

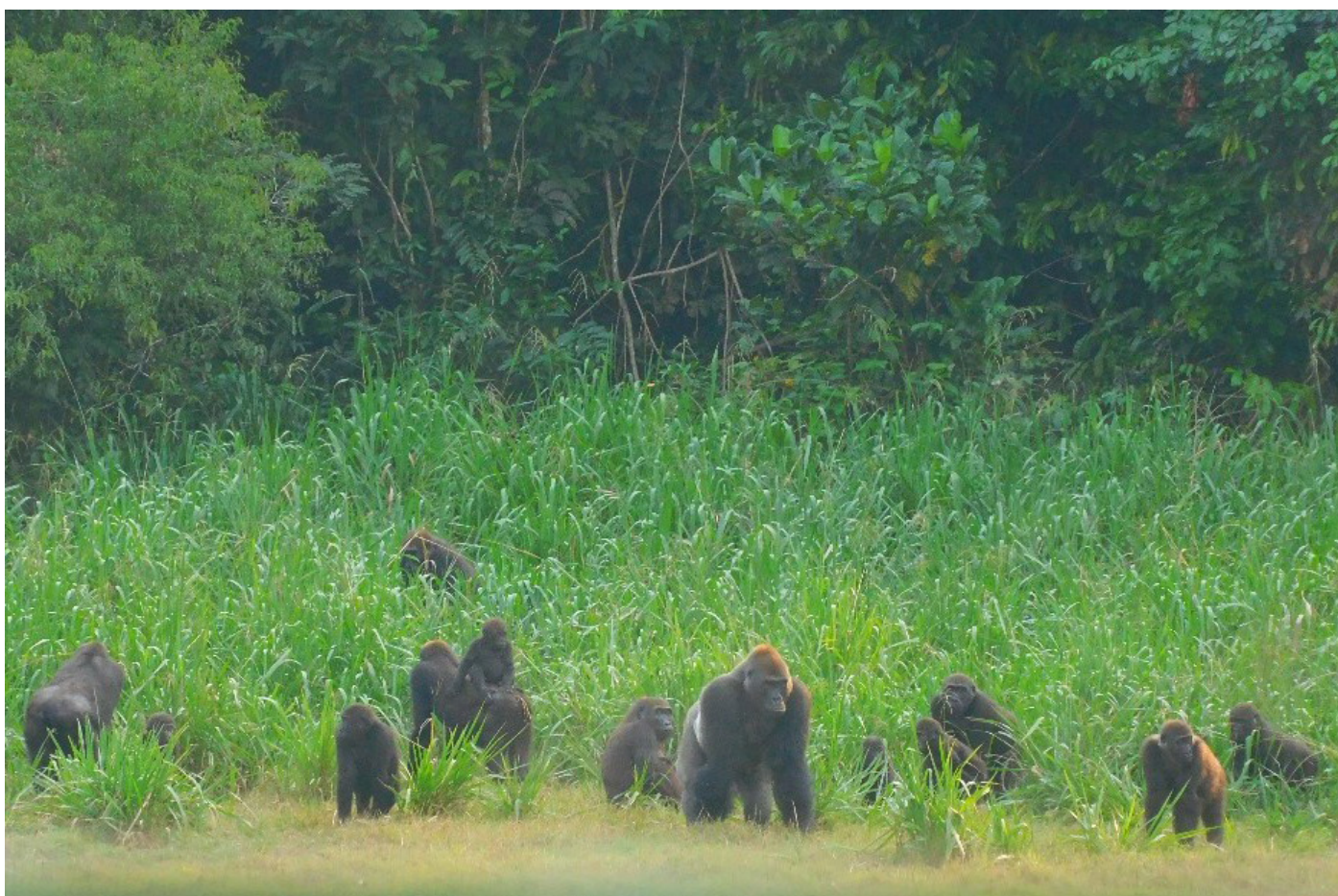


LOBEKE NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2025

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF LOBEKE NATIONAL PARK, EAST REGION, CAMEROON



Western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) in Petite Savane clearing inside Lobeke National Park



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GOVERNANCE:

Strengthening Conservation Governance Through IMETT and METT4 Evaluation



@Jengi TNS/WWF

Lobeke personnel and community representatives during evaluation meeting

From 3 to 6 June 2025, WWF and MINFOF held a workshop in Bertoua to assess Lobéké National Park's 2023–2024 management effectiveness using IMETT and METT4 tools. With support from GEF7 and the EU, key stakeholders - including COVAREFs, IPLC representatives, and local organizations - reviewed progress made in the park's management between 2023 and 2024, noting improved IMET (68.21) and METT (67.46) scores.

Despite the milestones achieved, resource constraints persist. The workshop recommended co-management governance, enhanced stakeholder communication, and better human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

Emphasis was also placed on cross-border coordination, zoonotic disease surveillance, and sustainable agriculture to foster climate resilience and conservation impact.



@Jengi TNS/WWF

Participants at the end of IMET evaluation meeting in Bertoua

GOVERNANCE:

Cross-Program Exchange Enhances Conservation and Livelihood Strategies



@Jengi TNS/WWF

Group photo of Lobeke and Coastal Forests Program teams after an enriching experience sharing in Bakingili

From 17 to 23 June, WWF Jengi TNS and the WWF Coastal Forests Program facilitated a week-long knowledge exchange aimed at strengthening collaboration among Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in addressing human-wildlife conflict and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Participants included representatives from Baka communities in the Tri-National de la Sangha (TNS) landscape, Bakweri communities around Mount Cameroon National Park, and Mbororo communities near the Bakossi and Mount Kupe-Muanenguba National Parks.

Practical field visits showcased traditional and modern techniques to prevent elephant crop raiding, such as chili-infused barriers and GPS-guided patrols.

The host Mbororo community exhibited community-driven livelihoods like organic vegetable farming, beekeeping, and local education initiatives. There were cultural exchanges to foster mutual respect and deepen the integration of indigenous knowledge in conservation.

Key outcomes from the exchange trip were strengthened inter-community collaboration, commitments taken by Baka leaders to adopt and replicate successful strategies, greater recognition of the role of indigenous knowledge in biodiversity conservation

This exchange has fostered peer learning and inclusive approaches in tackling shared environmental and social challenges.



Meeting between Baka representatives and Mbororo community in Bangem, Southwest Region



A Mbororo man showing to Baka leaders honey his community made as part of income generating activities

@Romanus Ikfuingei / WWF

INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION:

WWF Boosts Inclusive Community Data Skills With Sapelli Tool



Training of trainers workshop on Sapelli by University College London (UCL) in Mambele multimedia hall

Two separate training sessions were organized in June on the use of sapelli in data collection in and around Lobeke National park. On 17 and 18 June, WWF and University College London conducted a refresher and advanced training on the Sapelli data collection platform for eco-guards and WWF staff in Lobéké.

The hands-on sessions, under the ExCiteS programme and funded by INFORBIO, covered new platform updates, community-led ecological monitoring, and participatory mapping tools.

A key innovation introduced was the integration of zoonotic disease data collection to support early detection systems aligned with One Health principles. This training-of-trainers model enhances the ability of conservation teams to work alongside Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in managing protected areas more inclusively and adaptively.

Meanwhile, on 20 and 21 June, WWF Jengi-TNS held its annual capacity-building workshop—funded by GEF-7 on using the Sapelli platform for independent social and ecological data collection. The event gathered 24 Baka and Bantu community members from six communities, including women and eco-guards.

Sessions were delivered in both French and Baka, featuring co-designed tools, group activities, and field demonstrations based on local environmental challenges.



Participants comprising Baka representatives and park personnel at the end of capacity building session on Sapelli

COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT:

Enhancing Forest Crime Monitoring Through Digital Innovation and Collaboration



A presentation made during the workshop in Douala

To stem criminal activities linked to forest exploitation, the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Pulitzer Center organized a workshop on 24 and 25 June, on the use of digital tools to investigate forest crimes.

The WWF Jengi Program Technical Advisor participated in the event that brought together CSOs, journalists, and researchers to exchange strategies and foster collaboration.

The WWF Jengi TNS representative shared success stories from the Lobeke landscape, including a real-time deforestation monitoring platform built with Global Forest Watch. He also gained skills in tools like

the Open Timber Portal and Cameroon's Interactive Forest Atlas. These innovations will now support capacity-building efforts for forest stakeholders around Lobeke, including MINFOF, NGOs, and logging companies.

Strengthened partnerships and shared protocols are expected to boost the Lobeke monitoring platform's ability to detect and respond effectively to illegal forest activities, promoting more transparent conservation outcomes.

TRANS-BORDER COLLABORATION

Strengthening Park Management in TNS With EarthRanger



R-L: Stephane (Technical Advisor Lobeke National Park), Ella Le Borgne (EarthRanger expert), Aristide and Emmanuel (CAR) at training in Dzanga-Sangha

As part of the EU-funded NaturAfrica project for the TNS landscape, the Technical Advisor of Lobeke National Park undertook a capacity-building mission from June 17–19, 2025, to strengthen EarthRanger deployment.

Hosted in Dzanga-Sangha (CAR), the mission focused on EarthRanger's real-time functionalities, integration with SMART and CyberTracker, and operational enablers and challenges.

It emphasized EarthRanger's landscape-scale approach to conservation monitoring and yielded key recommendations, including hardware procurement, API integration, training, and knowledge exchange. The mission laid a solid foundation for adapting and scaling EarthRanger in Lobeke to enhance coordinated, real-time protection efforts across the TNS transboundary landscape

RESEARCH & ECOLOGICAL MONITORING:

Lobeke Launches 2025 Wildlife Survey

A 10-day field data collection mission at Pont Cassé at the beginning of June marked the first step of the 2025 wildlife survey campaign in the Lobéké National Park and its peripheral areas.

It aimed to establish species-specific degradation parameters for key wildlife signs - namely elephant dung and great ape nests.

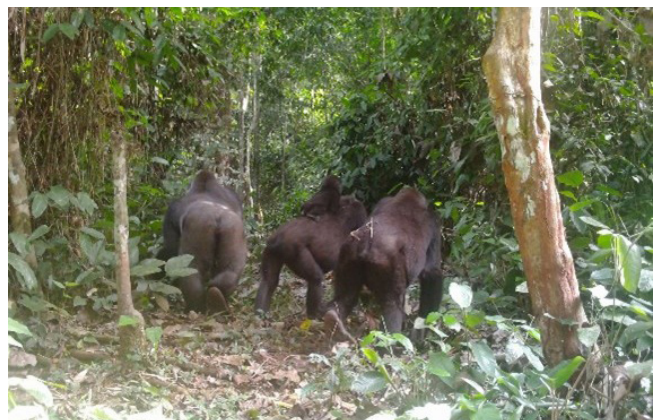
These parameters are critical for accurately

estimating species density during large-scale wildlife inventories, as they enable the conversion of field observations into population estimates.

The mission recorded 114 fresh wildlife signs, comprising 46 gorilla nests, 27 chimpanzee nests, and 41 elephant dung piles. Nine (09) successive field missions will be carried out at 7-14-day intervals to monitor the degradation of elephant dung and great ape nests.



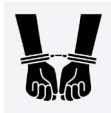
Forest elephant and gorillas in transects



ANTI-POACHING:



30-day patrols



400km covered

09 suspects arrested



1500 wire snares



02 guns seized



12 ammunitions

In June, ecoguards of Lobeke National Park and the TNS Brigade conducted four 30-day anti-poaching patrols in and around Lobeke. The teams covered over 400 km.

The patrols resulted in the arrest of nine (09) individuals, including three who, being minors, were released after signing a commitment. The six others were handed over to the judiciary to face the law.

The law enforcement teams seized two (02) firearms and 12 (twelve) ammunitions, bushmeat, and over 1500 wire snares .

These positive outcomes are a result of strengthened collaboration and ongoing commitment to protect wildlife in the TNS landscape.

SAVE THE DATE

BAKA-BANTU FESTIVAL 2025

Celebrating the Spirit of the Forest

Fourth edition - 31 July to 3 August 2025



Step into the heart of the Congo Basin and immerse yourself in a truly unforgettable cultural experience!

From July 31 to August 3, 2025, the vibrant cultural heritage of the Indigenous Baka and local Bangando (Bantu) communities will come to life in Mambele, the headquarters of Lobeke National Park - a World Heritage site renowned for its extraordinary biodiversity and stunning landscapes.

What to Expect:

- Traditional Storytelling
- Handcrafted Art & Artifacts
- Songs and Dances
- Sacred Rites and Ceremonies
- Gastronomy

This four-day cultural showcase will welcome visitors from Cameroon and beyond to experience the connection between people and nature, and discover how culture enriches the richness of Lobeke National Park beyond its wildlife.

LOBEKE STORIES IN THE MEDIA

From porter to conservation leader, the inspiring story of Marlyse Bebeguewa in Cameroon



Marlyse Bebeguewa, once a teenage porter in the rainforests of southeastern Cameroon, now leads conservation monitoring efforts in Lobéké National Park, using cutting-edge tools to protect endangered wildlife.

She was the only woman selected during a 2014 recruitment drive and has broken gender barriers in a male-dominated field by mentoring young women and championing inclusive conservation.

Her story is one of many among Indigenous and local communities — both Baka and Bantu — helping to manage one of Cameroon's most biodiverse forest landscapes.

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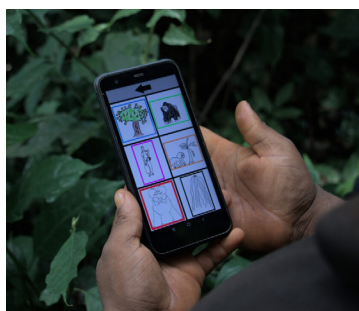
Strengthening conservation & human rights around Lobeke National Park: Over 80 trained in combating wildlife crime and promoting human Rights

In a significant step towards sustainable conservation and community wellbeing, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), in partnership with WWF, recently trained over 80 people, including ecoguards, members of village anti-poaching committees (COVILAB), biomonitoring assistants, and representatives from the Baka community, around Lobeke National Park, a vital segment of the Tri-National Sangha (TNS) transboundary landscape spanning Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of Congo.



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Cameroun : Les communautés autochtones Baka se servent de la technologie pour protéger la biodiversité

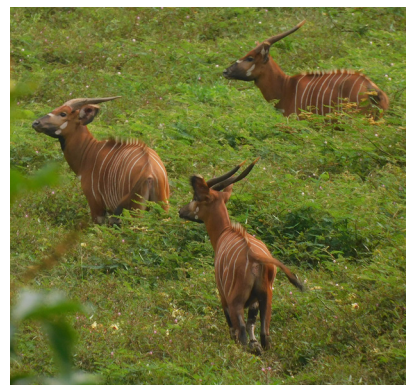
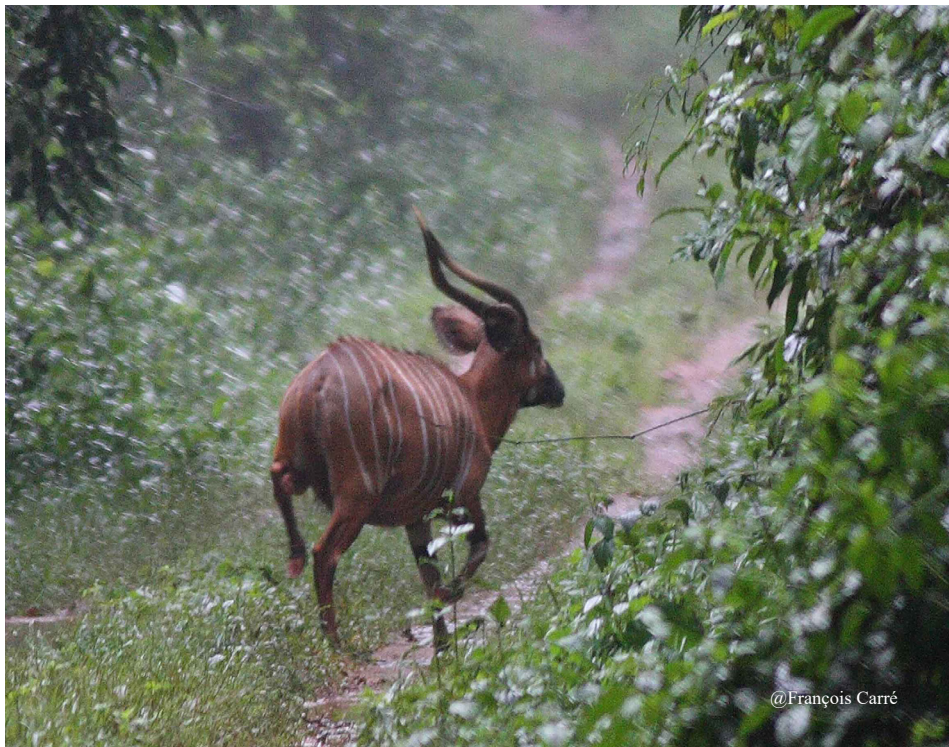


Freddy Mbengue, un jeune agriculteur de 24 ans, vêtu d'un polo noir et d'une culotte jeans, balade sans cesse un regard inquisiteur au milieu des arbres. Ce membre de la communauté Baka du village Yenga-Tengué, situé au Sud-est du Cameroun, près du Parc national de la Lobéké, tente d'identifier des arbres fruitiers, ou des essences utilisées pour leurs vertus médicinales pour se soigner. Il est muni d'un smartphone de couleur noire et d'une machette, qui lui permet de déblayer une piste herbacée, qu'il n'a plus empruntée depuis le retour des pluies en avril dernier.

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DISCOVERY:

The Elusive Bongo Antelopes of Lobeke National Park



Deep within the bright green expanse of Lobeke National Park, nestled in the southeastern corner of Cameroon, roams one of Africa's most striking and secretive creatures - the bongo antelope. Adorned by elegant white stripes and spiraled horns, the bongo is a living beauty of the rainforest and a jewel of the Congo Basin.

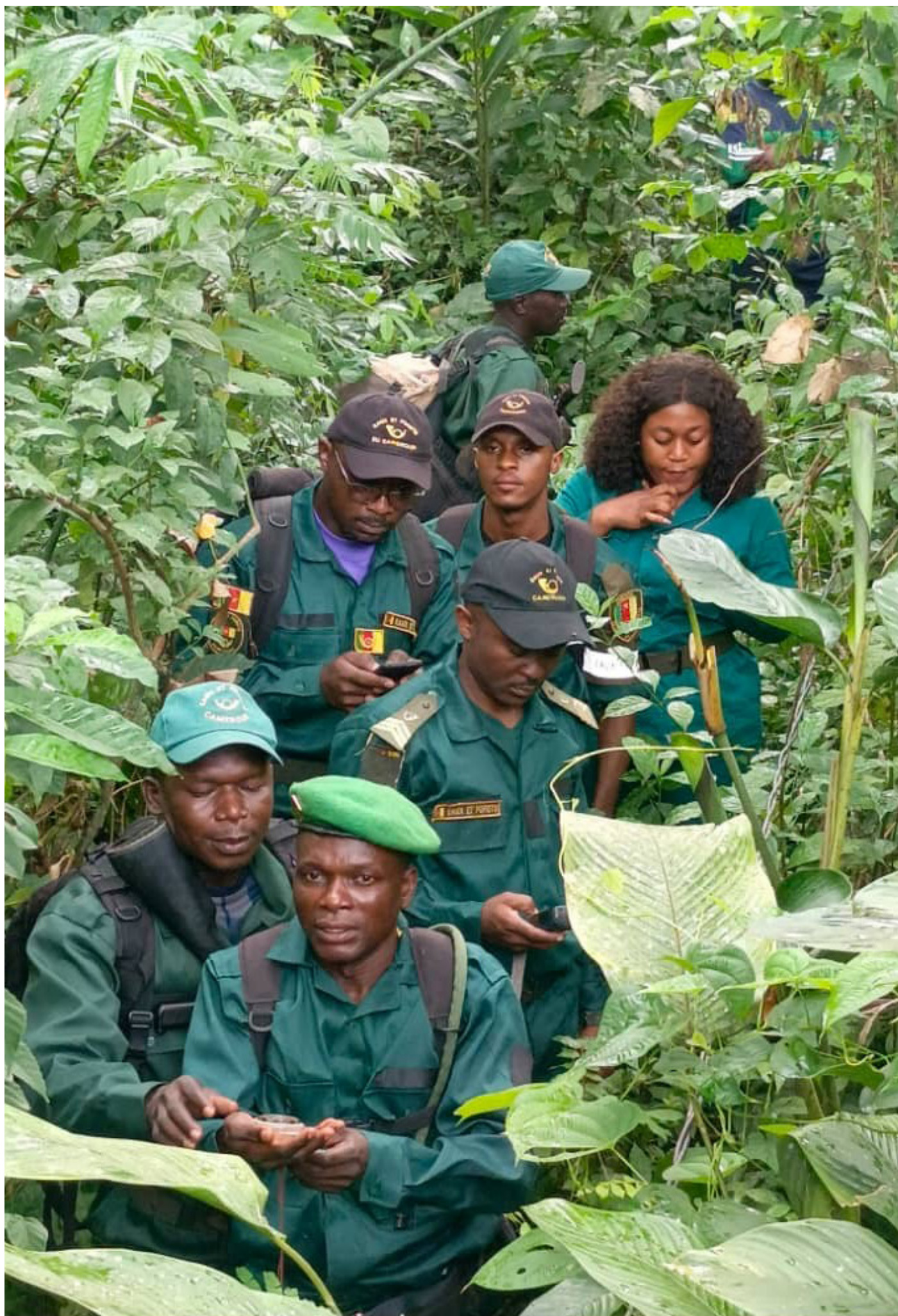
Lobeke National Park, which is part of the Sangha Trinational World Heritage Site, is a sanctuary of biodiversity. It is home to forest elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees, and among them, the bongo antelope (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*) - the largest and most colorful forest-dwelling antelope in Africa.

Bongos are easily recognized by their reddish-brown fur, vertical white stripes, and long, spiraled horns. These antelopes thrive in dense, humid forests and

are especially drawn to mineral-rich forest clearings known as "bais", which crowd Lobeke's landscape.

Bongos are elusive and mostly nocturnal. They move silently through the undergrowth, making sightings a rare and thrilling experience for visitors and researchers. Visitors to Lobeke can observe bongos from watchtowers overlooking forest clearings, especially during early morning or dusk.

While bongos play a vital role in forest ecology by dispersing seeds and maintaining plant diversity, their populations are under pressure due to poaching and habitat loss. Thanks to ongoing conservation efforts - supported by organizations like WWF and the TNS Foundation - bongo antelopes can continue to thrive.



Ecoguards during practical phase of forest navigation tools