region is the Sangha River.[7] The precise border between the Central African Republic, Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo is located at 2°13'14"N 16°11'31"E / 2.22056°N 16.19194°E (in the Sangha River), marking the furthest point of the park to the southwest. The park's altitude ranges from 340 to 615 m (1,115 to 2,018 ft) above sea level. The whole park is on alluvial sands. Along streams, forest clearings can be found with marshy depressions referred to as 'bai'. [8] The Dzanga Bai (translation: "the village of elephants") is a sandy salt lick that measures 250 by 500 m (820 by 1,640 ft). It is traversed through the middle by the Dzanga, a stream.[4][9] Since 1997, Bai Hokou has the base site of the Primate Habituation Programme where gorilla habituation for tourism has been ongoing, along with research.[10]

Logging occurred in the 1980s in the Dzanga sector but not in the Ndoki which is primary forest.[8] Amis Kamiss wrote in 2006 of having visited fifteen diamond mining sites in the Lobé River region, located in the northwestern part of the national park.[11]

Fauna and flora[edit]

There are three types of forest within Dzanga-Ndoki National Park: mainly dryland, a semi-evergreen forest that contains swamp-forest areas along the rivers and, a closed-canopy, monodominant *Gilbertiodendron dewevrei* forest. The dryland forest is an open, mixed canopy that is dominated by *Sterculiaceae* and *Ulmaceae*; often associated with it is a dense understorey of *Marantaceae* and *Zingiberaceae*. Along the Sangha River, there are stands of *Guibourtia demeusii*.

There are several intact populations of key forest fauna including the western lowland gorilla, African forest elephant, chimpanzee, giant forest hog, red river hog, sitatunga, endangered bongo,[12] African forest buffalo, and six species of duiker.[13] The gorilla density of 1.6 individuals/km<sup>2</sup> within the Dzanga sector is one of the highest densities ever reported for the western lowland gorilla.[3]

The Dzanga-Ndoki National Park has been designated an Important Bird Area (#CF008).

The IBA is contiguous with two other IBAs, Lobéké of Cameroon (#CM033) and Nouabalé-Ndoki in Congo (#CG001). Over 350 bird species have been reported at the national park of which at least 260 can be expected to breed. *Stiphornis sanghensis* has been described as a new species noted only within Dzanga-Sangha, but further investigation is pending[8] as it may also occur in adjacent parts of Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and Republic of the Congo.[14]

In May 2013, the slaughtering of 26 African forest elephants by poachers in Dzanga Bai, a reserve in the World Heritage Site Sangha Trinational[15] led to worldwide concern by conservationists.[16]