

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION -- IUCN SUMMARY

407: DJA FAUNAL RESERVE (CAMEROON)

Summary prepared by IUCN (April 1987) based on the original nomination submitted by Cameroon. 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:

On the Dja River in the Central-Southern and Eastern Provinces of Cameroon, 243km south-east of Yaoundé, and 5km west of Lomie. 2°49'-3°23'N, 12°25'-13°35'E.

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

Protected as a 'réserve de faune et de chasse' in 1950, and then as a 'réserve de faune' under the National Forestry Act Ordinance 1973. Accepted as a Biosphere Reserve in 1981. Proposed as a National Park. Area is 526,000 ha.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

The Dja reserve is virtually encircled by the Dja River which flows west along the long northern boundary of the reserve, and then along the southern boundary, before flowing southeast as a tributary to the Congo. Cliffs run along the course of the river in the south for some 60km, and are associated with a section of the river broken up by rapids and waterfalls. Except in the south-east of the reserve, the relief is fairly flat and consists of a succession of round-topped hills.

The vegetation mainly comprises dense evergreen Congo rainforest with a main canopy at 30-40m rising to 60m. Some 43 species of tree form the canopy, with legumes being particularly common. The area is known to have a wide range of primate species including lowland gorilla, greater white-nosed guenon, moustached guenon, crowned guenon, talapoin, white-collared mangabey, white-cheeked mangabey, agile mangabey, drill, mandrill, potto, Demidoff's galago, black and white colobus monkey and chimpanzee. Other mammals include: elephant, bongo, sitatunga and buffalo.

A population of pygmies live within the reserve, maintaining an essentially traditional lifestyle.

4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

Agriculture and hunting are prohibited within the reserve, and access is restricted. No commercial logging has taken place within the reserve itself, and few people have lived there since villages were relocated in the 1940s prior to establishment. Traditional hunting rights are allowed, but the use of non-traditional hunting methods needs to be controlled. The Dja River forms a natural boundary round much of the reserve, and there are currently three guard posts to the east and northwest. Two new posts are in the process of being established to the north and northwest. Since establishment of the reserve in 1950, the area has in effect been treated as a strict reserve by the management authorities, and management has been restricted to protection of the resources, and in particular anti-poaching activities. A preliminary management plan has been recently completed by the Garoua Wildlife College.

A population of pygmies live within the reserve in small sporadic encampments, and are free to hunt within the reserve using traditional methods. There are also some villages close to the reserve (although population density in the region is low).

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

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

a) Natural property

- (ii) Outstanding example of biological evolution. The primary forest in the Reserve is notable for its species diversity and its exceptionally pristine condition.
- (iii) Superlative natural phenomena and ecosystems. The large trees and wild rivers with rapids and waterfalls result in an exceptionally scenic landscape.
- (iv) Habitat of Rare and Endangered Species. Several rare species are found in the Dja including two species of crocodiles, chimpanzees and lowland gorillas.

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Carte de localisation de la réserve du DJA

Les différents accès

Echelle : 1/1 500 000



407 RESERVE DU DJA (CAMEROON)

1. DOCUMENTATION:

- (i) IUCN Data sheets, Afrotropical Protected Area Directory and Afrotropical Protected Area System Review.
- (ii) Consultations: Cameroon government authorities and staff of technical assistance agencies in Cameroon, A. Allo, T. van der Zon, A. Dufresne, A. Cloutier, V. Balinga, S. Gartland, D. Thomas
- (iii) Literature: Plan d'aménagement provisoire, prepared by Garoua Wildlife School.
- (iv) Site visit and aerial survey, March 1987 (J. Sayer).

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

The Dja reserve is the fifth largest protected area in the Guinea-Congolian rainforest area in Africa. Two of the larger sites and the sixth largest site, Tai, are already on the World Heritage list. Of the remaining three larger sites, Maiko in Zaire was not considered to be adequately managed to merit World Heritage status, Seti-Cama in Gabon has been almost entirely logged and is the site of a major oil extraction industry, and little information is available about the third, Lefini in the Congo.

Dja is located in a transition zone between the Biafran forests of Southern Nigeria and SW Cameroon and the forests of the Congo basin. These forests have the highest biological diversity in Africa. Plant diversity is probably highest in the more humid areas around the Korup National Park; vertebrate diversity is likely to be very high in Dja. The forests of southern Cameroon are therefore the most important in Africa for biological diversity conservation.

Within Cameroon Dja received by far the highest ranking in the IUCN/UNEP Protected Area System Review. It is clearly the leading site for tropical moist forest conservation in West Africa. The standard work on the phytogeography of Cameroon by Letouzey (1968) suggests that whereas much of the forest of south-east Cameroon consists of old secondary formations derived from earlier periods of shifting agriculture, the forests of the Dja region are essentially undisturbed. The fauna and flora represent a transition between the coastal and Congo basin communities and as such are not included in any other protected area. Dja receives only 1600 mm of rainfall and has 3 months with less than 100 mm of rainfall. It would therefore be best described as a semi-evergreen forest. It is much drier than the Korup National Park and this would explain its lower floral diversity. The vertebrate fauna is thought to be richer than that of Korup.

Dja is distinct from any other protected forest area in Cameroon; the only somewhat similar areas which might eventually receive protection are in north-east Gabon and possibly in north Congo.

3. INTEGRITY

At least 90% of the area is undisturbed and subject to no immediate threat. The area has little economic potential. Several thousand people live on the edge of the reserve along roads running from Somalomo to Chouam and from Bissombo to Mékas. These people are long-term inhabitants of the region and are principally engaged in the cultivation of cocoa and coffee. These plantations are relatively stable and occur as a mosaic within the forest.

The people also grow some subsistence crops but there are few signs of shifting cultivation or of recent expansion of agricultural activity. The reserve is sufficiently large that its integrity does not require the resettlement of these people; the internal regulations of the reserve could be adapted to permit the continuation of existing agricultural activities whilst discouraging immigration or expansion.

The people in and around the reserve use it extensively for hunting. There are reports of large scale commercial hunting of elephants, buffalos and various antelopes. Again the extent of the reserve is such that it is?? unlikely that hunting could pose a significant threat to wildlife populations. The notable exception is elephant hunting which needs to be brought under control. Subsistence hunting of small and medium sized wildlife should be allowed in the reserve in the proximity of those settlements located along the edge of the reserve.

The reserve has recently been subject to mineral exploration. No exploitable deposits were located within its boundaries. Calcareous deposits north of Bi on the SE boundary of the reserve are to be subject to further surveys and this may lead eventually to open-cast mining for cement production close to the reserve boundary. The consequent influx of people could pose some threat to the reserve and the boundary in this sector would need careful surveillance.

The area has also been subject to recent forest inventories. These violated existing legislation which prohibits such surveys without authorisation from the management authority (The Délégué Général du Tourisme). Reports on?? the timber potential which these inventories identified are conflicting but strong assurances were given by various parties that no timber exploitation would be allowed within the reserve itself. Apart from the legal constraints upon timber extraction the area remains relatively inaccessible, however stands of valuable timber trees do occur and in the longer term pressures for extraction might develop.

The proposed Bangui - Atlantic (trans-african) highway is projected to pass close to the southern boundary of the reserve. Plans for this highway are at an early stage of development and there is time to ensure that conservation considerations are adequately addressed when the final alignment is being planned. The most probable route appears to follow the reserve boundary from Bî to Lomié and this would clearly have major impacts upon the reserve. It would greatly facilitate access for management and tourism, it would also tend to draw agriculturalists towards the reserve boundary and would increase pressures for timber extraction. Such threats could be countered if an effective management authority were in place by the time that road construction begins.

The protection staff of the reserve consists of a warden and 4 guards. The warden lives 50 km from the reserve boundary but a new housing and office building is being constructed for him at Somalomo on the reserve boundary at a cost of US \$100,000. This building should be completed in 1987, the basic structure is already in place. At present there is little effective management of the reserve apart from sporadic anti-poaching patrols. The Wildlife and National Parks department have no infrastructure for the reserve apart from the one incomplete building. At present threats are so slight that this lack of management is not a problem. However, it is clearly essential in the medium term that a conservation presence be established within the reserve and that monitoring and appropriate visitor promotion and law enforcement activities be developed.

4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Dja was accepted as a Biosphere Reserve in 1981. Its long-term conservation prospects would be enhanced if the majority of the area at present uninhabited were to be upgraded to national park status. Since Dja already falls under the jurisdiction of the Wildlife and National Parks department this change in status only requires a decree. The existing reserve legislation would apparently allow the Department of Wildlife and National Parks to authorise the population to continue their agricultural activities whilst preventing new settlements or expansion of cultivated areas. Rights should be restricted to the present inhabitants and their immediate descendents. Existing legislation would also allow the presently un-gazetted areas within the "Boucle du Dja" to be classified as buffer zones, thus enabling the Wildlife and National Parks Department to exercise some control of human activities. The buffering function would be enhanced if this status were extended to include a band of 3 to 5 km in width around the outside of the Boucle du Dja.

5. EVALUATION

The Dja reserve is one of the largest, biologically richest and best preserved moist forest areas in Africa. It is bigger, less disturbed and subject to less threat than any other area in Cameroon or neighbouring countries and is therefore one of very few areas where an extensive tract of moist forest might reasonably be expected to be totally protected in the long term. The area has many outstanding floral and faunal attributes and is the only totally protected area in this particular type of humid forest. It therefore qualifies for World Heritage listing under Criteria ii and iv.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Dja reserve should be inscribed on the World Heritage list. The committee may then wish to recommend the following:

- Strongly urge the Cameroon Government to upgrade the legal status of the reserve to give it better protection.
- Encourage the authorities to complete the park headquarters at Somalomo and establish an effective management presence in the reserve in accordance with the management plan prepared by the Garoua Wildlife College.
- Request the Cameroon government to ensure that the planning for the trans-african highway takes into account the potential negative impacts of this road on the reserve and ensures that rural development activities in the area of the reserve do not tend to promote the expansion of agriculture or settlement within or close to the boundaries of the reserve.
- That detailed faunal and floral surveys be carried out to better document the natural wealth of the reserve.

