

# GABON

*On the cutting edge of wildlife conservation*



*Forest elephants on the coast of Gabon, in Loango National Park.* Credit: Richard Ruggiero / USFWS

Gabon contains a wealth of natural resources. A country roughly the size of Colorado with a population of less than two million people, it represents the best hope for reversing the damage from poaching and habitat loss that has put Central Africa's threatened and endangered species at risk of extinction.

More than 50 percent of Africa's remaining forest elephants live in Gabon, as well as important populations of western lowland gorillas and chimpanzees. Gabon has one of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world, and dense forests cover more than 80 percent of its land area. As the country strengthens its park system, it must protect against poachers who cross its borders to kill wildlife, and against illegal fishing operators who deplete its marine life.

Gabon has demonstrated a strong political will to conserve its wildlife on land and at sea. In 2002 it established a network of 13 national parks covering 10 percent of the country. In 2007 it created a national park agency, *Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux* (ANPN), to manage the network. In November 2014, President Ali Bongo Ondimba announced that ANPN would create 10 marine protected areas covering 23 percent of the country's territorial waters. In 2017, this was expanded to include 9 additional marine parks and 11 new reserves.

ANPN's overarching goal is to conserve Gabon's wildlife heritage by enhancing its capacity to effectively manage protected areas and provide leadership for conservation in Central Africa.

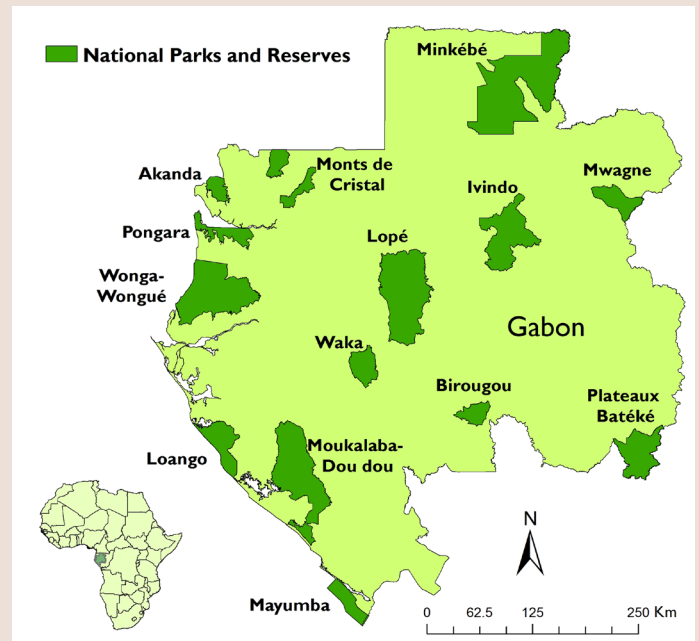
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*Through a government-to-government cooperative agreement, USFWS is helping strengthen Gabon's national park agency and improve management capacity to provide greater protections to wildlife populations.*

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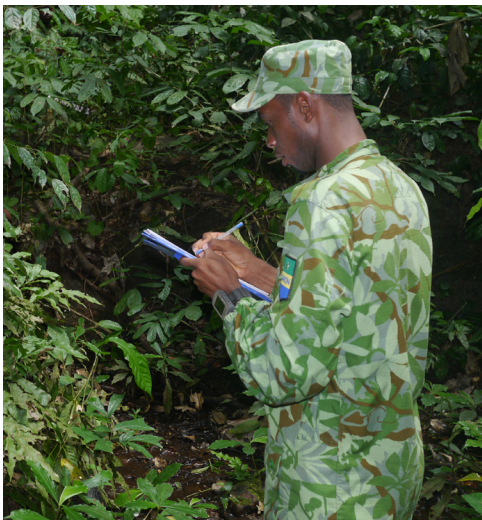
## Program Highlights

- USFWS supports Gabon's progressive vision for wildlife conservation through an innovative multi-year cooperative agreement with its national park agency (ANPN).
- This agreement allows USFWS to work side by side to address rapidly escalating threats, such as elephant poaching, while at the same time enhancing immediate and long-term capacity of ANPN to effectively manage the national park network and adaptively respond to emerging conservation challenges.
- As part of this agreement, USFWS is supporting ANPN to eliminate illegal fishing and secure Gabon's marine resources through its *Gabon Bleu* program.



*Above: Gabon's network of protected areas.*

Credit: William Kanapaux / USFWS



Above: An ANPN ecoguard collects data during a patrol in Gabon's Minkébé National Park. Credit: William Kanapaux / USFWS

## Threats to Central African Wildlife

### Elephant poaching

The ivory trade poses the single biggest threat to the survival of the African elephant. The number of forest elephants in Central Africa fell 62 percent between 2002 and 2011.

### Commercial bushmeat trade

Commercial demand for bushmeat poses the single greatest threat to the majority of forest animals in Central Africa. A thriving commercial trade often emerges around logging concessions and other work camps.

### Extractive industries

Logging, mining and oil exploration that are unregulated and unmanaged threaten wildlife by destroying and degrading habitats. These industries also create roads that attract poachers and new human settlements.

### Marine turtle mortality

Commercial and artisanal fishing operations threaten marine turtles through direct and incidental capture. During nesting season, poachers also capture females and raid nests for eggs.

### Disease

Ebola and other infectious diseases are a major cause of decline in Africa's great ape populations. Ebola's mortality rate is higher for chimpanzees and gorillas (up to 95 percent) than for humans.

### The pet trade

Live capture of animals for the pet trade threatens many species, including great apes. Many adult apes are killed while defending infants during live capture.

## Strategic Objectives

Gabon's cooperative agreement with USFWS, launched in 2012, has three objectives:

- Help ANPN establish itself as a premier African parks agency with strong national support and adaptive capacity for managing the parks and their boundary areas;
- Develop a system for improving wildlife security in buffer zones outside of national parks; and
- Reduce pressure on the parks and surrounding areas from extractive industries: forestry, mining, oil and gas, and commercial fishing.

USFWS support for ANPN comes through the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), which seeks to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss and forest degradation in the Congo Basin by increasing capacity for natural resource management at local, national, and regional levels.

## On-the-Ground Investments

USFWS has been active in Gabon since 1989. During this time, USFWS has been supporting numerous projects and providing technical support to strengthen capacity for managing wildlife and habitats in Gabon. Projects include monitoring and securing wildlife populations, improving capacity for protected area management, and working with communities on resource management and ecotourism.

## USFWS Support to Gabon, 2016 - 2018

Fiscal Year	Amount Awarded	Amount Leveraged
2016	\$8.3 million	\$6.9 million
2017	\$10 million	\$1.5 million
2018	\$7.8 million	\$0.25 million
3-year total	\$26.1 million	\$8.4 million

## Achievements

The USFWS cooperative agreement with Gabon is an example of direct government-to-government assistance. Despite Gabon's demonstrated commitment and political will for conservation, ANPN has been under-resourced, under-staffed, and lacking in technical capacity. Since its inception, the USFWS-ANPN cooperative agreement has resulted in a number of achievements, including:

- Elimination of elephant poaching in Wonga Wongue Presidential Reserve in a single year.
- Implementation of a national elephant monitoring program.
- Development of a model-parks approach that establishes the organizational structure necessary for strengthening Gabon's capacity to conserve and manage important wildlife species and their habitats.
- A spatial plan for marine parks, oil exclusion zones, and fishing zones.
- An expansion of Gabon's marine protected area network to cover more than 26 percent of the country's Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Signed agreements between ANPN and Gabon's two largest oil producers for protecting marine resources.
- Accelerated security training for park guards and law enforcement partners
- Creation of an integrated information management system for law enforcement
- Reduction in illegal artisanal and commercial fishing in Gabon's lagoons and coastal waters through ANPN's *Gabon Bleu* program.



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September 2019