Nyungwe National Park

2025 Conservation Outlook Assessment

SITE INFORMATION

Country: Rwanda
Inscribed in: 2023
Criteria: (x)

This serial property represents an important area for rainforest conservation in Central Africa. The property is home to intact forests and peat bogs, moors, thickets and grasslands, providing habitats to a highly diverse flora and fauna. The Park also contains the most significant natural habitats for a number of species found nowhere else in the world, including the globally threatened Eastern Chimpanzee (Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii), Golden Monkey (Cercopithecus mitis ssp. kandti) and the Critically Endangered Hills Horseshoe Bat (Rhinolophus hillorum). © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2025 Conservation Outlook

Finalised on 11 Oct 2025

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

The conservation state of Nyungwe National Park is good overall. Despite a few challenges like the presence of an international road crossing the park, a dense neighbouring human population and invasive alien plant species, the overall current threats to the site are low. Furthermore, threats are addressed effectively inside and outside the park and sustainable funding mechanisms are being developed with good relationships with local communities. Of some concern is the fact that there is no updated Management Plan available since the last one expired in 2021. This leads to a lack of clarity regarding the the management and use of the buffer zone, which was previously detailed in the 2012-2021 Management Plan. The current general provisions are not sufficient to ensure the buffer zone functions as an added layer of protection for the property.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

▶ **Valuable habitat and floral biodiversity** **Criterion:(x)**

The intact forest ecosystem of NNP supports a wide variety of forest types as well as non-forest montane environments such as grasslands, moors, thickets and peat
bogs. These environments are home to a total of 1,468 species of vascular plants (143 ferns, two or three gymnosperms and 1,322 angiosperms). Among these, 240 species are endemic to the Albertine Rift, at least 32 of which are endemic to Rwanda, and 76 species are threatened to varying degrees. Since parts of the
forests are hyper-humid with a very abundant flora of epiphytes, the Orchidaceae are particularly well represented with 198 species, 59 of which are endemic to the
Albertine Rift with 18 endemic to Rwanda. In all 18 species are threatened to varying degrees (State Party of Rwanda, 2022; IUCN, 2023).

▶ **High level of faunal biodiversity** **Criterion:(x)**

As for its fauna, this ecosystem preserves currently 101 species of mammals, including 20 endemic of the Albertine Rift, two species endemic to Rwanda and 14 endangered species. Among these species are 14 primate species (or taxa) and the populations of the l'Hoest's monkey and the Albertine Rift race (ruwenzorii) of the Angola colobus are probably among the most important for these two species. The population of over 300 chimpanzees is not very large, but it is important for the preservation of the eastern race schweinfurthii of this endangered species. The avifauna has 351 species, including 31 (84%) of the 37 known endemic species of the Albertine Rift and 10 threatened species. In particular, NNP is home to the only large population of the Grauer's rush warbler, an endangered Albertine Rift endemic, living in a protected area. Reptiles number 46 species, 14 (33%) of which are endemic to the Albertine Rift but only one species is endangered. Amphibians number 32 species, 21 (69%) of which are endemic to the Albertine Rift and two endemic to Rwanda. In addition, three species are threatened. The entomofauna has at least 290 species of butterflies, including 47 species endemic of the Albertine Rift and 3 local endemic taxa (State Party of Rwanda, 2022; IUCN, 2023).

Other important biodiversity values

▶ **Ecosystems, communities and ecological/biological processes**

The 101,957 ha mountain ecosystem has unique value due to its relatively large area, its great diversity of forest and non-forest, edaphic and ombrophilous formations, and of very different ages which represent various stages of plant succession taking place in mountain environment. Between closed-canopy and open-canopy forest exist a dynamic equilibrium. Between the vast mountain bamboo thickets and the various types of surrounding forests is another dynamism at work. These interactions remain poorly understood, however. Several large peat bogs, located at varied altitudes, contribute significantly to the richness of the whole ecosystem. These peatlands are not only the seat of internal vegetation cycles, but the ecotones between these peat lands and the swamp forests or the dense terra-firme forest are also very dynamic. The whole of this forest ecosystem, with predominant Afro-montane biogeographic affinities, is eminently representative for the natural landscapes of the Albertine Rift Montane Forests Ecoregion. Finally these peat bogs, especially those of the Kamiranzovu basin, preserve exceptional pollen archives spanning several hundred thousands of years (State Party of Rwanda, 2022; IUCN, 2023).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

Located in one of the country's most densely populated areas with high levels of poverty, NNP continues to face threats from road traffic, hunting, gold mining, and human wildlife conflicts. Hunting with snares continues inside the park but management aims at working with the rangers and ecoguards (who are recruited from hunters) to reduce this threat. Upgrading of a road to the north of the property will hopefully reduce truck traffic on the main road traversing through the property.

▶ Hunting, Collecting & Controlling Terrestrial Animals

(Hunting)

Low Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

Hunting is practiced mainly by "professional" hunters who live on the fringes of society and are also involved in other illegal activities in and outside the park. The game hunted are most often porcupines (Atherurus africanus), large rodents (Gambian rat), bovids (duikers, bushbuck, and formerly buffaloes) or pigs (bush pig and formerly giant forest hog). Primates are generally trapped by accident. In the years after 1996, when many Rwandan farmers came back from the refugee camps in DRC there was an increase in hunting and some people started to hunt monkeys. Since African Parks took over the management of the NNP early 2021 it has been found that hunting is more important than previously thought. In comparison with the lowland forests of Central Africa, however, it remains quite inconspicuous. It is done exclusively with cable traps, therefore mainly affecting duikers, porcupines, genets and civets, mongooses and large rodents like the Gambian rat. Nevertheless, monkeys and other animals like the side-striped jackal are occasionally caught. Effective law enforcement and community engagement, like the existing revenue-sharing scheme are critical to address this threat (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ Mining & Quarrying

(Gold mining)

Low Threat
Outside site

Gold mining took place from 1935 until 2004. This activity had strongly disturbed some river beds. The gold miners contributed to the out-hunting of some mammal species. Today, most of the damage has been repaired and mining sites have been restored through natural regeneration. However, occasionally there is evidence of illegal mining, especially in the Tangaro valley. Most of these actions are localised and affect only very small areas, but vigilance and effective law enforcement is needed (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ Biological System Management, Removing/Reducing Human Management

(Human wildlife conflicts)

Low Threat
Outside site

Olive baboons (Papio anubis) and vervet monkeys (Cercopithecus pygerythrus) living outside NNP tend to damage crops from farmers near the park boundaries. Baboons in particular steal potatoes, corn and sweet potatoes. However, from time to time small monkeys, especially l'Hoest's monkeys, come from the park and also damage fields, while chimpanzees have learned to prey on bee hives to eat the honey. Recently a group destroyed 60 beehives. Although the damages are reimbursed to the victims by the Compensation Fund, the human wildlife conflict could escalate if damage worsens or there are issues with compensation, for example. Furthermore, the fund does not reimburse the damage caused by the vervets, which live everywhere outside the park, and this may increase farmer's frustrations (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ Roads, Trails & Railroads

(Roads traversing the property)

Low Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

There is an international road crossing the property which is completely illuminated and used by heavy truck and bus traffic causing disturbance and risks of roadkill and pollution. At one point, the road was closed to traffic at night, but this regulation has not been maintained. The truck traffic is expected to decrease significantly once a road to the north of the property is upgraded, which was completed mid-2024. There is a process underway to regulate the traffic through Nyungwe Natural Forest with the intention to reduce vehicle speed and noise (IUCN, 2023). Additionally, the rehabilitation of the Nshiri-Bweyeye track that runs along the border with Burundi, while beneficial for border surveillance, may harm sub-montane forests. It runs through “one of the rare areas of sub-montane forest (<1,650m) in the property, and rehabilitation of the road could seriously damage the forest” (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

Potential Threats

Low Threat

Potential threats include some problematic native species and invasive alien species that currently have not spread significantly into the park but require monitoring and vigilance to prevent potential negative impacts on flora and fauna. Wildfire, climate change and earthquakes pose currently low threats that may increase in the future due to accumulated impacts. Furthermore, both solid and effluent waste present potential threats stemming from road users and resulting from traffic accidents. Epidemic zoonosis (Ebola, Covid-19) is a potential threat to primate populations, particularly as habituated primate groups are so important for tourism.

► Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species, Problematic Native Species

Low Threat
Outside site

(Invasive plants)
Invasive/problematic species
Acacia mearnsii
Pinus patula
Solanum chrysotrichum
Ageratum conyzoides
Erigeron sumatrensis
Other invasive species names
Sambucus mexicanus, Alnus sp., Chrysanthellum americanum, Tridax rocumbens, Sericostachys scandens

Several invasive alien species are present on the edges of the forests. This is unavoidable since over 80 exotic plant species are now more or less integrated in the flora of Rwanda. Some of these plants can become invasive. This is the case with the Mexican elderberry (Sambucus mexicanus), common around Uwinka and Gisovu, the black wattle (Acacia mearnsii), and a recently introduced elm (Alnus sp). In some areas even the Mexican pine (Pinus patula) starts to spread spontaneously from seeds. The most worrying invader is the devil’s fig (Solanum chrysotrichum), very common in the Gisovu area. Inside the forest some small invaders have been found along paths (e.g. Ageratum conyzoides, Chrysanthellum americanum, Erigeron sumatrensis, Tridax rocumbens), but these plants do not pose a significant threat to the local flora and fauna. Chromolaena odorata (Asteraceae) are still unknown in Rwanda (State Party of Rwanda, 2022). The native liana (Sericostachys scandens) appears to be a problem in open areas, often covering trees, clearings and road edges. Monotypic stands of Bracken (Pteridium aquilinum) which grow in areas affected by fire can prevent natural regeneration.

► Fire & Fire Management

Low Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)
Outside site

(Wildfire)

Fire can significantly degrade certain parts of the forests and non forest vegetation, convert forests in open habitats, and negatively affect biodiversity. Repeated fires
are a significant potential threat. Nevertheless, fires are part of the ecosystem and contribute to the maintenance of the biodiversity. Bamboo thickets most probably only become established after extensive fire (Janzen, 1976) and perhaps need fire to survive in the long term. The many open spaces in the eastern part of the forest massif, especially to the south of the main road, are often attributed to the

fires of the late 1990s (Plumptre et al., 2002). These fires burned large areas of moors, pioneer forests and Macaranga kilimanscharica forests. The burnt forests, the peat bogs and the Hagenia thickets were quickly recolonised by Hagenia and Macaranga. Most open areas were not colonised by forest, however, and remained in their pre-fire state. Overall, therefore, the fires of the 1990s did not significantly change the distribution of open and forested formations. Most of these open habitats probably existed already since centuries. In other words, the Nyungwe Forest is a dynamic ecosystem and the existing dynamic processes have to be preserved. Management must take this phenomenon into account and be adapted accordingly (State Party of Rwanda, 2022; IUCN, 2023).

► Geological Events

(Earthquakes)

Very Low Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

Earthquakes are very frequent in the region. At Lake Kivu, the earth crust has already widened by about 10 km and continues at a rate of 10 mm per year. The Albertine
Rift being an extension fault, most of these earthquakes are totally imperceptible, however, and the risks of violent earthquakes are very low. Earthquakes barely perceptible to humans, however, can trigger minor landslides and solifluction that help to maintain the open-canopy forests of the lower slopes of the mountains (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

► Changes in Temperature Regimes, Changes in Precipitation & Hydrological Regime

(Climate change)

Low Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

As for Rwanda, the most recent reports predict an increase in temperature, a slight increase in precipitation, an increase in seasonal contrasts and an increase in the frequency of exceptional climatic events (Araujo et al., 2016; Aguirre-Guitterez et al., 2020). The increase in rainfall should not significantly affect the forests and associated habitats. Very long dry seasons could represent a danger, however, by increasing the risk of repeated fires. The increase in temperature could cause certain types of vegetation to shift upwards. Indeed, a recent study has shown that the vegetation changes resulting from climate changes increase with altitude (Lézine et al., 2019). The vegetation of the highest summits (Bigugu, Muzimu) could therefore be affected. However, the NNP is probably one of the most resilient forest areas in
the Albertine Rift region. Not only does it represent the second largest area of mountain forests and has an altitudinal gradient of 1,470 m, but above all it shelters a core area of hyper-humid forests linked to high measurable precipitation (2,000-2,200 mm/year) increased by significant occult precipitation linked to the clouds which stagnate in its deep valleys. Some of these forests indeed survived the Last Glacial Maximum. It is therefore likely that the ongoing climate change will have some impacts but that the forest, on the whole, will remain in good condition. The most important risks generated by climate change are probably at the level of the peripheral human populations whose subsistence agriculture will be affected. The occurrence of heavy rainfall will increase erosion in the surrounding crop lands and the increase in temperature will disturb some crops. Some studies estimate that food security in Rwanda could be endangered in the years to come (Liu et al., 2008). This could significantly increase the pressures on the natural ecosystems. Another potential danger lies in the implementation of measures to fight climate change which may affect biodiversity. “Assisted reforestation” to increase carbon sequestration could indeed affect open habitats such as open-canopy forests, moorlands and grasslands. This danger is all the more real since all the environments that are not dense forest tend to be considered degraded environments.

► Water-borne & other effluent Pollution, Garbage & Solid Waste

(Solid and effluent pollution)

Very Low Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)
Outside site

There is very little pollution risk for the moment. The heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides, as well as erosion could theoretically affect NNP. This is not the case,
however: because of the configuration of the relief most rivers leave the park and only a few small streams enter it. The only pollution observed currently in NNP is along the main road. Some people still

throw plastic bottles and other rubbish out of their vehicle. Some lorries have accidents and lose their load in the park. Recently a load of fertilizers became dispersed in this way in the forest. The highest risk is with vehicles transporting fuel or petrol (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ **Pathogens** — **Low Threat**

(Epizootic diseases) — Inside site, widespread(15-50%)

The introduction of an Ebola fever or even Covid-19 epidemic into NNP could affect certain animal populations. Chimpanzees and small primates are particularly
vulnerable, but Ebola fever can also affect duikers. This threat must be considered in the management strategies, especially in the development of ecotourism (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

Overall assessment of threats — **Low Threat**

Located in one of the country’s most densely populated areas with high levels of poverty, Nyungwe National Park continues to face threats from road traffic, hunting, gold mining, and human wildlife conflicts. Hunting with snares continues inside the park and presents dangers for various non-target and endangered species. Management aims at working with the rangers and ecoguards (who are recruited from hunters) to reduce this threat. Upgrading of a road to the north of the property will hopefully reduce truck traffic on the main road traversing through the property. Potential threats include invasive alien plant species on the edges of the park that need careful monitoring to avoid potential negative impacts on native flora and fauna inside the site. Additionally, the rehabilitation of the Nshiri-Bweyeye track, while beneficial for border surveillance, may harm sub-montane forests. Furthermore road users are a source of solid and effluent waste pollution. Epidemic zoonoses like Ebola and COVID-19 pose threats to primates, vital for tourism.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

▶ **Involvement of stakeholders and rightsholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, in decision-making processes** — **Mostly Effective**

African Parks aims to develop a conservation-led economy around Nyungwe National Park, supported by local communities. The 3E+ Community Engagement Strategy—focusing on engagement, education, and economy—guides this effort. By partnering with various organizations, African Parks aims to foster strong conservation support in and around the National Park, ensuring it becomes a lasting value for future generations. The community engagement involves a team working with five districts and 53 villages, maintaining communication with local institutions to involve them in park management. This approach enhances local knowledge, ownership, and support for conservation objectives. As the population around the Park grows, sustainable resource use is crucial. African Parks supports education to boost community resilience and understanding of Park's importance. Economic activities are planned to link conservation with improved livelihoods, supporting community development without depleting natural resources. This strategy also contributes to the national economy and ecosystem services. Employment is key, with 280 permanent jobs and 250 temporary positions expected by the end of year three of implementation (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ **Legal framework** — **Highly Effective**

Nyungwe National Park was created on November 21, 2005 by Law 22/2005, based mainly on:
• The organic Law 04/2005 of April 8, 2005 determining the modalities of protection, conservation and promotion of the environment in Rwanda ;
• The organic Law 08/2005 of July 14, 2005 determining the use and management of land in Rwanda;

• The Law 32/2003 of September 6, 2003 modifying and complementing decree Law of April 26, 1974 approving and modifying Law of June 18, 1973 establishing the Office of Tourism and National Parks in Rwanda.
• The Law 47/1988 of December 5, 1988 organizing the forest regime;
• The Rwanda-Urundi Ordinance 83 bis/Agri of December 12, 1933 as modified by Rwanda-Urundi Ordinance 33/Agri of May 24, 1934 establishing the reserved forest of Nyungwe.
In addition, several laws have been published more recently to further strengthen legal protection:
• The Law 52/2011 of December 14, 2011 establishing the Special Guaranty Fund.
• The Law 47bis/2013 of June 28, 2013 determining the management and utilisation of forests in Rwanda.
• The organic Law 48/2018 of August 13, 2018 on the Environment.
• The organic Law 64/2021 of October, 14 2021 governing biological diversity (State Party of Rwanda, 2022)

► Governance arrangements — Highly Effective

The governance of the Park is based on a public-private partnership model. Consistent efforts are made to follow the principles of good governance including transparency, clarifications of responsibilities, accountability and participatory decision-making processes. Indeed, following a contract between the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) and African Parks, Nyungwe Management Company (NMC) was established under the Rwandan law. The Board of NMC comprises four representatives of African Parks and three representatives of RDB. The daily management of the Park is the responsibility of the Park Management Unit (PMU) appointed by the Board, including the two key managers designated by African Parks: the CEO of the Company who also serve as Park Manager and the Financial Coordinator of the Park.
The Board is accountable to the RDB for delivery on the desired outcomes and oversees the management of the park by the PMU. All decision making in the Company are by way of majority vote with each member being entitled to cast their vote.

Several stakeholder consultations have informed the development of the 2012-2021 management plan of the Park. Following that, various mechanisms have been employed to foster stakeholder participation. The Park has maintained collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society, National University of Rwanda, and Kitabi Technical College for ecological research, capacity building, and specific interventions. The tourism industry also collaborates with the Park and local communities are active in tourism activities including nature-based tourism and cultural tourism. The NNP Community Partnership Programme ensures that communities benefit from the Park to stimulate their engagement. Several community-based committees have been established in different zones to address specific issues: surveillance committees, tea producing, milk producing committees. Most buffer zones are used for tea farming by either local communities or private companies who actively contribute to enforcing unauthorized access ban to the Park.

Human-wildlife conflict management mechanisms are in place and judged satisfactory by stakeholders. These include avoidance measures as well as compensation measures (State Party of Rwanda, 2022). The forestry plantations in the buffer zone of the nominated property fall under the management authority of the Rwanda National Forestry Authority (NAFA). In July 2011, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) signed a long-term management agreement for the buffer zone with a forestry company applying sustainable and socially responsible standards.

► Integration into local, regional and national planning systems (including sea/landscape connectivity) — Highly Effective

Protection of wildlife and biodiversity areas are among the top priorities for Rwanda and Protected Areas are at the heart of the national development and biodiversity values ecosystem services are integrated into planning processes, poverty reduction strategy and national economy and strengthening the environmental governance at local level (REMA, 2023). The National Strategy for Transformation, NST1/Seven Years Government Program (2017-2024) sets the priority for a green economy approach in its Economic Transformation pillar that promotes “Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and

Environment to Transition Rwanda towards a Green Economy". Moreover, environment and climate change were highlighted as cross-cutting areas of policy concern which can be positively impacted by a range of development activities with priority given to agriculture, urbanisation, industries and energy. The National Environment and Climate Policy 2019 (Ministry of Environment, 2019) seeks to provide strategic direction on environment and climate change in Rwanda, bearing in mind its linkages with socio-economic development.

► Boundaries — Some Concern

Nyungwe National Park is composed of the Nyungwe Natural Forest, the Cyamudongo Natural Forest, and the Gisakura Natural Forest (State Party of Rwanda, 2022). The National Park boundaries are irregular and don't follow topographical features, but rather the limits of pioneer farmers' clearings. They sometimes align with small rivers, tracks, or the Rwanda-Burundi border. The boundaries, recorded in law 22/2005, are defined with 745 reference points using the GCS WGS 1984 system. Before 2006, these were part of administrative subdivisions.

The component parts of Cyamudongo Natural Forest (430 ha) and Gisakura Natural Forest (17 ha) are extremely small. Both Cyamudongo and Gisakura Natural Forests are completely disconnected from each other and from Nyungwe Natural Forest due to the presence of tea plantations and settlements hampering movement of wildlife. In this respect, the State Party is considering the development of ecological corridors to improve the connectivity between the component parts. The property is subject to a zoning regime to achieve different management objectives in different parts of the protected area. Four main zones have been identified: Ecologically Sensitive Zone; Tourism High Use Zone; Wilderness Zone; and Buffer Zone. The component part of Nyungwe Natural Forest is surrounded by a legally defined, discontinuous buffer zone totalling 10,085 ha, consisting mainly of exotic pine plantations. It provides a buffer for about 70% of the component part. The south-western and southern end is bordered by Kibira National Park (Burundi). In other areas without a buffer zone, the component part borders tea plantations with some small-scale agriculture, provide a buffering function, even if they are not legally defined as buffer zone. The topography separates it clearly from heavily used lower-altitude areas surrounding the
property and its buffer zone. Cyamudongo Natural Forest, at an altitude of about 1,700-2,100 m has no buffer zone, but is mostly surrounded by plantations and farmland. Gisakura Natural Forest is entirely surrounded by tea plantations (IUCN, 2023).

Of some concern is the lack of clarity regarding management and use of the buffer zone, which was previously detailed in the 2012-2021 Management Plan. The current general provisions are not sufficient to ensure the buffer zone functions as an added layer of protection for the property (IUCN, 2023).

► Overlapping international designations — Data Deficient

Not applicable

► Implementation of World Heritage Committee decisions and recommendations — Data Deficient

No information yet due to the recent inscription.

► Climate action — Data Deficient

Nyungwe National Park plays a significant role in climate action and environmental conservation. As a large montane rainforest, Nyungwe acts as a vital carbon sink. The dense forest vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas concentrations.
Protecting the diverse species within Nyungwe helps maintain ecosystem resilience. Biodiverse ecosystems are generally more adaptable to climate change and can continue to provide essential services, such as water regulation and soil stabilization. Nyungwe is a critical watershed for Rwanda and neighbouring countries. The forest helps regulate water cycles, ensuring a stable supply of water to rivers and streams. This is essential for agriculture, hydropower, and domestic use, especially in the face

of changing rainfall patterns due to climate change (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).
Although there is no direct information regarding how site-level management is addressing climate change without an updated management plan available, at the national level, Rwanda is committed to addressing climate change and has developed various guiding policies.

► Management plan and overall management system — Some Concern

During the first months of taking over the park, NMC based its activities on a first 5-years business plan elaborated by African Parks, published in 2019 and approved by the Government. Its was partially based on the management plan which had been conceived by RDB for the years 2012-2021. This first plan mainly described the principal objectives of the management of NNP: “expand eco- and community-based tourism offerings and attract investment to unlock the economic potential of Nyungwe, ensure its financial sustainability and foster local economic growth, job creation and livelihoods development in an environmentally responsible manner. Develop Nyungwe National Park into a key element of Rwanda’s tourism offering with the aim to provide a longer, high-quality experience for visitors to the country.”
This plan also discussed where to locate the main infrastructures, especially the different available option for the building of the park headquarters at Gisakura.
As soon as NMC was operational, an adapted version of the Business Plan was drawn up based on the first experiences at and around NNP. It is planned for the period 2022-2026 and will be published officially after approval by the government. The 5-year Business Plan (5YBP) serves as a working document to communicate the medium-term objectives (outcomes) for the Park, as well as the sub-objectives (outputs) and annual actions (inputs) that directly contribute towards ensuring these objectives are met. This plan coordinates management action and aligns employees and stakeholders behind a common plan of action and forms the basis for the annual budget and the M&E framework. The 5YBP and budget is updated on an annual rolling basis, along with the corresponding five-year budget. The objectives outlined in this plan contribute towards the achievement of the desired 20-year environmental, social and financial impacts, as outlined in the Long-Term Sustainability Strategy (State Party of Rwanda, 2022). Whilst the Long-Term Sustainability Strategy provides a commendable vision for the property that is centered on community inclusive conservation and the expansion of the ecosystem and connectivity, and creates a framework for the development of the next Management Plan, the LTSS does not replace it and therefore an updating of the expired 2012-2021 Management Plan is a pressing requirement. The updated Management Plan should contain the same level of detail and concrete action as the successfully implemented 2012-2021 Management Plan, and in particular specify how the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the property
will be be preserved (IUCN, 2023).

► Law enforcement — Mostly Effective

Law enforcement in Nyungwe National Park is crucial for protecting its rich biodiversity and ensuring the safety of both wildlife and visitors. The park employs rangers who are trained to monitor and patrol the area, preventing illegal activities such as poaching, logging, and encroachment.
The law enforcement department work closely with all stakeholders to ensure ecosystem integrity through anti-poaching activities, control of movements to reduce illegal mining, logging, agricultural practices, honey harvesting, illegal development and fire risk, and to maximise tourism revenues and conservation impact. Addressing environmentally damaging activities and ensuring compliance of local communities living around the park boundary will be essential. The limiting of illegal activities is supplemented with extensive community sensitisation, community eco-guards and promotion of alternative livelihood programmes (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

► Sustainable finance — Mostly Effective

A detailed and comprehensive Business Plan from 2022-2026 was included in the nomination, and if all goes as planned, an increase in “high-level tourism” will eventually make the Park self-sustaining. From 2022-2026 there is an average operating budget of about $3.5MY/year. Currently African Parks receives about $2.3MY from “commercial income” (although difficult to see where this comes from, even if park fees are high), and significant international financing (Postcode Lottery, WYSS Foundation, Fondation

Segré, Stichting Natura Africae (Dutch), Rob & Melani Walton Foundation, and the Danish Fund). They noted international funding of $2.9MY in 2022 (dropping to 1.4MY in the next four years). The shortfall in the budget is made up by a contribution of $400,000/year from the Government (RDB) and by African Parks, which to begin with is investing over $1MY. It is too early as yet to see if this “sustainable financing” model will work or not. The park fees seem very high for the offer, and it remains to be seen if they will be able to attract enough international tourists willing to pay. There is a lack of clarity regarding who will pay for the continued maintenance of the “canopy walk”. There is also a very expensive foreign-owned (Emirati) lodge just outside of the Park (the “One-and-Only”). While presumably the government receives taxes from this operation, it is likely that few profits from this enterprise are returned to the Park. African Parks has presumably made a feasibility study on the number of potential clients for such exclusive lodges, as they plan is to build more inside the Park (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

► Staff capacity, training and development — Mostly Effective

When NMC took over its management, NNP had been employing just over 180 staff members, over 80% of those were law enforcement personnel, indicating an imbalance in the team. In 2022 the number of permanent staff was increased to 263 members; it will reach 318 by 2026. In addition, 250 casual workers may be hired, in particular for trail maintenance or for exceptional work. The Park Management Unit (PMU) staff is expected to be employed from year one and consists of seven officers: the Park Manager, Special Projects Manager, Tourism and Marketing Manager, Finance Controller and Administration Manager, Community Manager, Head of Law Enforcement and Operations Manager. To fully manage the operations of the Park, African Parks did a restructuring process and appointed new staff for NNP so that staffing requirements could be met. This restructure and subsequent processes are currently being completed.

Most rangers receive a three-month in-house training provided by African Parks, which sends international trainers to the site who have worked in other parts of Africa. Two rangers were sent for training in Zambia. African Parks is providing mainly ranger training, online courses in English and management (African Parks Management Toolkit).
Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centre (IPRC) is located in Kitabi on the edge of the Nyungwe Forest. This institution offers training courses in forestry, wildlife management and wildlife tourism. Many staff members of NMC have training there. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) also sent staff to Garoua in Cameroon.
The Cyamudongo Project initiated by the University of Koblenz-Landau (Germany) with the botanist Professor Eberhard Fischer, provided training in identification of plants, reptiles and amphibians and the Centre of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management (CoEB) has provided training in wildlife (mammals) identification, trees identification (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

► Education and interpretation programmes — Mostly Effective

Education and interpretation programs in Nyungwe National Park play a vital role in promoting conservation awareness and enhancing the visitor experience. These programs are designed to educate both locals and tourists about the park's unique biodiversity, ecological importance, and the need for its protection.

Guided Tours and Walks: The park offers guided tours led by knowledgeable rangers or guides who provide insights into the flora, fauna, and ecological significance of the park. These tours often include information about the various species that inhabit the park, such as primates, birds, and plant life.

Visitor Centers and Exhibits: Nyungwe National Park may have visitor centers equipped with educational exhibits that highlight the park's natural history, conservation efforts, and cultural heritage. These centers serve as a hub for learning and engagement.

Community Outreach Programs : The park engages with local communities through outreach programs that emphasize the importance of conservation and sustainable practices. These programs aim to foster a sense of stewardship among community members and encourage their participation in conservation initiatives.

School Programs and Workshops: Educational programs tailored for schools and educational institutions are often organized to teach students about environmental conservation and the specific ecosystems within the park. Workshops and interactive sessions can inspire the younger generation to take an active interest in protecting natural resources.

Interpretive Signage and Materials: Throughout the park, interpretive signage and informational materials provide visitors with self-guided learning opportunities. These resources help visitors understand the significance of the park's features and the role they play in the broader ecosystem (NNP nomination dossier, 2022).

► Tourism and visitation management — Mostly Effective

Nyungwe National Park offers a rich potential for tourism development due to its diverse ecosystems and unique biodiversity. Efforts to promote tourism in the park focus on enhancing visitor experiences while ensuring conservation. Activities such as canopy walks, primate tracking, bird watching, and guided nature hikes are popular among tourists. Infrastructure improvements, such as better roads and visitor facilities, are also part of the development strategy. Community involvement and sustainable practices are key to balancing tourism growth with environmental preservation, providing economic benefits to local communities while maintaining the park's natural beauty. According to the nomination dossier, all tourism interventions are linked to the framework of a comprehensive Tourism Development Plan (TDP), which includes proposed mechanisms for strengthening the tourism circuit and retaining tourists in the country for a maximum time period while increasing the spend of individual tourists (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

The current annual visitation of approximately 15,300 was modelled to reflect the five year vision for Nyungwe. Annual increase in visitation number is expected at 10% on average over the first five years. The total infrastructure investment budgeted for the construction of the two new lodges is $940,000 in total. The first lodge is expected to be operational at the end of year 3 with the second lodge operational at the end of year 5.
Further tourism products requiring investment would be the development of two mid range lodges (one in Cyamudongo Forest and one in Nyungwe Forest) in the first 10 years of the agreement period as well as adventure and nature-based activities. This includes rehabilitation of nature trails. There are currently no major projects taking place in the park with the exception of the maintenance of the Canopy Walkway by GreenHeart.

Based on the predictions, the total funding gap for the first five years amounts to just over US$ 5,275,213. This amount will be provided by African Parks but measures will be take to reduce this funding gap. They will include the following:
(a) Secure institutional grant support from African Parks donor community.
(b) Deepen relationships with major individual donors through visits to the park and local communities.
(c) Develop and grow a diversified and quality tourism product to increase revenue-generating potential for the park (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

► Sustainable use — Data Deficient

Not applicable

► Monitoring — Mostly Effective

Monitoring is essential but given the very steep mountains and locally dense undergrowth, designing unbiased and financially acceptable census techniques is quite challenging (Plumptree et al., 2002). Alongside law enforcement and various surveillance activities, regular monitoring is organised to obtain data on the state of the main wildlife populations, and the state of the vegetation. Estimates of the populations densities of primates, duikers and other ungulates, as well as of traces of human activity are expected to be organised all over the park every 2-3 years. To facilitate monitoring activities as well as surveillance, some access trails are needed. Currently, the access to the most remote parts of the park is difficult. These remote areas of the park had indeed not been included in the 1999 biodiversity

assessment. Besides, some specific threats, like the impact of the main road crossing NNP, have to be monitored.
In the initial phase of NNP being taken over by African Parks, the NMC decided to collect as many observations as possible on illegal activities in the park in order to identify the main problems and be able to adapt the management according to the findings. That will be simplified in the future (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ Research — Mostly Effective

Research activities in Nyungwe National Park are essential for understanding its complex ecosystems and informing conservation strategies. The park is a biodiversity hotspot, making it an important location for scientific research in various fields. Researchers conduct studies to catalogue and monitor the diverse species of flora and fauna in the park. This includes research on primates, birds, insects, and plant species, contributing to our understanding of their ecology and behaviour. Cultural and socioeconomic research is also conducted by national and international research teams. Collaboration with universities, research institutions, and conservation organizations is often key to these efforts (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ Effectiveness of management system and governance in addressing threats outside the site — Mostly Effective

Important socioeconomic measures have been taken at the periphery of the park including environmentally friendly entrepreneurship to reduce poverty, reduce human-wildlife conflicts, and reduce pressure on the park. Multi-faceted partnerships between park managers and local communities result in stronger community engagement in conservation measures.
However, further efforts are needed to ensure there is clarity regarding the management and use of the buffer zone. The long-term management agreement signed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) for the buffer zone with a forestry company applying sustainable and socially responsible standards if a good practice example, while the management plan is updated to provide further guidelines.

▶ Effectiveness of management system and governance in addressing threats inside the site — Some Concern

The management of the property has been successfully guided by the 2012-2021 Management Plan and there is a promising vision in place for the property,
which may in future address concerns to improve the connectivity between the three component parts and to strengthen the buffer zone arrangements. However, as there is currently no Management Plan in place that would ensure continuity at the same level as the previous 2012-2021 Management Plan, the management requirements are not sufficient to be evaluated as effective currently. This also leaves a gap for the management of the buffer zone. It will be important to reinforce the legal status of the buffer zone, to ensure its functioning as added layer of protection (IUCN, 2023).

Overall assessment of protection and management — Mostly Effective

Overall, the Nyungwe National Park is well conserved and its management standards have improved significantly over the past years. The management of the property has been successfully guided by the 2012-2021 Management Plan and there is a promising vision in place, which may in future address concerns to improve the connectivity between the three component parts and to strengthen the buffer zone arrangements. Most threats the park are low and are addressed with appropriate measures by park management. Also, significant progress has been made in terms of ensuring sustainable finance for the park, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the Park is self-sufficient. Of some concern is the lack of an updated Management Plan and the lack of clarity regarding management and use of the buffer zone, which was previously detailed in the 2012-2021 Management Plan. The current general provisions are not sufficient to ensure the buffer zone functions as an added layer of protection for the property.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ Valuable habitat and floral biodiversity

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

Due to the recent inscription, the property's fauna is in a good and stable state of conservation but monitoring data is needed to accurately determine population trends over time.

The property represents “the second largest and best protected” area of mountain forest in the very biodiverse Albertine Rift Ecoregion. The total flora includes 1,441 species of native vascular plants, including 256 Albertine Rift (AR) endemics of which 38 are endemic to Rwanda (with an unknown number endemic to the Park). The small Cyamudongo Forest has 628 species, 266 of which are not present in the much larger Nyungwe Forest.

While the vegetation forms a very complex mosaic of numerous plant associations, it is clear that the absence of large herbivores (elephants, buffalo) and predators must have changed the dynamics. Areas of dense monotypic thickets of the native liana Sericostachys and Bracken Pteridium aquilinum (present in areas that underwent fire and other disturbance) and today preventing natural regeneration) pose management issues (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

▶ High level of faunal biodiversity

Good
Trend:Stable

Due to the recent inscription, the property's fauna is in a good and stable state of conservation but monitoring data is needed to accurately determine population trends over time.

The property's fauna is said to be “almost complete” with four species recently becoming extinct (Savanna Elephant, Buffalo, Giant Forest Hog and Leopard). There are plans to reintroduce these species. Currently the “flagship” species in the park are its primates, with 14 species listed in the nomination, of which 4 species (Chimpanzee (EN), Angola Colobus (VU), L’Hoest’s Monkey (VU) and Blue Monkey (LC)) are habituated and are tourist attractions. Two other threatened primates, Owl-faced Monkey (VU) (where there is a small, isolated population in the bamboo area) and Golden Monkey (EN) (although there are conflicting opinions on whether this species is present in Nyungwe, and only 13 species are listed in the Management Plan) occur in the property. The Hills Horseshoe Bat (CR) is endemic to the property, although little is known about the distribution of this species. As for birds, the nomination notes 351 species (a number of which are passage migrants), of which around 25-30 species are Albertine Rift endemics (uncertainty due to differing taxonomies and uncertain presence of some species). The Grauer’s Swamp-Warbler (VU) has probably its second largest population in the Kamiranzovu Swamp, and the only large population in a protected area. A few other threatened birds are listed for the park, including the Grey Parrot (VU). It seems that this species is very localised in the property, and there is a plan to release birds confiscated in Europe into the Cyamudongo forest. For the 32 species of amphibians, 22 are Albertine Rift endemics of which 2 are endemic to the Park. Of these, one caecilian (Boulengerula fischeri, VU) is only known from its type locality in the Cyamudongo Forest. Jackie's Reed Frog (DD), is only known from two collections in Nyungwe at 1,940 m. For the 46 species of reptiles, 13 appear to be Albertine Rift endemics with one, the Congo Three-toed Skink (DD), only known from the type specimen collected in Nyungwe (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

Summary of the Values

▶ **Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values**

Low Concern
Trend: Stable

Nyungwe Forest is about 95% intact. Its fauna is said to be “almost complete” with four species recently becoming extinct (Savanna Elephant, Buffalo, Giant Forest Hog and Leopard). There are plans to reintroduce these species. Currently the “flagship” species in the park are its primates, with 14 species recorded. The total flora includes 1,441 species of native vascular plants, including 256 Albertine Rift (AR) endemics of which 38 are endemic to Rwanda (with an unknown number endemic to the Park). The small Cyamudongo Forest has 628 species, 266 of which are not present in the much larger Nyungwe Forest. As for birds, 351 species (a number of which are passage migrants), of which around 25-30 species are Albertine Rift endemics have been noted (uncertainty due to differing taxonomies and uncertain presence of some species). For the 32 species of amphibians, 22 are Albertine Rift endemics of which 2 are endemic to the Park. For the 46 species of reptiles, 13 appear to be Albertine Rift endemics with one, the Congo Three-toed Skink (DD), only known from the type specimen collected in Nyungwe. Due to the recent nomination, the site's key attributes are in good condition, although some areas of dense monotypic thickets of the native liana Sericostachys and Bracken Pteridium aquilinum pose some management issues.

▶ **Assessment of the current state and trend of other important biodiversity values**

Good
Trend: Stable

The property includes the largest and best preserved expansion of montane forests with a full gradient of vegetation types, from lower montane forest at 1,650- 2,000 m to upper montane forest above 2,600. Only the forests of the Itombwe Nature Reserve in DRC are much larger, but they include numerous villages and an increasing human population which largely depends on the natural resources of these forests through hunting, collecting and shifting cultivation. Also, NNP is home to a great diversity of forest formations, including pioneer and secondary thickets and forests which are rarely present in other similar protected areas of the region. These habitats are very important since they guarantee the dynamisms that characterise these forests. It is also home to a great diversity of high altitude grasslands and wetlands, which have disappeared elsewhere or are severely degraded. The NNP also includes some relict vegetation of the Last Glacial Maximum or even from before the Last Glacial Maximum and the peat of the Kamiranzovu marshes preserve unique palynological archives about the climate and vegetation history of the region during at least the last 43,000 years. Finally, the lower montane forests of NNP harbour numerous very old and tall trees, something unusual in African montane forests. Globally, NNP is not only a forest national park thus: it represents a very complete high altitude landscape in the richest part of the Albertine Rift biogeographic region. NNP has a core high rainfall area with over 2,000 mm of rainfall annually, surrounded by somewhat drier areas. It harbours therefore a significant area of hyper-humid forests. This explains its exceptional diversity in Orchidaceae (probably over 200 species) and enhances its resilience to climate change (State Party of Rwanda, 2022).

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ **Access to drinking water, Commercial wells**

Nyungwe is a critical watershed, supplying water to many rivers and lakes in the region. It plays a vital role in water regulation, ensuring a stable water supply for agriculture, hydropower, and domestic use.

▶ **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

The park attracts tourists from around the world, contributing to Rwanda's economy. Ecotourism generates revenue that supports conservation efforts and provides jobs and income for local communities.

- **Carbon sequestration**

  As a dense tropical rainforest, Nyungwe plays a significant role in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

- **Importance for research,**
  Contribution to education

  The park serves as a valuable site for scientific research and environmental education. Studies conducted in Nyungwe contribute to our understanding of tropical ecosystems and inform conservation strategies.

Summary of benefits

Nyungwe National Park offers a wide range of benefits, both locally and globally. Overall, Nyungwe National Park is a vital natural asset that supports environmental health, economic development, and cultural heritage, while also playing a crucial role in global efforts to address climate change.

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