

NOMINATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Name: SALONGA NATIONAL PARK

Identification No: 280

Date received by WH Secretariat: 12.4.83

Contracting State Party having submitted the nomination of the property in accordance with the Convention: ZAIRE

Summary prepared by IUCN (March 1984) based on the original nomination submitted by Zaire. This original and all documents presented in support of this nomination will be available for consultation at the meetings of the Bureau and the Committee.

1. LOCATION: Central Zaire basin.

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

Owned by the Government of Zaire, and managed by the Institut Zaïrois pour la Conservation de la Nature (IZCN). The national park was established in November 1970, and is defined in law as 'une réserve naturelle intégrale'.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

The park comprises a large section (36,000 sq km) of the central basin of the Zaire River, a very isolated region only accessible by water transport. It is in the Congo Rain Forest Biogeographical Province with main topographic features being plateaux and river terraces. Rivers in the northwest are large and meandering with marshy banks but on the higher ground in the east, valleys are deeper and rivers run below cliffs of 80m. The southern sector of the park includes the watershed between the basin of the Luilaka to the north and east, Likoro to the west and Lukenje to the south. Soils are a thin humus layer over Kalahari sands with several lateritic flushes. Altitude in the Northern Sector ranges from approximately 350m in the West to 530m in the East; the Southern Sector varies from 350m in the Northwest to 700m in the Southeast.

Climate is typically continental equatorial, hot and humid with mean annual precipitation of 1,300mm and a slightly drier season from June to August. Mean annual temperature of 25.5°C. Temperatures are stable with a daily mean variation from 20°C at night to 32°C during the day. Cloud cover is common in mornings associated with fog and storms during midday but skies are often clear at night.

The area is almost entirely covered with equatorial forest, the principal types being swamp forest, riverine forest and dry-land forest. A grassland vegetation known locally as 'botoka-djoku' or elephant's bath occurs in the north. Southwards the vegetation is more open with 'esobe' (savanna-like) clearings.

No systematic faunal survey has been made but most of the Congo forest animals appear to be present. The most important species reported is the pygmy chimpanzee Pan paniscus endemic to Zaire. (According to various sources the presence of this species within the park is not confirmed). Other species

include colobus monkeys, pangolins, forest elephant (listed by IUCN as vulnerable), yellow-backed duiker, water chevrotain, sitatunga, bushbuck, bongo and pygmy Cape buffalo. Birds include herons, black stork (migrant), yellow-billed stork and the Zaire peacock (an endemic species). Reptiles include African slender-snouted crocodile (listed by IUCN as threatened).

4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

There is no management plan, and to date, a policy of non-management of the natural system has been followed. This will in future be complemented by a strategy of scientific management aimed at avoiding unexpected disturbance of the natural balance. Management plans will also be prepared.

The Park is divided into two sectors separated by a settlement zone some 40 km wide which is excluded from the Park. About one third of the southern sector of Salonga is occupied by groups of pygmies and there is a local land claim on the eastern edge.

Management problems include poaching using both traditional and modern methods, local population pressure, fire and destruction of habitat by tree cutting for firewood and by honey gatherers. If the two sectors of Salonga are considered together it is the largest national park currently existing in Africa and the third largest in the world.

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION IN WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

The Salonga National Park nomination, as presented by the Government of Zaire, provides the following justification for designation as a World Heritage property:

a) Cultural property -- not applicable

b) Natural Property

(ii) On-going geological processes. The plant and animal life in Salonga National Park is an example of biological evolution and the adaptation of life forms in a complex equatorial rainforest environment. The large size of the park ensures continued possibility for evolution of both species and communities within relatively undisturbed forest.

(iii) Exceptional Natural Beauty. The Park's flora is perhaps one of the very few completely undisturbed biotopes still existing in Central Africa. Moreover, there are zones in the Salonga National Park that are practically inaccessible to man, which have never been explored and which, therefore, can be considered as perfectly virgin.

(iv) Habitats of rare and endangered species. Salonga National Park was established partially to protect the pygmy chimpanzee and is the only protected area in which this species may exist. The bonobo is listed by IUCN as vulnerable.

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1. DOCUMENTATION:

- (i) Nomination form and maps
- (ii) IUCN Data Sheets
- (iii) Consultations: J. Verschuren, K. Curry-Lindahl, H. Eidsvik, M. Maldague
- (iv) Literature Consulted: IUCN project files - Zaire
IUCN 1982: A Conservation Strategy for the Great Apes

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

Salonga has no comparable site within Zaire as it is the only protected area in the Congo Rainforest Biogeographical Province. There are other areas in Zaire that do harbour known pygmy chimpanzee populations but none have national park status.

The only other comparable area is the Tai National Park (World Heritage 1982). This area is located in the Guinean Rainforest Biogeographical Province and, therefore, has a different species composition and is smaller.

There is no other tract of rainforest in Africa that is of the extent of Salonga (considering both sections in total).

3. INTEGRITY

The park, one of the largest in the world, is of sufficient size to provide viable habitats for its plants and animals. The fact that the park is divided into two separate units suggests that some controls or corridors in the central portion should be considered as linkages between the two blocks.

Salonga is currently under some pressure from poachers and local people who remove vegetation to an unknown extent. There is a land claim from a local chief in the southern block. Effects of occupation by settlers in the southern block are also not known.

As in all of Zaire's national parks Salonga lacks sufficient management infrastructure, trained staff, and management plans. The park's future will only be assured if management capacity is strengthened and additional resources are made available. The nomination outlines material requirements totalling US\$112,190.

4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Based on reports from field officers, Zaire has been unable to devote adequate resources to support the level of management required to maintain existing World Heritage sites. The additions of further sites would further strain and dilute these resources.

5. EVALUATIONS

As the major equatorial rainforest protected area in Africa and possible habitat of the pygmy chimpanzee, Salonga meets criteria (iii) for natural properties. Its seasonally flooded rainforests and "esobe" habitats are not found elsewhere. The vast size of the park and the fact that it is almost

biologically unknown suggest that it also meets criteria (ii). Despite the threats to its integrity, corrective measures, appropriately applied, could ensure long term viability. IUCN has requested its Primate Specialist Group to assess the status of the pygmy chimpanzee in the park.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Salonga National Park should be added to the World Heritage List. The Committee should carefully consider the assistance request that is submitted with the nomination. A management plan should be prepared for the park and a review of the possibility of a corridor between the two sectors be conducted.

