

Creating the Misotshi-Kabogo Protected Area In Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo



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Introduction

The Misotshi-Kabogo (formerly Kabobo) region of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contains probably one of the largest populations of chimpanzees left in the Katanga region, and has the most southerly population of chimpanzees in the Congo Basin forests. A survey funded partially by USFWS Great Ape Conservation Fund (Project: 98210-6-G035) conducted in early 2007 by a team of scientists from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Field Museum in Chicago and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) estimated that there are about 1,500 chimpanzees here, one of the few viable populations of eastern Chimpanzees in the Albertine Rift region (Plumptre et al. 2007b). The region consists of about 1,000 km² of medium altitude and montane rainforest ranging from 770-2,725 metres on the escarpment to the wetlands of Lake Tanganyika. Because there is very little forest left within this altitudinal range in Africa, this area is particularly valuable for the conservation of chimpanzees and other species. There is about another 1000 km² to the west of gallery forest and grassland (fig 1). Although endangered, chimpanzees are relatively abundant as there is a taboo against killing them for bushmeat by the Babembe people. Most other populations occur at much lower density or in fragmented forest patches and do not reach the 500 estimated minimum to be viable in the long term. The region is also important for its populations of endemic subspecies of Angolan Colobus (*Colobus angolensis prigoginei*) confined to this forest, possibly a subspecies of Bongo (the only other Bongo found in mountainous areas in Kenya is a different subspecies), and Red Colobus (*Ptilocolobus oustaleti foai*) which is also a subspecies confined to this region.

This is one of the few sites in DRC where a large population Chimpanzees live in a forest-savanna mosaic of habitats more akin to the types of habitat where they occur in Tanzania. This habitat is thought to be more similar to the habitat early hominoids inhabited and it is believed that we can learn more about how these hominoids might have lived by studying chimpanzees in this habitat type. This proposed area therefore represents a rarer habitat type for chimpanzees and would conserve some of the behavioural and environmental flexibility exhibited by this species which is found in few other places in the World.

The area around Mount Kabobo (28.9 E, 4.8 S – 29.2 E, 5.2 S) has also been noted as important for conservation in the past. Prigogine (1960) identified that it had 18 Albertine Rift endemic bird species, including the Kabobo Apalis (*Apalis kaboboensis*) found only in this region. As a result, Kabobo was nominated as part of the Albertine Rift Endemic Bird Area by Birdlife International and was included in WWF 's Albertine Rift Ecoregion. Brief surveys in the 1950s identified at least seven endemic amphibians (we have added two more since) and two endemic reptiles were also known from Mt. Kabobo (Plumptre et al. 2003; 2007a). This region was also identified as a 'Centre of Plant Diversity' despite little information being available for it (Davis, Heywood and Hamilton, 1994). Surveys led by WCS in the region in early 2007 following aerial reconnaissance of a much larger region in 2006 indicate that the area around Mt. Kabobo is even more important than previously thought. Four new mammal species to science have been discovered (a bat, a rodent and two shrews), and we also have two new frog species, of which one may be a new genus. The number of endemic birds has increased to 22, making this area the 5th most diverse of over 40 sites in the Albertine Rift for birds (Plumptre et al. 2007b).

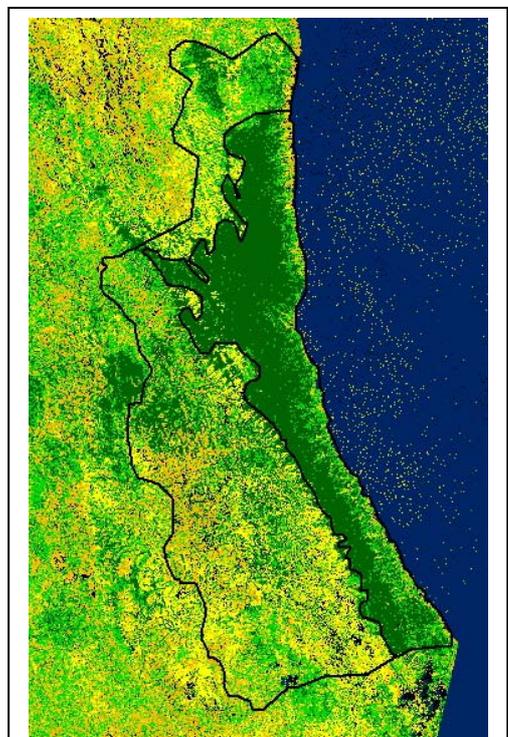


Figure 1. Misotshi-Kabogo proposed protected area in 2008.

Currently there is no protected area status for the Misotshi-Kabogo region. However, it has been kept intact in part due to low human population and past rebel activity in the region. The time to take action to create a protected area is right: the region is calm and secure; local village chiefs have expressed interest in creating a protected area because they believe it would bring more attention to the area; and the DRC government is committed to conserving 15% of its land in protected areas. In addition, the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) has been informed about the interesting findings in this region and is interested in creating a protected area in the region. Clearly there is local and national support for the creation of a protected area in the region.

USFWS support for moving the process forward to create some form of protected area in Misotshi-Kabogo was obtained in April 2008. The goal and objectives of the project were as follows:

Goal: To create a protected area in the Misotshi-Kabogo region.

Objectives:

1. Undertake aerial and satellite mapping of the potential protected area to create maps to help define the boundaries of the protected area that would be designated. Also we would undertake a socioeconomic survey to better understand opportunity costs of the protected area creation as well as better define the protected area boundary and the Luama Hunting Reserve.
2. Hold meetings with regional chiefs, provincial government leaders and ICCN to work together to agree on the delimitation of a protected area in the region and to obtain signed agreements for its creation.
3. Work with ICCN and Ministry of the Environment to develop a formal document to gazette the area and start to formally mark the protected area on the ground.

Achievements of the project:

The achievements completed are reported here for each of the objectives. Mr Arcel Bamba was identified and recruited to lead the project for WCS based in Kalemie and he has been provided with a motorbike and a computer to enable him to operate around the proposed protected area. He also was trained in participatory methods of mapping village areas by the WCS team in Epulu in the Ituri Forest who have been doing this type of work for many years.

Objective 1. *Mapping the potential reserve and undertaking a socioeconomic survey.*

Aerial mapping was made of parts of the Misotshi-Kabogo massif and the adjacent Luama Hunting Reserve in May 2008 and in October 2008. Unfortunately the weather was particularly wet whenever the pilot was trying to obtain imagery for this region but most of the remaining region was flown in September 2009 apart from a small strip across the forest. Aerial photos obtained were joined and orthorectified using the ENSO Mosaic system to provide a photographic map at about 80 cm resolution for the areas that were flown. These have been used to help 'ground truth' satellite imagery for the Misotshi-Kabogo and Luama area – particularly classification of the Miombo woodland areas and separating them from forested areas. It has also been used to map settlements, agriculture and mining sites in both the Luama Hunting Reserve and the proposed protected area in Misotshi-Kabogo. The final satellite image classification has been produced by the WCS GIS lab in Kampala and mapped human impacts (Figure 2) and land cover (Figure 1).

A socioeconomic survey was completed for the villages along lake Tanganyika (the more logistically difficult area) and for the villages along the road that links Uvira to Kalemie and that separates the proposed protected area from the Luama Hunting Reserve. The results showed that people living here are particularly poor compared with people living elsewhere

in the Albertie Rift region (see attachment 1). The villages along the lake shore differed from those along the road in both their household income and also their ability to earn cash from selling agricultural/fish products. Use of the forest contributed to only about 6-8% of their annual household income but was important for paying for school fees and treatment for sickness.

The survey also indicated that 85-90% the people interviewed wanted some form of protected area that would still allow some use by local communities. As a result of this encouraging finding we held meetings with the traditional chiefs and provincial officials in July 2009 to discuss the creation of a protected area.

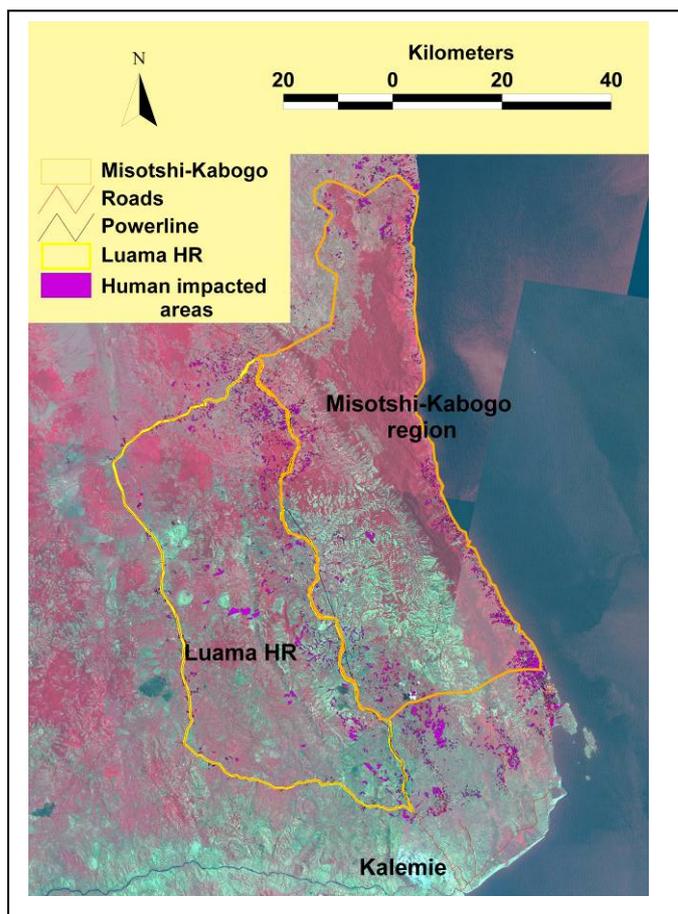


Figure 2. Map of human impacts on both the Misotshi-Kabogo region and the Luama Hunting Reserve. Most signs were of fires set to clear fields for cultivation or for hunting wildlife, but a few were for artisanal mining.

Objective 2. Hold meetings with village/regional chiefs, provincial government leaders and ICCN to work together to agree the location of a protected area.

We worked with ICCN to invite the traditional chiefs and district political leaders to meet and discuss the options for creating a new protected area. Between 8-14th July 2009 WCS and ICCN held two meetings in Kalemie and Misisi towns respectively to present the results of the biological and socioeconomic surveys and also to present all the various options for the creation of a protected area that are possible in Congo. These options included creating a natural reserve or faunal reserve, creation of a national park or creation of a community reserve. The two meetings were supported by a WWF grant as well as this USFWS grant (figure 3). The resulting outcome was that the traditional leaders and district authorities voted unanimously to create a new National Park surrounded by a Natural Reserve where access to forest resources would be allowed. The name of the park and its buffer zone has been

agreed as the Ngamikka National Park (based on the mountains Nganja, Misotshi, Kabogo and Kabili). They wanted park status for part of the area for several reasons:

1. It would bring more attention to their area
2. It could attract funding more easily than a reserve
3. It would also help keep immigrants who are coming into the region from outside away from the area
4. It would provide better protection for the fauna and flora in the area



Figure 3. Traditional chiefs and district officials at meeting in Misisi (left) and Kalemie (right).

With this agreement ICCN and WCS then approached the Governor of Katanga in Lubumbashi and Governor of South Kivu in Bukavu in August 2009 to brief them on the findings of these two meetings and to discuss the way forward for the creation of the national park and buffer zone.

1. Lubumbashi: We met with the Provincial Minister of Environment, the President of the Provincial Assembly and 3 Provincial MPs. They were all happy to hear that the local community proposed the creation of a national park. The Minister said that this was good news because the central government is giving away almost all areas to mining companies. He needs a clear agenda (when do we think we could have the national park created was his question) and to know exactly how the local community will benefit from the project. The President of the Provincial Assembly was also happy and like the Kivu Governor wanted to know how he could help speed up the process. We then met three Provincial MPs just before they entered the Assembly building. We quickly provided information concerning Kabobo and they thanked us for that and reassured us that they were available for further collaboration.

2. Bukavu: We met the ministry of environment, the Vice President of the Provincial Assembly, an MP from Fizi (Mr Jean Ngoma) and the Vice-Governor. They are all supportive of the idea of creating a national park. The Ministry of Environment encouraged us to also meet with national MPs from Fizi in Kinshasa and insisted that we should speed up the process (actually all of them stressed this) before the area is given to the mining sector. The Provincial MP from Fizi (a Mai-Mai) has a lot of information concerning the area and should be considered as a key informant. Unfortunately the two other MPs from Fizi were not around during our visit. The Vice-Governor is a great conservationist and wanted to know how he could support the project from his end. He also insisted that we provide them with an agenda. This issue was also raised by the Vice-President of the Provincial Assembly. The latter encouraged us to organize a field visit along with the Provincial MPs.

Recommendations that came out of these meetings included:

1. Keep the flow of communication between Bukavu/Lubumbashi and ICCN and its partners.
2. Continue support for lobbying/meetings with authorities.
3. Organize a field visit for MPs to Kabobo.

4. Need to meet National MPs (from both Fizi and Kalemie) in Kinshasa.

Following these meetings WCS started a process of participatory mapping around the proposed park and reserve. Most of the villages have now been visited apart from a few at the northernmost extreme of the massif. It has taken longer to visit these areas than expected because of the time required in each village and also because there has been some insecurity in the northernmost part of the region.

The team undertaking the participatory mapping visits each village and meets with the leaders of the village and then the whole village to explain to them the results of the biological survey, socioeconomic survey and the meetings of the traditional leaders and the district authorities. They also meet with specific groups such as men and women in the village separately (figure 4), indigenous peoples (pygmies), the leaders and the youth. They then discuss together where the existing boundaries of agriculture occur and where they would like to be able to expand their agricultural production to in future. GPS points are collected at the boundaries of the existing agriculture and at the boundaries of where they want to expand to. Using this information together with the land cover map and the biodiversity survey data we have we have created a draft map of the proposed Ngamikka National Park (figure 5) which incorporates most of the desires of the villages but also proposes some ecological corridors to the lake shore on the eastern boundary and some corridors linking with Luama Hunting Reserve on the western side. These areas are important because there is little forest conserved in the 770-1000m altitude range in the Albertine Rift region because most of it has been deforested. This map is being taken back to the villages at the moment and these modifications are being discussed and final boundaries being agreed upon.



Figure 4. Participatory consultations taking place with maps in one of the villages with men (left) and women (right).

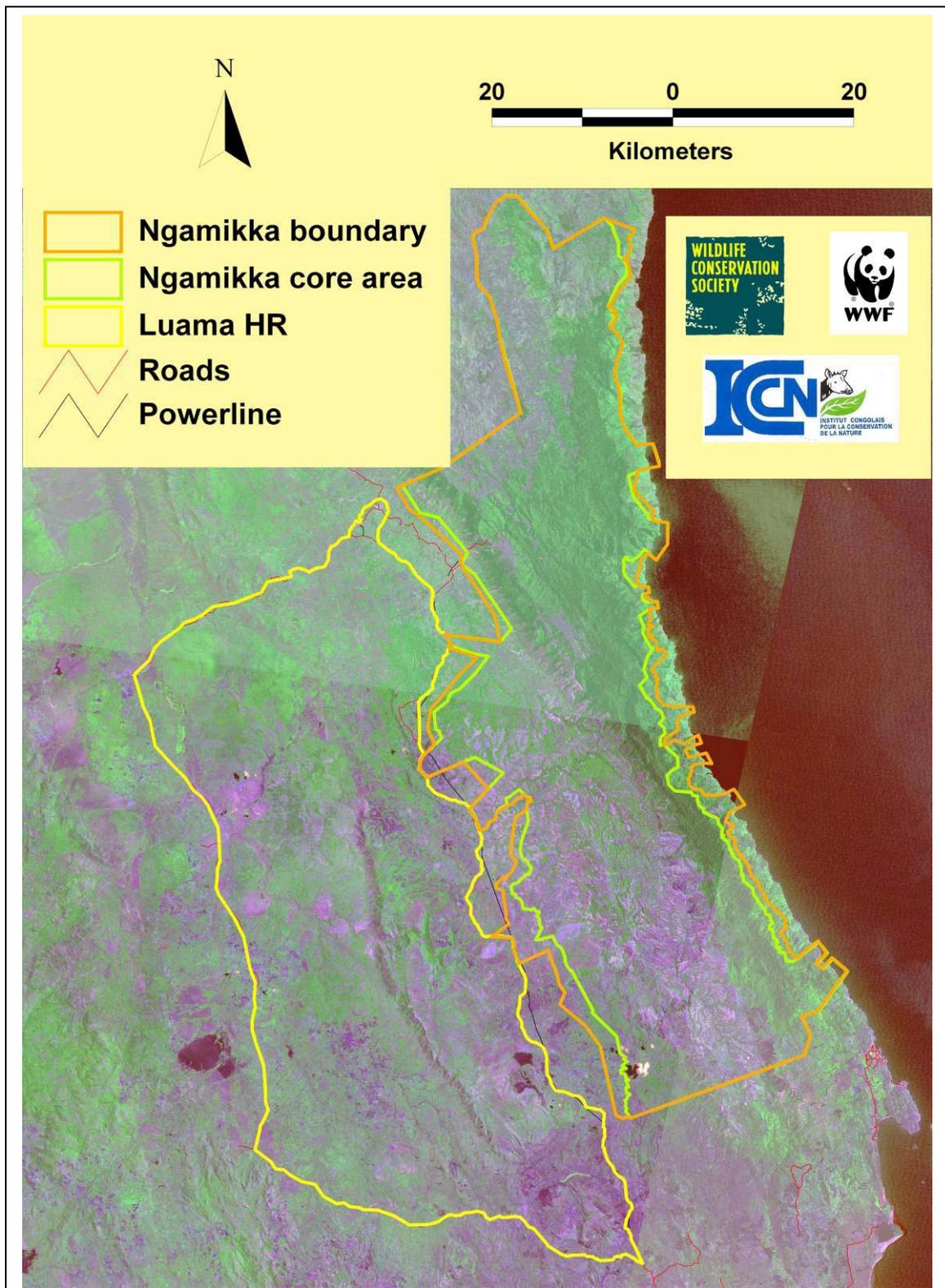


Figure 5. Map of Ngamikka Park boundary together with the Luama Hunting Reserve showing the border of the proposed Ngamikka Park (orange) together with the core park area (green). In between the two boundaries will be the buffer zone where multiple use of forest resources will take place.

Objective 3. *Develop a formal gazettment document with ICCN.*

There is now an official process that exists in DRC (that wasn't existing when the proposal for this project was written) that describes how new protected areas should be created. It needs the following steps to be followed:

1. Undertake biological and socioeconomic surveys.
2. Creation of a Conseil Consultative Provinciale (CCP)
3. Get agreements from the local communities on the creation of a protected area
4. Get agreements at Provincial level that the protected area is created
5. Get agreements at National level for national reserves and parks.

So far in this process we have complete the biological and socioeconomic surveys which show that the site is suitable for a national park status and that the local community are supportive of this. We have signed agreements by the Traditional Chiefs stating that they agree to the creation of a new national park. We have met with officials at provincial level in 2009 and again in 2010 to bring up the gazettment of the park. In principle they are ok with the idea but one issue that has occurred is that there are several prospection concessions for minerals that overlap with the proposed park boundary. These have been allocated to various companies (Tanganyika Mining Company, LEDA mining Congo, Kameco, and Wamico-SPRL) but none have started any prospections in the area. ICCN is working closely with WCS to raise the issue of this park at national and provincial level at the moment and to lobby for the annulment of the prospection concessions.

In 2010 three further meetings were held at provincial level in Lubumbashi and these are described here:

1. Meeting with members of the provincial parliament

A meeting was held at the ICCN office in Lubumbashi in June 2010 and three provincial MPs representing Tanganyika district were present and were informed about activities that have been achieved so far in Misotshi-Kabogo region. MPs were delighted to know that such activities have been implemented. They promised their support to the plan to create the protected area as long as it helps to ensure the long term preservation of their culture and contribute to the local development. "We have lost most of our wildlife during the armed conflict and any action that can lead to protect more species is a way to save Congolese heritage", they stressed. Four main recommendations were suggested:

- continue with local awareness for the protection of the forest even before the legal gazettment,
- Develop a plan (management plan) for the protection of the forest and local development (community projects),
- Speed up the process to protect the forest before the rehabilitation of the road starts as this will have a real impact on the forest and can induce local people to change their attitudes and perception towards the protection of the forest.
- Keep MPs informed on the project's activities to make sure MPs can timely advocate and call the governor for quick action.

The meeting was positive as most of the MPs are from the area and they suggested Misotshi-Kabogo being the name of the area as it encompasses two main cultural values that represent the river and the mountain. They also suggested exploring the possible transboundary nature of the PA to be created with Mahale given that people living around these areas are the same and the same culture.

2. Meeting with the Provincial Coordinator of environment and nature conservation

This consultation aimed at agreeing the steps that need to be taken towards the creation of the new protected area and get support from the Provincial coordinator in charge of environment and conservation for the creation of a CCP. After the report from the WCS team, we were informed that some efforts were already underway to create the CCP and a potential donor from Netherlands available. As a result Katanga Province's stakeholders were already ready to hold their first meetings. Unfortunately, the central Government instructed the Province to hold on until the national Consultative Committee was set up. The coordinator promised to send all relevant documents to Richard so that we can assess how the process can be boosted. After informing them on the efforts from South Kivu where the CCP has been created, they asked for more time to re-discuss the issue with the regional director and then get back to us. They were happy that at least there is an International Conservation NGO which is interested in Katanga forests and promised their support and the inclusion of WCS in future activities regarding CCPs.

3. Meeting with the provincial minister in charge of environment

We met with the Provincial Minister late in the evening and provided relevant information regarding Kabogo surveys and the request about the CCP. He was also delighted to learn that there are several endemic species in Kabogo and promised his support towards the creation of the CCP and Kabogo PA. He requested his Chief of Staff to follow up the matter and report back to him and let us know the future steps as this is required by law.

Conclusion

Because of this more elaborate process and the issue of the mining concessions we have not managed to gazette the park yet but we still have the support of the local community to do so as well as the provincial authorities and ICCN and we believe that by the end of 2011 the Ngamikka Park will have been created. We have funding from the MacArthur Foundation, WCS and WWF to finalise the gazettment and are now beginning to look for funds to support the management of the new park.