

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION — IUCN SUMMARY

475: PARC NATIONAL DU MANOVO-GOUNDA-ST FLORIS (CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC)

Summary prepared by IUCN (April 1988) based on the original nomination submitted by the Government of the Central African Republic. 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.

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1. LOCATION:

The area occupies most of the eastern end of Bamingui-Bangoran province in the north of the country, on the international border with Chad. The western boundary is about 40km east of Ndéle and the road from Ndéle to Birao runs through the park. 8°05'-9°50'N, 20°28'-22°22'E

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

The Parc national Manovo-Gounda-St Floris was declared on 17 May 1979 with a total area of 1,740,000ha, including the previously designated St Floris National Park and the former Safarafric hunting/tourism concession. Part of the area was first designated as Oubangui-Chari National Park (13,500ha) on 10 December 1933 and renamed Matoumara National Park in 1935. The area was subsequently redefined on 27 July 1940 as St Floris National Park with an area of 40,000ha, enlarged to cover 100,700ha in 1960, and again to cover 277,600ha in 1974. The area previously designated St Floris National Park forms the northern region of the current park.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

The park comprises three main zones, the flood plain of the Bahr Aouk and Bahr Kameur rivers in the north, the Massif des Bongo in the south, and a gently undulating transitional plain between. The lowland areas, which are seasonally flooded, have fine, deep, alluvial soils, although drainage in these areas may be quite poor. This gives way to a flat plain with coarse, generally ferruginous and well-drained soils, in which some areas, particularly the depressions, have developed a lateritic or ironstone shield, on which woody vegetation is noticeably sparse or absent. The massif, which is separated from the plain by an escarpment, is chiefly composed of sandstone and is highly dissected. Five major rivers run down from the massif through the park to the Bahr Aouk and Bahr Kameur, and the park includes the complete basins of three of these. The climate is tropical, semi-humid Sudano-Guinean, with a mean annual rainfall of between 950 and 1700mm, mainly falling between June and November. There is only one rainy season, alternating with a hot dry season. Rainfall is much higher on the upland areas, while maximum temperatures can be much higher in the flood plain to the north.

The predominant vegetation type over much of the park is Soudano-Guinean woodland savanna. Terminalia laxiflora and Isoberlinia wooded savannas cover extensive areas of the upland plains, with Isoberlinia savanna generally lying further to the south. These savannas are interspersed with other less common types (including Combretum scrub or "ironstone meadow" where the ironstone pan is close to the surface), and form a mosaic distribution related to edaphic and topographic features. Dry forest occurs along the edges of the plains, particularly along the Gounda and Koumbala Rivers, and in small islands within the plains.

The lowland areas are subject to both flooding and fire, and this is reflected to some extent in the vegetation. Two other types of woodland/woodland savanna occur within the lowland areas, impeded drainage tree savanna along sections of the river valleys, and a more mixed woodland/woodland savanna around seasonal streams and other isolated low points. The most heavily flooded areas support communities of perennial grasses, sedges and annual forbs, while trees and shrubs are confined to patches of higher ground. Further to the south on the higher ground are found bamboo open savanna, and woodlands associated with the hilly areas of the river sources.

A wide range of animal species has been recorded within the park, although most research has concentrated on the St Floris region. Several animal species of particular conservation concern occur: black rhinoceros Diceros bicornis (now reduced to fewer than 10 individuals), elephant Loxodonta africana, red-fronted gazelle Gazella rufifrons (here at its southern limit), leopard Panthera pardus, cheetah Acinonyx jubatus, hunting dog Lycaon pictus, shoebill Balaeniceps rex and crocodile Crocodylus niloticus. There are large seasonal populations of pelican Pelecanus (Pelecanus onocrotalus and P. rufescens) and marabou stork Leptoptilos crumeniferus, and the park may be fairly important for both waterbirds and shorebirds, particularly the flood plains to the north.

#### 4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

Management of the area is the responsibility of the Société MANOVA S.A., following agreement between the Société and the government, and the parc is the best protected area in the country. Most management effort goes into anti-poaching (which receives support from the army) and the prevention of grazing within the park boundaries. There is no current management plan.

Over a period of several years, FAO has worked within the Central African Republic with the aim of improving wildlife management. As part of this work a number of recommendations for improving the management of the area have been made. This is also true for a number of subsequent projects within the area.

The most significant human impact on the park would appear to be professional poaching of large mammals, particularly of rhinoceros and elephant. Fire, whether initiated by grazers, poachers, hunters or guards, is also a serious concern. Poachers, most of whom reportedly enter the park from Chad and Sudan, have recently begun to use automatic weapons, and numbers of several species have been reduced in the area due to poaching pressure. The situation is reported to be deteriorating.

Meanwhile the equipment available for park staff is inadequate, with only one vehicle and a few arms, and park staff consists of only the conservator and five guards (although this is supplemented by army personnel for anti-poaching work, as well as by concessionaire staff).

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

The nomination for the Parc national Manovo-Gounda-St Floris, as presented by the Government of the Central African Republic, provides the following justification for designation as a World Heritage property:

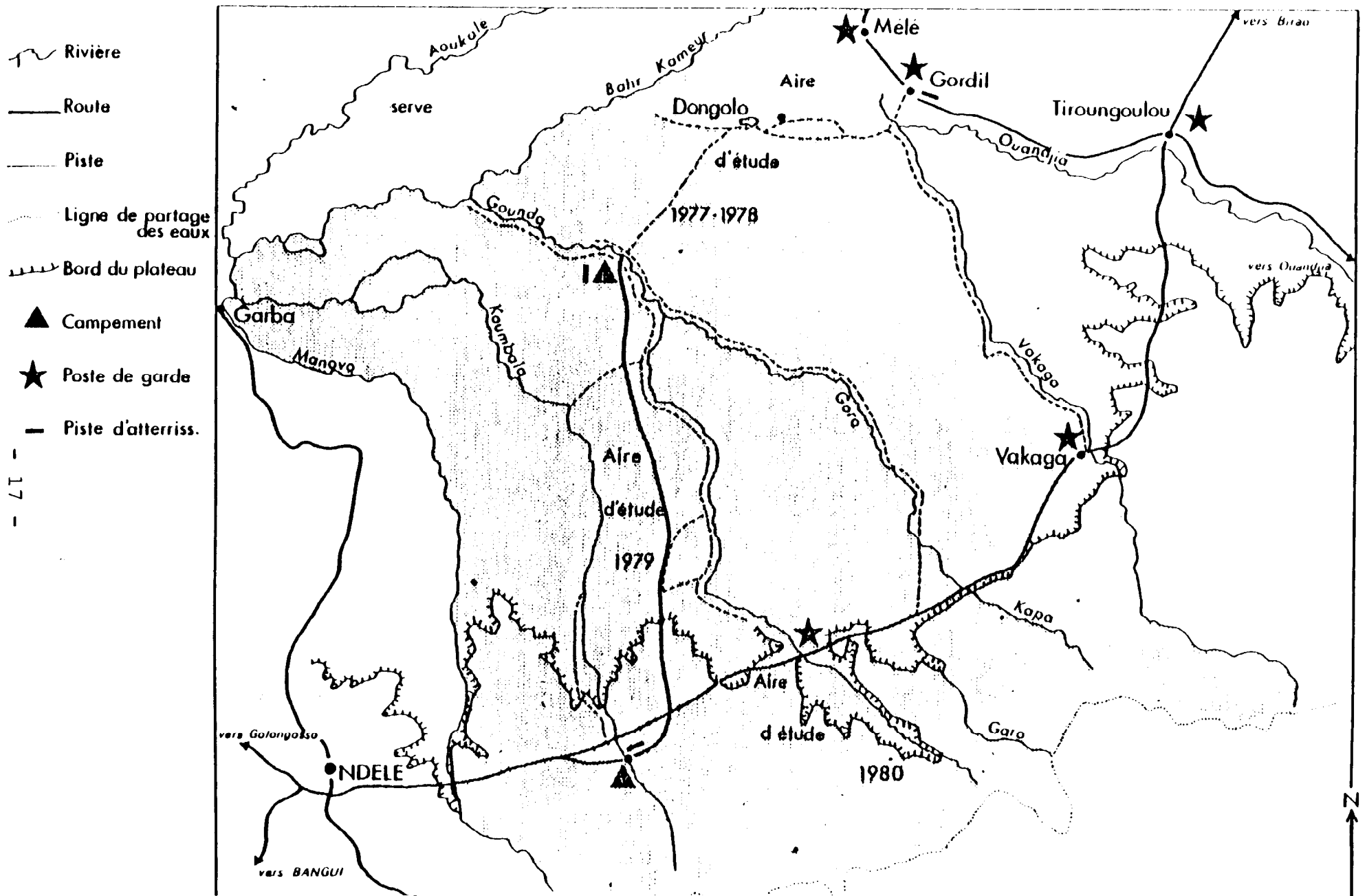
b) Natural property

- (iii) Superlative natural formations. The area of the park is large enough to include the entire basins of three rivers, and significant areas of a range of biotopes including grassy floodplains, a variety of wooded savanna types, and woodlands, as well as the wetlands associated with the rivers, and the rugged sandstone Massif des Bongo.

The area is also large enough to support viable populations of a whole range of species typical of this part of Africa, and includes populations of species of both West and East African origin.

- (iv) Habitat of rare or threatened species. At least eight species of conservation concern occur within the park, which provides a considerable area for their support.

# PARC NATIONAL MANOVO, GOUNDA, ST FLORIS



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

475 MANOVO-GOUNDA-ST.FLORIS NATIONAL PARK (CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC)

1. DOCUMENTATION

- i) IUCN Data Sheet
- ii) Additional literature consulted: IUCN/UNEP 1987, Review of the Protected Areas System of the Afrotropical Realm
- iii) Consultations: T. McShane, G. Sournia, P. Portas, E. Pironio, J.P. Thomassey, N. Donnet
- iv) Site visit: J. Sayer IUCN (June 1988); T. McShane WWF

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

Manovo-Gounda-St. Floris National Park (PNMGF) is the largest savanna park in west and central Africa covering 17,400 sq km. The park comprises portions of the Guinea-Congolian Transition Zone, the Sudanian Regional Center of Endemism and the Sahelian Transition Zone on a gradient from south to north. PNMGF includes important examples of dry forest, which is under severe threat from fire throughout its range and gallery forest. No other protected area in the west and central African savanna zone covers such a broad range of habitat types. Due to PNMGF's unique location, it serves as an important transition zone for flora and fauna from east and west Africa and, through the gallery forest corridors, species from the tropical forest zone to the south.

Comparable sites in West Africa include Comoe National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niokolo-Koba National Park, Senegal, both currently on the World Heritage List; Bamingui-Bangoran National Park, Central African Republic, a listed Biosphere Reserve; and W National Park, Niger, Burkina Faso and Bénin, and Penjari National Park, Bénin, currently unlisted. Other savanna parks exist, but are smaller and contain an impoverished fauna.

PNMGF compares very favourably with both west African savanna World Heritage Sites. The park covers a greater area, has as diverse a flora and range of mammal species. The park comprises a greater range of habitats and more diverse flora and fauna than the Bamingui-Bangoran Biosphere Complex. PNMGF is larger and more diverse than any of the remaining parks occupying the same west and central African biome.

While important savanna ecosystems have been included on the World Heritage List for southern, eastern and western Africa, the northern central African savannas are conspicuously absent. PNMGF is biologically the most important example of this ecosystem.

3. INTEGRITY

Human population density around PNMGF is very low and there is little threat posed by demands for land. The human history of the region is predominately influenced by its position on the Islamic frontier. Early in the century, slave raiders depopulated the north-eastern part of present day Central African Republic. The effects of this activity are still apparent today.

Agriculture is sparse and limited around the park boundaries. PNMGF is, for the most part, surrounded by faunal reserves and managed hunting zones which provide a buffer to certain land uses. The nearest population centres are N'délé to the west, Quadda to the south, Birao to the east and Haraz-Manguaigne, Chad, to the north.

The park was put on IUCN's Register of Threatened Protected Areas of the World in 1986. The primary threats to the park come from two main factors:

- **Illegal Hunting.** Commercial hunting of elephant, black rhino and giraffe for wildlife products is well documented. It is estimated that 75% of the park's elephant population was lost between 1981 and 1984. Black rhino have been reduced from the 100's to the low 10's and the giraffe population has declined. Hunting also continues on a large scale for bush meat which is transported to towns in Sudan, Chad and the Central Africa Republic.

During a recent field inspection (January 1988), evidence of illegal hunting was widespread. This included the sighting of camels and hunters (thought to be Sudanese) operating on the Gounda River in the centre of PNMGF. Further investigations indicated as many as 25 camels may have been in the area and over 50 buffalos and 100 kobs (Kobus Kob) had been killed. Indications were that automatic weapons were being used. The French military was alerted to the presence of the Sudanese and responded by transporting CAR military to Gordil on the park's eastern boundary resulting in the capture of 20 camels and 42 sacks of meat.

Discussions with various people working in PNMGF indicate that widespread hunting and reductions in animal populations continue. The civil wars in neighbouring Chad and Sudan have brought many weapons into the area and Chadians, Sudanese and Central Africans have been implicated in these activities.

- **Illegal Grazing.** Most illegal grazing is due to livestock from the Nyala region of Sudan and from Chad. In general, livestock enter the St. Floris sector of the park in late December and early January and depart in May, using the area as a dry season range. The presence of livestock in the St. Floris sector is principally due to the combined effects of the drought and overgrazing to the north. The presence of cattle has generally gone uncontested. Perennial grasses are being changed to annuals and herbs indicating a lowering of productivity. Rinderpest was last recorded in 1983/84 with mortality recorded among buffalo, giant eland and warthog. Herders also engage in illegal hunting. Coordinated efforts between the Ministries of Eaux et Forêts and Elevage in Sudan and CAR are necessary to reroute herds to other well-watered pastures outside of the park area.

The southern part of PNMGF is crossed by National Route 8 linking N'délé with Birao and Sudan. This route, though controlled at the park boundaries, allows easy access. Some form of control and monitoring must be rigorously exercised as illegal hunting and transport of wildlife products is regularly associated with transit on this route. It has been proposed that this route be rerouted by the EEC/FED project.

The legislation creating PNMGF is well documented and provides adequate protection. Though legislation exists, the park currently experiences limited and sporadic effective management and government support in terms of manpower and equipment is minimal. There is a conservator and five park guards assigned to manage the entire 17,400 sq km area. Lack of transport and other support has confined them to Manovo Camp at the park's western entrance. There is little indication of further direct input from the Ministère des Eaux, Forêts, Chasses, Pêche et Tourisme, the agency responsible for conservation of the park.

There has been past anti-poaching support from both the French and CAR military, however, this has been sporadic and of short-term value. There is no regular military presence in the area and under whose command they come when discharging park duties is not clear. The sustainability of such actions is a cause for concern.

Some management authority and responsibility for tourism and controlled hunting in the park has been vested in a private company, Manovo, S.A., which has a 20 year operating concession. The tourism infrastructure is currently being upgraded to an international standard and a sizeable investment is being made. Limited management activities are practiced and consist primarily of grading park tracks, burning to improve game viewing and some anti-poaching and anti-livestock operations. There are approximately 10 guards employed by the organization for this last purpose. There is little indication that these actions are coordinated with the government agency responsible for PNMGF.

EEC/FED is also beginning a large project (\$27 million) centered on the park. Objectives of this project include road/access improvement, research and infrastructure development (provision of housing and staff). Anti-poaching activities will be undertaken by CAR staff associated with this project. The initial phase of this project is four years with a planned extension of six years. Given the current state of management of PNMGF, a ten year project would be the minimum time required to ensure some level of sustainability. Coordination between this project and Manovo, S.A. is currently lacking and is necessary if a sound management programme is to be realised.

Past conservation projects in PNMGF (UNDR/FAO, FAC, WWF, AWF) have produced few sustainable results contributing to improved management capabilities. The FAC/Peace Corps project, however, did produce valuable baseline ecological data. If the current projects are to be sustainable in the long-term, a number of institutional changes amongst the government and the current projects themselves are necessary.

#### 4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The nomination accurately outlines the situation in PNMGF by highlighting its biological importance while documenting the problems (illegal hunting, grazing, etc.). The problems of park management, of which illegal hunting and grazing are symptoms, are not well described and have been presented in greater detail in this evaluation.

#### 5. EVALUATION

From a biological point of view, PNMGF occupies arguably the most important savanna ecosystem in west and central Africa and contains threatened floral elements (dry forests and extensive gallery forests) and an extremely diverse fauna. It is the largest savanna park in the region. It is an important link in the system of African savanna parks stretching from east to west Africa across the northern savanna belt. It is an interesting example of "crossroads" where species distributions and movements from the east and west African savanna communities and the forest communities to the south have come together. It also offers an important baseline to monitor environmental changes taking place throughout the Sahelian and Sudanian regions due to drought and overgrazing. PNMGF, therefore, qualifies for World Heritage listing under Criteria (ii) and (iv).

Management of the park must be upgraded, however, if it is to maintain its long-term viability. The current projects focusing on tourism and infrastructure development offer this opportunity but a more active role is required from government.

6. RECOMMENDATION

As outlined above, there are serious concerns over the integrity of the park despite its meeting two criteria for a natural World Heritage site. In addition, the policy of the use of the area by a private concessionaire is not clear. Certainly the integrity of the park has strong prospects for improvement with the EEC grant but this has yet to be implemented.

IUCN recommends that consideration of this nomination be deferred pending (1) clarification of the role of the private company operating in the reserve, and (2) reports are received on the progress in implementing the EEC project to restore the park's integrity and improve its management regime.

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