IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
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Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Dja Faunal Reserve. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Dja Faunal Reserve

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Cameroon
Inscribed in: 1987
Criteria:
(ix) (x)

Site description:
This is one of the largest and best-protected rainforests in Africa, with 90% of its area left undisturbed. Almost completely surrounded by the Dja River, which forms a natural boundary, the reserve is especially noted for its biodiversity and a wide variety of primates. It contains 107 mammal species, five of which are threatened. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2014 Conservation Outlook

Critical

The current state and trend of World Heritage values are of significant concern as the pressures on the area are growing with development projects (mining, dams, and plantation) threatening the values and integrity of the site. Poaching is one of the major threats and it is recurrent inside the property, notably in the eastern sector where an organized network in the commercial trade of species appears to function. Because of important energy and industrial projects it is feared that poaching problems will continue to increase, and it would be useful for the management authority to monitor the effectiveness of anti-poaching activities within the boundaries of the property. The financial, technical and human resources are insufficient to effectively control the area and address some of the major threats, especially poaching. Lack of recent monitoring data makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the state of wildlife in the property and its vicinity. However, a serious decline of populations of some species in comparison with the time of inscription is evident. The natural values of the site are still present, but in the absence of urgent responses to the threats, they will continue to rapidly degrade. Despite ongoing efforts, the overall situation of the management of the property remains critical.

Current state and trend of VALUES

High Concern
Trend: Deteriorating

The natural values are still present at the site; however the situation is of high concern. Signs of deterioration of the site’s biodiversity are present. There is a perceptible decrease of wildlife in comparison with population levels at the time of inscription. The demand for land and bush meat as well as the pressure from development projects (mining, dams, and plantations) at the periphery of the site could potentially lead to a further decline of the site’s values. Lack of recent data makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the state of wildlife in the property and

its vicinity.

Overall THREATS

Very High Threat

A significant threat is the current and potential poaching, particularly as a result of agro-industrial, hydro-electric, mining, and forestry projects in the vicinity of the property. The collaboration of all these economic operators in anti-poaching activities is essential for the ecological monitoring of the entire site. However, despite some positive actions by certain economic operators since the second half of 2013, and the support of conservation partners, which have enabled the increased presence of surveillance and monitoring staff in some parts of the property, the threat of poaching remains present and is having a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Some Concern

Due to a lack of resources, the management of the site is not effective and of some concern. Poaching is increasing rapidly in relation with the demand for bush meat and the weakness of anti-poaching patrols. The management authority and its partners are increasing efforts to combat poaching. However, it would be useful to monitor the effectiveness of the anti-poaching surveillance within the property. It is hoped that the recently obtained conservation funding will help strengthen the technical and operational capacity of the management body and improve enforcement, supervision and control.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

► Primary rain forest with rich and varied ecosystems

Criterion:(ix)

The primary forest of the Dja Reserve is interesting for its diversity of species and its unique pristine condition. With its topographical diversity and its three biogeographical and geological influences, it has a rich and varied ecosystem that reflects the ecological evolution in progress in this type of environment. It belongs to the forest block considered to be the largest in Africa for the maintenance of biological diversity. The vegetation mainly comprises dense evergreen Congo rainforest with a main canopy at 30-40 m rising to 60 m. The shrub layer contains over 53 species. The forest is also rich in lianes. The herbaceous layer is composed principally of Marantaceae and Mapania species. The Congo rainforest is also characterized by almost pure stands of Gilbertiodendron dewevrei forest. Other main vegetation types are swamp vegetation, and secondary forest around old villages (which were abandoned in 1946) and recently abandoned cocoa and coffee plantations. Composition of the secondary forest is noticeably different as a result of the relative scarcity of species of the Meliaceae (SoOUV, 2011).

► Habitat of numerous remarkable species many of which are globally threatened

Criterion:(x)

The Dja Reserve is one of Africa's most species-rich rainforests. It includes the habitat of numerous remarkable animal and plant species, many of which

are globally threatened. It has over 100 species of mammals, of which at least 14 primates. In addition, flagship species are found in the Reserve, such as the endangered forest elephant, and the nearly extinct African gray parrot, as well as bongo and leopard. Birds include Bates's weaver, which is endemic to southern Cameroon, and grey-necked picathartes probably also occurs in this reserve. Reptiles include python, lizard and two species of crocodile (both of which are threatened species) (SoOUV, 2011).

► **Wide range of primate species**
Criterion:(x)

Although the area is poorly studied, it is known to have a wide range of primate species including western lowland gorilla, greater white-nosed guenon, moustached guenon, crowned guenon, talapoin, red-capped mangabey, white-cheeked mangabey, agile mangabey, drill, mandrill, potto, Demidorff's galago, black and white colobus monkey and chimpanzee (IUCN Evaluation, 1987).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats
High Threat

Poaching is one of the major threats and the most significant current threat, and it is recurrent inside the property, notably in the eastern sector where an organized network in the commercial trade of species appears to operate. Surveillance efforts are increasing, reducing the level of poaching both within and outside the property. Further increasing the surveillance effort and law enforcement will be crucial to further control poaching, especially in light of the likely significant influx of people related to the ongoing construction of the Mekin dam and the industrial plantation project.

► Commercial hunting

High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Commercial poaching is increasing despite recent increases in ranger numbers, and currently represents the main threat to the site. In 2008, 2983 illegal animals seized were seized in the course of 308 anti-poaching patrols, while in 2010 this number increased to 8919 animals seized by only 101 patrols. Poaching is recurrent inside the property, notably in the eastern sector of Lomié where an organized network in the commercial trade of species appears to function with the support of local elites (UNESCO/IUCN Mission Report, 2012). Due to significant energy-related and industrial projects it is feared that poaching will continue to increase, and it will be essential for the management authority to monitor the effectiveness of anti-poaching activities within and near the boundaries of the property (SOC Report, 2013).

► Subsistence hunting

Very Low Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Traditional hunting is permitted within the property as part of the user rights extended to the indigenous communities, however, this can neither be at the expence of protected species, nor take on a commercial nature (UNESCO/IUCN mission report, 2012).

► Logging/ Wood Harvesting

Low Threat
Outside site

Logging affects the entire periphery of the site, causing fragmentation of the forest habitat thus having an impact on biodiversity. (BETTI J.L., 2004). The exploitation of forest products may be done either by private concessionnaires, or by local communities. Although the logging itself does not pose a risk to the OUV of the property as long as it is located outside its boundaries, there is a risk of illegal logging within the property. Furthermore, these activities also have indirect impacts on the property (facilitated access

and poaching). While these activities do not constitute an imminent threat to the values and integrity of the property, their strict control and the surveillance of the exploited areas remains a necessity (UNESCO/IUCN Mission Report, 2012).

Potential Threats

Very High Threat

Mining projects could potentially change the social and natural environment of the site in a very rapid time. The projects will bring many people to the area increasing pressures on the site. The industrial plantations and the construction of the Mekin dam, despite positive progress in negotiating agreements for the implementation of anti-poaching activities, currently do not appear to foresee any concrete measures to avoid, mitigate, and/or compensate negative impacts on the OUV of the property. The cumulative impact of all these projects represent a very high threat.

► Mining/ Quarrying

Very High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Numerous exploration licenses for mining projects have been granted in the periphery of the site, one of which overlapped with almost 20% of the site (IUCN/UNESCO, 2012). However on 13 March 2013 the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Technological Development of Cameroon decided to reduce this particular license in order to remove the encroachment on the property (SOC report, 2013). GEOVIC has been granted a license for the exploitation of cobalt and nickel in the northern periphery of the site on a territory of about 150 000 ha located about 40 km away from the site’s border. The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment of this project was considered insufficient by the World Heritage Committee. So far, GEOVIC has neither established an action plan, nor a monitoring plan, nor has it developed specific protocols to respond to problems, or foreseen a realistic budget that matches the risks (UNESCO/IUCN Mission Report, 2012). In the framework of the sustainable conservation project of the Dja Faunal Reserve funded by the Franz Weber Foundation, terms of reference for a new Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) are currently being developed

(SOC Report, 2014).

► Dams/ Water Management or Use

Very High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

The “Mekin” dam is currently being constructed at the confluence of the Mekin and Dja Rivers. The Mekin dam is likely to have a direct impact on the property, both during its construction and during the operation phase. The property will be partly flooded by the reservoir, and the influx of people associated to the dams construction and operation is likely to have impacts on the property through easier access (eg. spontaneous settlements, illegal forestry and agricultural activities, hunting, fishing, and poaching) (IUCN/Unesco Mission Report, 2012; SOC Report 2012). The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project recognizes that the socio-economic development that it will induce could result in increased anthropogenic pressures on the property (SOC report, 2014). Since 2012, the EDC / Hydro Mekin Company is involved in a multiparty discussion between stakeholders within the territory of the Biosphere Reserve. Negotiations are underway for the development of a memorandum of understanding for the implementation of awareness-raising, anti-poaching and ecological monitoring activities within the zone of influence of the dam (SOC report, 2014). Despite this positive sign of improved dialogue between those concerned, which should be pursued, environmental management plan for the project does not appear to include appropriate measures to mitigate the direct and indirect impacts of the dam on the OUV of the property (SOC Report, 2014).

► Crop production

Very High Threat
Inside site

A concession (45200 ha) has been granted in the peripheral zone of the biosphere reserve and at the limit of the site for rubber, oil palm, and cocoa plantations. According to the operator, the project could result in an immigration of some 30000 new inhabitants (UICN/Unesco, 2012).The concessionaire, Sud Hevea Cameroun, and the Dja Conservation Service have signed an agreement relating to the implementation of awareness-raising, anti-poaching and ecological monitoring activities in the plantation

and the property itself. However, no concrete measures to prevent, mitigate and/or compensate the negative impacts of this project on the property's OUV are evident (SOC report, 2014).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Tourism and interpretation

Data Deficient

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► Relationships with local people

Mostly Effective

The relationships are quite good but the situation is changing due to the development of the area. A real effort needs to be done in order to involve local institutions and the population more (UNSECO/IUCN Mission Report, 2009). The managemet authority of the property provides support to the 18 vigilance and monitoring committees established in local communities. With the support of the Great Apes Project, two community wildlife management committees have been created and a simple wildlife management plan has been approved for Malen V village, as well as community zoning of some hunting areas (State Party Report, 2013).

► Legal framework and enforcement

Some Concern

A strict application of the current legal regime of the property would suffice to preserve its OUV and maintain its integrity. The essential question in this regard mainly relates to the capacity of the management authority, and the political will to fully apply and enforce the law, and to ensure that the management authority has sufficient technical and financial capacity (UNESCO/IUCN Mission Report, 2012).

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Data Deficient

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► Management system

Some Concern

The management system exists but the staff is insufficient for ensuring its effective implementation (UICN/Unesco, 2012). In 2012 a five-year emergency safeguarding plan for protected areas in Cameroon was developed and approved by the President of the Republic. The plan provides for the annual recruitment of 500 eco-guards, their training, and the upgrading of equipment. The Dja Faunal Reserve is one of the seven priority areas of the emergency plan (SOC Report, 2013).

► Management effectiveness

Some Concern

The Management Plan is too general and not accompanied by a strategic action plan. The organization and means are insufficient. The current Management Plan (2008-2012) is far from being achieved. The financial and human resources are insufficient (IUCN/Unesco, 2009; IUCN/Unesco, 2012).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Some Concern

The State Party has been making an effort to implement the recommendations made by the World Heritage Committee at its 36th session. These efforts have resulted in the elimination of the overlap with the property of a mining permit, the development of a partnership with Sud Hévéa Cameroun, the mobilization of funds from the Franz Weber Foundation (World Heritage Centre project for the conservation of the property), and the recruitment of 24 additional rangers, among others (SOC report, 2013). Nevertheless, the recommendations made by the Committee at its 36th session (2012) have not yet been fully implemented, despite the deadline of one year given by the Committee. Also, the construction of the Mekin dam continues without any measures in place to avoid and mitigate its impacts

(SOC report, 2014).

▶ Boundaries

Some Concern

Parts of the boundary in the north are not clearly demarkated in the field which facilitates agricultural encroachments in the site. There is no buffer zone (UICN/Unesco, 2012). The projected activities of the property management service in 2013 included the revision of the boundaries, their materialization and maintenance (SOC Report, 2013).

▶ Sustainable finance

Some Concern

The national financial resources granted to the site are insufficient, especially for anti-poaching activities. There is no financial local autonomy, making it difficult to react quickly to daily problems. The financial resources provided by the State party are decreasing (UICN/Unesco, 2012). In 2013, the World Heritage Centre and the Franz Weber Foundation signed a five-year agreement for the Dja Faunal Reserve preservation project (UNESCO, 2013). This project has supported a number of the activities undertaken by the State Party since 2013 in response to the World Heritage Committee’s recommendations (SOC Report, 2014).

▶ Staff training and development

Mostly Effective

Some training has been developed for the staff mainly on monitoring of large mammal species (UICN/Unesco, 2012). In 2013, with support from partners, 30 ecoguards have been trained in the techniques of ecological monitoring data gathering, and seven officers in the management of databases (SOC report, 2014).

▶ Sustainable use

Some Concern

Traditional hunting by Baka Pygmies is permitted in the site, however, non-traditional hunting methods are theoretically strictly controlled (UNESCO/IUCN Mission Report, 2012). Commercial poaching is in large part

based on traditional hunting (UNESCO/IUCN Mission Report, 2009).

▶ Education and interpretation programs

Data Deficient

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▶ Monitoring

Some Concern

Ecological monitoring is approximate and problematical. Earlier data have been lost or are not easily accessible. The monitoring of fauna populations was not operational in 2012, due to the lack of resources (UICN/Unesco Mission Report, 2012). The implementation of ecological monitoring activities in the East of the property has been supported by the African Wildlife Foundation since August 2013. Since 2013, 30 ecoguards have been trained in the techniques of ecological monitoring data gathering, and seven officers in the management of databases, and a database for ecological monitoring is now operational and awaiting its linkage with SMART in 2014 (SOC report, 2014).

▶ Research

Some Concern

Very little research is currently ongoing in the property (IUCN/Unesco Mission report, 2009) (IUCN/Unesco Mission report, 2012)

Overall assessment of protection and management

Some Concern

Due to a lack of resources, the management of the site is not effective and of some concern. Poaching is increasing rapidly in relation with the demand for bush meat and the weakness of anti-poaching patrols. The management authority and its partners are increasing efforts to combat poaching. However, it would be useful to monitor the effectiveness of the anti-poaching surveillance within the property. It is hoped that the recently obtained conservation funding will help strengthen the technical and operational capacity of the management body and improve enforcement, supervision and

control.

▶ **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site**

Serious Concern

The main pressures from outside the site are related to big development projects (mining permits, an industrial plantation, and a dam). The available resources are insufficient to respond adequately to these pressures (IUCN/Unesco, 2009; (IUCN/Unesco, 2012). Negotiations with the developer of the Mekin dam and with Sud Hévéa Cameroun to implement awareness-raising, anti-poaching and ecological monitoring activities are encouraging, but so far do not appear to have resulted in any concrete action on the ground (SOC report, 2014).

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **Primary rain forest with rich and varied ecosystems**

Low Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

The pressure on resources and the decline of some mammalian species (particularly elephants) that play an important role in the ecological processes could lead to a significant decline of the values associated with criterion (ix).

▶ **Habitat of numerous remarkable species many of which are globally threatened**

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

The faunal richness of the site has perceptibly decreased compared to what it was at the time of inscription (elephants, buffalos, bongos, some primates) due to poaching which could in the future question the values of criterion (x).

However due to the lack of recent data it is difficult to make conclusions on the state of wildlife in the property and its vicinity (SOC report, 2012).

► Wide range of primate species

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

Currently, it is difficult to know the exact status of the wildlife populations in the property. A status evaluation of great apes conducted in 2010 over roughly 13% of the area of the property, in the southern sector of Somalomo, concluded that there remained a “quite large” population of great apes, apparently stable over the last fifteen years. Although these results are encouraging, the last IUCN/UNESCO mission to the property (2012) estimated that the reduced area covered by this study and its focalization uniquely on great apes did not enable the establishment of general conclusions on the state and evolutionary tendencies of wildlife in the property and its vicinity (SOC report, 2012).

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

High Concern

Trend: Deteriorating

The natural values are still present at the site; however the situation is of high concern. Signs of deterioration of the site’s biodiversity are present. There is a perceptible decrease of wildlife in comparison with population levels at the time of inscription. The demand for land and bush meat as well as the pressure from development projects (mining, dams, and plantations) at the periphery of the site could potentially lead to a further decline of the site’s values. Lack of recent data makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the state of wildlife in the property and its vicinity.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ Poaching

Local

Poaching is the main current pressure on the site, and could be exacerbated by the influx of people resulting from mining project, ongoing dam construction, and industrial plantations. The control of the reserve is currently insufficient and would likely not be able to respond to increasing anthropogenic pressure caused by such an influx of people.

▶ Mining

Local

The mining explorations in the periphery of the property are likely to have an impact on its OUV (increase of poaching, pressure for land in the immediate periphery). The risks for conservation would be at high level if an ESIA with accompanying measures is not approved and the measures to avoid and mitigate impacts implemented.

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ Is the protected area valued for its nature conservation?

The Baka Pygmies have specific rights in the site such as traditional hunting, collection of medicinal plants, fruits, roots…This is an important benefit but the tendency to commercialization could lead to a loss of biodiversity by over-exploitation.

▶ Outdoor recreation and tourism

The development of tourism could be a contribution to local and national economy as Dja can attract tourists both for natural and cultural reasons. Tourism at the property has already provided a benefit to local communities (notably Baka Pygmies) in the order of 1279000 FCFA (2558 USD) between April and July 2013

► **Contribution to education**

The site is a place of important education and training activities for local people. It will be critically important to include new immigrants to the area in education and awareness-raising activities, in order to mitigate the anthropogenic pressures on the site.

Summary of benefits

The main benefit from the site is the access to its natural resources for Baka Pygmies. There is a potential development for local and global population in the fields of tourism and education.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	RC/UE (ECOFAC IV)		Projet Mesures d'Accompagnement (PMdA-Dja) autour de la Réserve de Biosphère du Dja, Site pilote RAPAC .The aim is to insure the reduction of the pressure on the BR natural
2	RC		Plan d'aménagement de la Réserve de Biosphère de Dja.
3	RC/UE (ECOFAC V)		Projet d'appui au développement des populations de la boucle de Mekas. Réserve de Biosphère du Dja, Site pilote RAPAC. L'objectif général du projet est de promouvoir un développement durable de l'antenne Ouest de la Réserve de Biosphère du Dja à travers l'utilisation raisonnée des ressources naturelles

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5	RCA, 2004, Plan d'aménagement de la Réserve de Biosphère de Dja, Yaoundé, 113 p.
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