**Region: Congo Basin**

Countries included: Cameroon, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo

**Biodiversity and Global Environmental Benefits Regional Highlights:**

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| Country | Country-level biodiversity significance |
| Cameroon | * Cameroon’s biodiversity is of great importance to rural populations, of which approximately 80 percent are engaged in biodiversity-focused activities, or their means of subsistence/traditional health medicine depend on biodiversity products. The ecosystems are semi-arid, forested tropical savannah, mountain, Dense humid tropical forests, Marine and coastal, and freshwater.[[1]](#footnote-0) The North of the country includes the Guinean Forests of West Africa, home to several Key Biodiversity Areas prioritized in CEPF documentation [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/en_guinean_forests_ecosystem_profile.pdf). * Based on relative biological importance the following KBAs were highlighted as top priority in Cameroon: Bakossi Mountains, Bamboutos Mountains; Mbi Crater Faunal Reserve - Mbingo forest; Mont Kupe Integral Ecological Reserve; Mont Manengouba; Mont Nganha; Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge; Mount Lefo; Mount Oku; Mount Rata and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve; Tchabal Mbabo. These areas illustrate the high importance of Northern Cameroon, comprising 57 percent (12/21) of all Priority 1 KBAs in the Guinean Forests of West Africa.[[2]](#footnote-1) * Species biodiversity is relatively high. The geographic scope of species range-size rarity is centered in the Northwest region home to the Guinea Forests of West Africa. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are protected at a rate well below the global average, 36.31 to 44 percent, respectively. Large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs) are concentrated in the Northwest region; and include: [Tchabal-Mbabo](http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/tchabal-mbabo-iba-cameroon), [Yabassi](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6129), [Mont Nlonako](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6126), [Mount Rata and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6127), [Mount Mbam](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6117), [Mbam Minkom - Kala](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6131), and [Mbi Crater Faunal Reserve - Mbingo forest](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6116). PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 20.52 percent. * There are relatively few examples of prioritization mapping for conservation of biodiversity priorities in Cameroon produced by Indigenous Peoples or local communities. This [report](https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/default/files/publication/2010/04/cameroonunepreportnov08eng.pdf) to UNEP illustrates a case study in IPLC participation of mapping traditional forest resources, with the aim of prioritizing sustainable livelihoods and great ape conservation. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are moderate throughout the country with concentrations in [Mbam Djerem National Park](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6118), and the marine ecosystems near Douala, Cameroon. * The primary land cover types are Forest - 35.5Mha; Agriculture - 7.36Mha; Shrubland - 3.24Mha; Wetland - 454kha; Water - 383kha. * Cameroon has 7 ramsar sites with additional context [here](https://rsis.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/rsiswp_search/exports/Ramsar-Sites-annotated-summary-Cameroon.pdf?1589487716). * Cameroon ranks below the global average of ocean health, performing poorly in terms of artisanal fishing opportunities and very poorly in water quality. |
| Central African Republic | * The Central African Republic (CAR) is uniquely positioned between the Congo-Guinean forests of the South and the Sahel-Sudanian deserts to the North. Due to this location, CAR is home to a diverse set of ecosystems and rich and endemic species. While IUCN has mapped some of the species endemic to CAR it is largely believed that the political conflicts and instability in the region are leading to a reduction in species range and ecosystem quality.[[3]](#footnote-2) Although CAR is landlocked, it has over 2,000 km of waterways that link the region to the Congo river, Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[[4]](#footnote-3) * Species biodiversity is relatively high with large uncertainty in total biodiversity extent, with very specific range-size rarity points of importance outside of the cities/towns of N'Délé, Sibut, and Mbaïki. Given the predicted unidentified species, it is likely these sites represent current knowledge rather than the true scope of key species ranges. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are protected at a rate well above the global average, 74.37 to 44 percent, respectively. There are two large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs) found in the West of the country; and include: [Bozoum](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6079), [Dzanga-Ndoki National Park](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6083). PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 73.02 percent. * There are relatively few examples of prioritization mapping for conservation of biodiversity priorities in CAR produced by Indigenous Peoples or local communities. WRI and several development agencies have produced forest atlases (found [here](https://caf.forest-atlas.org/map?l=fr)) for most countries in the Congo Basin which highlight specific protected areas, production plants, and exploitation and development permits. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are moderate throughout the country with concentrations in Haute-Kotto and Mbomou Prefectures. * The primary land cover types are Forest - 51.1Mha; Shrubland - 10.3Mha; Agriculture - 1.31Mha; Water - 125kha. * CAR has 2 ramsar sites with additional context [here](https://rsis.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/rsiswp_search/exports/Ramsar-Sites-annotated-summary-Cameroon.pdf?1589487716). * CAR is landlocked and thus has no marine data. |
| DR Congo | * DR Congo is one of the world’s megadiverse countries, with high levels of endemism, freshwater, and forest resources. Severe political and economic pressures; however, have had devastating effects on the carbon stock and forest resources. DR Congo also holds approximately 50 percent of Africa’s freshwater resources, and critical species of aquatic fauna. Eastern DR Congo is home to the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot, which is spread over a million square kilometers, and provides vast ecosystem services and a habitat to over 100 endemic mammal species, among others. Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot documentation from CEPF is found [here](https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/eastern_afromontane_ecosystem_profile_final.pdf). * Species biodiversity is relatively high with moderate uncertainty in total biodiversity extent, with specific range-size rarity areas of importance in Eastern DR Congo and in Haut-Lomami province. Given the predicted unidentified species, it is likely these sites represent current knowledge rather than the true scope of key species ranges. * Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the country are protected at a rate below the global average, 40.01 to 44 percent, respectively. There are several large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs) found in the East and Center of the country; and include: [Kokolopori](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/29691), Marungu highlands, Itombwe Mountains, and [Lake Kivu catchment (DRC)](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/29671). PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 35.92 percent. * Prioritization mapping efforts of the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot, have identified 2 terrestrial and 4 freshwater KBAs which are Priority 1, comprising 5 and 11 percent (2/39 and 4/18) respectively. Based on relative biological importance the following KBAs were highlighted as top priority in DR Congo: Itombwe Mountains; Kahuzi-Biega National Park; Lake Albert; Lake Kivu; Lake Tanganyika; and Virunga National Park and Rutshuru. WRI and several development agencies have produced forest atlases (found [here](https://cod.forest-atlas.org/map?l=fr)) for most countries in the Congo Basin which highlight specific protected areas, concession permits, and forests allocated to local communities by the State. * A likely outdated IWGIA [Country Technical Notes on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40224547/congodr_ctn.pdf/2c80e90b-b0a9-4171-a621-3f0df1925ff9) for DR Congo is also provided, which includes further prioritization mapping from CBFP. * The GEF country profile is [here](https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/congo-country-programme.pdf), which includes the GEF country program strategy and prioritizations. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are moderately high throughout the country with peaks in Western DR Congo along the Congo River. * The primary land cover types are Forest - 169Mha; Agriculture - 27.5Mha; Wetland - 20.7Mha; Shrubland - 10.2Mha; Water - 4.31Mha; Grassland - 3.25Mha; and Settlement - 214kha. * DR Congo has 3 ramsar sites with additional context [here](https://rsis.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/rsiswp_search/exports/Ramsar-Sites-annotated-summary-Democratic-Republic-of-Congo.pdf?). * DR Congo is landlocked and thus has no marine data. |
| Equatorial Guinea | * Equatorial Guinea is located along the African Atlantic coast and divided into two biogeographic divisions—insular and continental. The country’s tropical rainforests, rich terrestrial and marine resources are home to a relatively high number of endemic species. In particular, the islands Bioko and Annobón are habitats for a large number of vertebrates, mammals (including a high number of endemic primates), birds and reptiles.[[5]](#footnote-4) The continental region is also habitat to numerous species, and provides considerable ecosystem services to the country’s population. The population of Equatorial Guinea is engaged in a number of market activities that produce negative effects for the environment, ranging from oil and gas exploitation, roundwood extraction, and hunting of forest meat.[[6]](#footnote-5) * In terms of range-size rarity, there are no areas of importance in Equatorial Guinea. * Key Biodiversity Areas within the country are protected at a rate well above the global average, 100 to 44 percent, respectively. PA protection of KBAs has risen from 1999, from 20 percent. * Academic prioritization mapping efforts are well documented for Equatorial Guinea, due to its relative biodiversity importance. Recent studies include, prioritizing [marine conservation efforts](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2019.00717/full) and [continental large mammal conservation efforts](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0075024). There are relatively few recent examples of prioritization mapping for conservation of biodiversity priorities in CAR produced by Indigenous Peoples or local communities. * The GEF country profile is [here](https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/equatorial-guinea-country-programme.pdf), which includes the GEF country program strategy and prioritizations. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are moderately evenly distributed throughout the country with peaks along the coast, such as the Southern Muni Estuary. * The primary land cover types are Forest - 2.37Mha; Agriculture - 277kha; Wetland - 42.5kha; Water - 17.5kha; Settlement - 5.99kha; Shrubland - 2.57kha; Grassland - 135ha. * Equatorial Guinea has 3 ramsar sites with additional context [here](https://rsis.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/rsiswp_search/exports/Ramsar-Sites-annotated-summary-Equatorial-Guinea.pdf?1589487716). * Equatorial Guinea performs poorly in terms of global ocean health, along the dimensions of artisanal fishing opportunities, sustainable food provision, and coastal livelihoods and economies. |
| Gabon | * Gabon is a high forest cover country, with forests comprising 91.3 percent of land area in 2018. The country’s forests are home to a number of endemic species, with the largest concentration in plant species—of the 8 - 10k, some 20 percent are endemic. While Gabon’s marine ecosystems have received less investment, they contain the highest density of leatherback turtle nesting sites globally, and are an important seasonal breeding ground for humpback whales.[[7]](#footnote-6) * Forests cover 85% of Gabon, while savannahs, mangroves and wetlands, among others, cover the remaining 15%. Forests in Gabon comprise an estimated 8000 plant species with a 20% endemism rate. The Monts de Cristal constitute Gabon’s richest region, and probably one of the richest in all tropical Africa, in terms of the number of plant species. * In terms of range-size rarity, there are few pockets of importance including Estuaire and Moyen-Ogooué province. * Key Biodiversity Areas within the country are protected at a rate well above the global average, 61.67 to 44 percent, respectively. There are three large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs); and include: [Léconi grasslands](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6310), [Mount Iboundji,](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/29692) and [Ogooué delta and Mandji island](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6309). PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 11.39 percent. * Academic mapping efforts are well documented for Gabon, highlighting prioritizations for [national level hydrological ecosystem services](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0179008) and [use and conservation cost-benefit analyses](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:68cec1ba-a08e-43a1-84d2-35fb1a3a14b2/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=Lee.Michelle_DPhilThesis.pdf&type_of_work=Thesis). While there are few prioritization mapping efforts led by Indigenous Peoples or local communities, the MappingForRights program has mapped [communities in Gabon](https://cbca.mappingforrights.org/) and their proximity to various areas of interest, including Logging concessions, Mining permits, Oil permits, Agri-industrial plantations, Protected areas, REDD+ projects, and Community forests. * The GEF country profile is [here](https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gabon-country-programme.pdf), which includes the GEF country program strategy and prioritizations. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are moderately evenly distributed throughout the country with peaks along the coast, such as the Southern Muni Estuary. * The primary land cover types are Forest - 23.4Mha; Agriculture - 1.33Mha; Shrubland - 927kha; Grassland - 376kha; Water - 333kha; and Wetland - 295kha. * Gabon has 9 ramsar sites with additional context [here](https://rsis.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/rsiswp_search/exports/Ramsar-Sites-annotated-summary-Gabon.pdf?). * Gabon performs poorly in terms of global ocean health, along the dimensions of sustainable food provision, coastal livelihoods and economies, and clean waters. There are 5 IUCN red-listed whale and dolphin species, and over 25 species of sharks and rays.[[8]](#footnote-7) |
| Rep. of Congo | * The Republic of Congo is located in the second largest rainforest in the world, and is habitat to a number of endemic species. Due to long standing political and economic pressures; however, there are sizable gaps in the knowledgebase of both species richness and ecosystems. Of the known species, several are listed on IUCN Red List as critically endangered, including the world’s largest population of western lowland gorillas, and species of elephants, marshbucks, and bongos.[[9]](#footnote-8) * Species biodiversity is relatively high with moderate uncertainty in total biodiversity extent, with specific range-size rarity areas of importance in Southern Congo near Brazzaville, Dolisie and Pointe-Noire. Given the predicted unidentified species, it is likely these sites represent current knowledge rather than the true scope of key species ranges. * Key Biodiversity Areas within the country are protected at a rate well above the global average, 72.12 to 44 percent, respectively. There are three large KBAs outside of/or partially within Protected Areas (PAs); and include: [Ogooué Leketi National Park](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/24252), [Dimonika Biosphere Reserve](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6087), and [Lower Kouilou basin](http://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/6088). PA protection of KBAs has risen from 2000, from 40.63 percent. * There are several prioritization mapping efforts led by Indigenous Peoples or local communities: [WWF’s summary](http://www.wwf-congobasin.org/where_we_work/tridom___tri_national_dja_odzala_minkebe/) of engaging [FPIC around conserving lands in Messok Dja](https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/191125_current_update__engaging_communities_in_the_future_of_messok_dja.pdf) (part of the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM) landscape), one of the last intact forest landscapes of the Congo Basin; [IWGIA’s Country Technical Notes on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40224547/congo_ctn.pdf/25612f61-03f1-4cbd-a983-bc3cf0ef9154), which includes a dated map on indigenous community locations; and the MappingForRights program has mapped [communities in Congo](https://cbca.mappingforrights.org/) and their proximity to various areas of interest, including Logging concessions, Mining permits, Oil permits, Agri-industrial plantations, Protected areas, REDD+ projects, and Community forests. * Stores of irrecoverable carbon are clustered in the Congo basin and along the Congo River. * The primary land cover types are Forest - 21.8Mha; Wetland - 4.28Mha; Shrubland - 3.80Mha; Agriculture - 3.44Mha; Grassland - 729kha; and Water - 357kha. * Congo has 14 ramsar sites with additional context [here](https://rsis.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/rsiswp_search/exports/Ramsar-Sites-annotated-summary-Congo.pdf?). * Congo performs poorly in terms of global ocean health, along the dimensions of sustainable food provision, artisanal fishing opportunities, and clean waters. |

1. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cm/cm-nr-05-fr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/en_guinean_forests_ecosystem_profile.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cf/cf-nr-05-fr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cf/cf-nr-05-fr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/gq/gq-nr-05-es.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=gq#facts> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. <https://gabon.wcs.org/en-us/Wild-Places/Gabons-Coast-Ocean.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. <https://gabon.wcs.org/en-us/Wild-Places/Gabons-Coast-Ocean.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/cg/cg-nr-05-fr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)