

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.

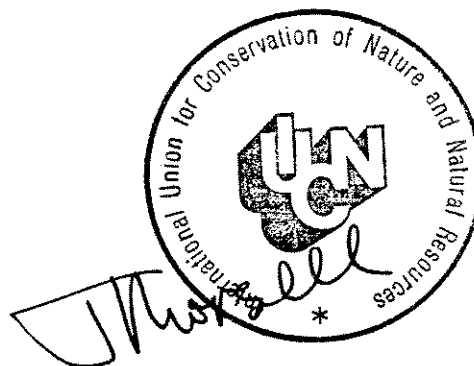
5. EVALUATION

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.



CAMEROON

NAME Réserve de faune du Dja
Réserve forestière et de faune du Dja

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY I (Strict Nature Reserve)
IX (Biosphere Reserve)
X (World Heritage - Criteria ii, iii, iv)

BIOGEOGRAPHICAL PROVINCE 3.02.01 (Congo Rain Forest)

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION On the Dja River in the Central-Southern and Eastern Provinces of Cameroon, 243km south-east of Yaoundé, and 5km west of Lomie. The river encircles it almost completely and forms its natural boundary, except to the south-west. 2°49'-3°23'N, 12°25'-13°35'E

DATE AND HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT Protected as a 'réserve de faune et de chasse' by Law No. 319 of 25 April 1950, and then as a 'réserve de faune' under the National Forestry Act Ordinance No. 73/18 of 22 May 1973. Reported to have received some protection as early as 1932, protection for certain species within Dja was stipulated by Decree No. 2254 of 18 November 1947, which regulated hunting in the French African territories. Accepted as a biosphere reserve in 1981 and inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1984. Proposed as a national park.

AREA 526,000ha

LAND TENURE State

ALTITUDE 400-800m

PHYSICAL FEATURES Except in the south-east of the reserve, the relief is fairly flat and consists of a succession of round-topped hills. A major fault line on the southern edge of the reserve, which is followed by the Dja River, has led to the formation of rather deeper cut valleys on the south eastern edge of the plateau. The reserve is, in fact, 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. The underlying substratum is formed of crystalline metamorphic rocks of Precambrian origin, part of the Mbalmayo-Bengbis series. These are principally schists, gneisses and quartzite. The soil is porous red ferralitic clay, poor in nutrients and fragile.

CLIMATE Equatorial type climate, with two rainfall peaks (May and September), and temperatures similar throughout the year. Mean annual temperature is 23.3°C (recorded at 640m) and the mean annual rainfall around 1570mm. August is the coolest month, with a mean monthly minimum of 18°C and maximum of 27°C, and April is the hottest with mean minimum temperature of 19°C and maximum of 30°C. There is less than 100mm rainfall

during 3 months of the year.

VEGETATION Dja is located in a transition zone between the forests of southern Nigeria and south-west Cameroon and the forests of the Congo Basin, and it seems likely that the forests of the region are essentially undisturbed. The vegetation mainly comprises dense evergreen Congo rain forest with a main canopy at 30-40m rising to 60m. Some 43 species of tree form the canopy, with legumes being particularly common. Species listed include Azalia bipindensis, Anthonotha ferrugina and Piptandeniastrum africanum in the Leguminosae, Sterculia oblonga and Triplochiton scleroxylon in the Sterculiaceae, rouge Entandrophragma sp., Guarea cedrata, and Lovoa trichilioides in the Meliaceae, and Baillonella toxisperma in the Sapotaceae, as well as Afrostryax lepidophyllus, Anopyxis klaineana, Terminalia superba, kapok Ceiba pentandra, Nauclea diderrichii, and Canarium sweinfurthii. The shrub layer contains over 53 species including species of Diospyros and Drypetes, as well as Staudtia kamerunensis, Cola spp., Syzygium jambos, Erythrophleum gabonensis, Macaranga sp. and Dacryodes buettneri. The forest is also rich in lianes. The herbaceous layer is composed principally of Marantaceae and Mapania spp. The Congo rainforest is also characterised by almost pure stands of Gilbertiodendron dewevrei forest. The other main vegetation types are swamp vegetation with Anthocleista nobilis, Raphia hookeri and Pacouria (Alstonia) spp., and secondary forest around old villages (which were abandoned in 1946) and recently abandoned cocoa and coffee plantations. Composition of the secondary forest is noticeably different as a result of the relative scarcity of species of the Meliaceae. Results of a 1987 vegetation survey are given in Bedel et al., 1987.

FAUNA Although the area is poorly studied, it is known to have a wide range of primate species including lowland gorilla Gorilla gorilla gorilla (T), greater white-nosed guenon Cercopithecus nictitans, moustached guenon C. cephus, crowned guenon C. pogonias, talapoin Miopithecus talapoin, white-collared mangabey Cercocebus torquatus, white-cheeked mangabey C. albigena, agile mangabey C. galeritus, drill Papio leucophaeus, mandrill Mandrillus sphinx, potto Perodicticus potto, Demidorff's galago Galago demidovii, black and white colobus monkey Colobus angolensis and chimpanzee Pan troglodytes (T). Other mammals include elephant Loxodonta africana (T), bongo Tragelaphus euryceros, sitatunga T. spekei, buffalo Syncerus aaffer, leopard Panthera pardus (T), warthog Phacochoerus aethiopicus, giant forest hog Hylochoerus meinertzhageni, and pangolin Manis sp. Birds include Bates's weaver Ploceus batesi (R), which is endemic to southern Cameroon, and grey-necked picathartes Picathartes oreas (R) probably also occurs in this reserve. The type locality of Dja River warbler Bradypterus grandis (K) is near the reserve and there are few other records of this kind. Reptiles include python, lizard and two species of crocodile (both of which are threatened species). Details of a 1987 fauna survey are given in Bedel et al. (1987).

CULTURAL HERITAGE A population of pygmies lives within the reserve, in small sporadic encampments, maintaining an essentially traditional lifestyle (although there would appear to be an increasing use of more modern methods).

Infobase produced by WCMC, January 1992

LOCAL HUMAN POPULATION The pygmies 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). The inhabitants of villages near Somalomo fish in the Dja and tributaries on its left bank, and cultivate mainly coffee, cocoa and cucumbers (for their seeds, which fetch high prices) (Bedel *et al.*, 1987).

VISITORS AND VISITOR FACILITIES None. Bedel *et al.* (1987) make recommendations for tourism development to involve the local population.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FACILITIES Some phytogeographic studies have been carried out (Letouley, 1968), and a research report on fauna has been prepared (Rowell, 1975), yet the reserve is essentially poorly known. There are no research facilities.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT 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 and hunting is heavily practised, 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 north-west. Two new posts are in the process of being established to the north and north-west but surveillance and management is inadequate (Bedel *et al.*, 1987). Since establishment of the reserve in 1950, management has been restricted to protection of the resources, and in particular anti-poaching activities; however, there is little infrastructure and few staff, which means that there is currently little effective management. This is not at present a problem because of the relatively low level of threat, but may well become so. A provisional management plan for the proposed national park has been prepared at the Ecole de Faune at Garoua (van der Zon *et al.*, 1986) which discusses further this and other problems and outlines possible solutions. Dja is one of the sites identified by IUCN/WWF Project 1613 (which aims to further the conservation of primates and tropical rain forest) as important for primate and rain forest conservation in West Africa.

MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS Cocoa, coffee and subsistence plots encroach onto the reserve, particularly on the northern and western borders, and poaching occurs. In both cases it seems unlikely that this is a serious problem at present, with the exception of elephant hunting. According to Gartlan and Agland (1982) the traditional hunting methods of the pygmies are being superceded, and the pygmies are tending towards a more sedentary life. This may cause problems in the future, and will need to be closely monitored. However, Bedel *et al.* (1987) stress the importance of hunting to the livelihood of the local population and of establishing local associations to monitor hunting pressure. The reserve has recently been subject to mineral exploitation, but no exploitable deposits were located within its boundaries. However, further investigation is being made on calcareous bodies on the south-east border of the reserve and this may lead to open-cast mining for cement production. The area has also been subject

to recent forest inventories, in violation of existing legislation, although extraction seems unlikely at present. Perhaps of more current concern is the possible routing of the Trans-African highway close to the southern boundary of the reserve.

STAFF The protection staff of the reserve at present consists of a warden and seven guards based at Messamena (although the warden still lives some 50km from the reserve).

BUDGET Annual budget is reported to be around 1.5 million FCA to cover staffing costs, and some 30 million FCA is likely to be made available during 1987 for construction of administrative buildings and staff accommodation.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION Direction de la faune et des parcs nationaux, Secrétariat d'Etat du Tourisme, Yaoundé

REFERENCES

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- Belinga, Eko (1982). Rapport de stage: étude monographique de la Réserve du Dja. Ecole pour la formation de spécialistes de la faune, Garoua.
- Gartlan, J.S. and Agland, P.C. (1980). A Proposal for a Program of Rainforest Conservation and National Park Development in Cameroon, West Central Africa. Report presented to the Gulf Oil Corporation and Société Nationale Elf Aquitaine.
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- Van der Zon, A.P.M. and Jean Nkemi à Tchic Dong à Echiké (1986). Le Parc National du Dja, Cameroun: Plan d'aménagement provisoire. Ecole de Faune, BP 271, Garoua, Cameroun.
- WWF Project 1613. International - Primate Action Fund.

DATE June 1987, updated May 1990
0028P

407: RESERVE DE FAUNE DU DJA (CAMEROUN)

Résumé préparé par l'UICN (avril 1987) d'après la désignation d'origine soumise par le Cameroun. L'original et tous les documents présentés à l'appui de cette désignation seront disponibles pour consultation aux réunions du bureau et du comité.

1. SITUATION:

Sur le Dja, dans les provinces du centre sud et est du Cameroun, à 243 km au sud-est de Yaoundé et 5 km à l'ouest de Lomie. 2°49'-3°23'N, 12°25'-13°35'E.

2. DONNEES JURIDIQUES:

Protégée en tant que réserve de faune et de chasse en 1950 puis comme réserve de faune par la loi de 1973 sur les forêts nationales. Acceptée comme réserve de la biosphère en 1981. Proposée comme parc national. Superficie de 526 000 ha.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

La réserve est pratiquement encerclée par le Dja qui coule vers l'ouest le long de la limite nord de la réserve, puis borde la limite sud avant de s'orienter vers le sud-est pour aller se jeter dans le Congo. Des falaises surplombent la rivière au sud sur quelque 60 km, entrecoupées par des rapides et des chutes d'eau. Si l'on excepte le sud-est de la réserve, le relief, assez plat, consiste en une série de collines.

La végétation consiste essentiellement en une forêt tropicale humide sempervirente dont la voûte principale atteint 30 à 40 m, mais peut s'élever à 60 m. Elle est composée de quelque 43 essences, dont des légumineuses, particulièrement communes. La région est connue pour sa grande variété de primates dont le gorille de plaine, le cercopithèque à nez blanc, le cercopithèque moustac, le cercopithèque couronné, le talapoin, le mangabey à collier blanc, le mangabey à joues grises, le mangabey agile, le drill, le mandrill, le potto, le galago de Demidov, le colobe noir et blanc et le chimpanzé. Parmi les autres mammifères, on peut citer l'éléphant, le bongo, le sitatunga et le buffle.

Une population de Pygmées vit dans la réserve selon un mode de vie essentiellement traditionnel.

4. ETAT DE PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

L'agriculture et la chasse sont interdites dans la réserve, dont l'accès est restreint. Il n'y a pas d'abattage dans la réserve elle-même, et rares sont les personnes qui y vivent encore depuis le déplacement des villages dans les années 1940. La chasse traditionnelle est autorisée, mais les méthodes de chasse non traditionnelles devraient être contrôlées. Le Dja forme une limite naturelle autour de la réserve, et il y a actuellement trois postes de garde à l'est et au nord-ouest. Deux nouveaux postes sont en train d'être installés au nord et au nord-ouest. Depuis la création de la réserve en 1950, les autorités de gestion la considère comme une réserve stricte, et leur activité a consisté

à protéger les ressources, notamment du braconnage. Un plan de gestion préliminaire vient d'être mis au point par l'Ecole pour la formation de spécialistes de la faune de Garoua.

Dés Pygmées vivent dans la réserve où ils s'installent en petits campements sporadiques, ils sont libres de chasser en recourant aux méthodes traditionnelles. Quelques villages sont installés à proximité, mais la densité de population reste faible dans la région.

5. RAISONS JUSTIFIANT LA DESIGNATION POUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL:

Pour justifier la désignation de la réserve de faune du Dja (Cameroun) en tant que bien du patrimoine mondial, le Gouvernement du Cameroun a donné les raisons suivantes:

a) Bien naturel

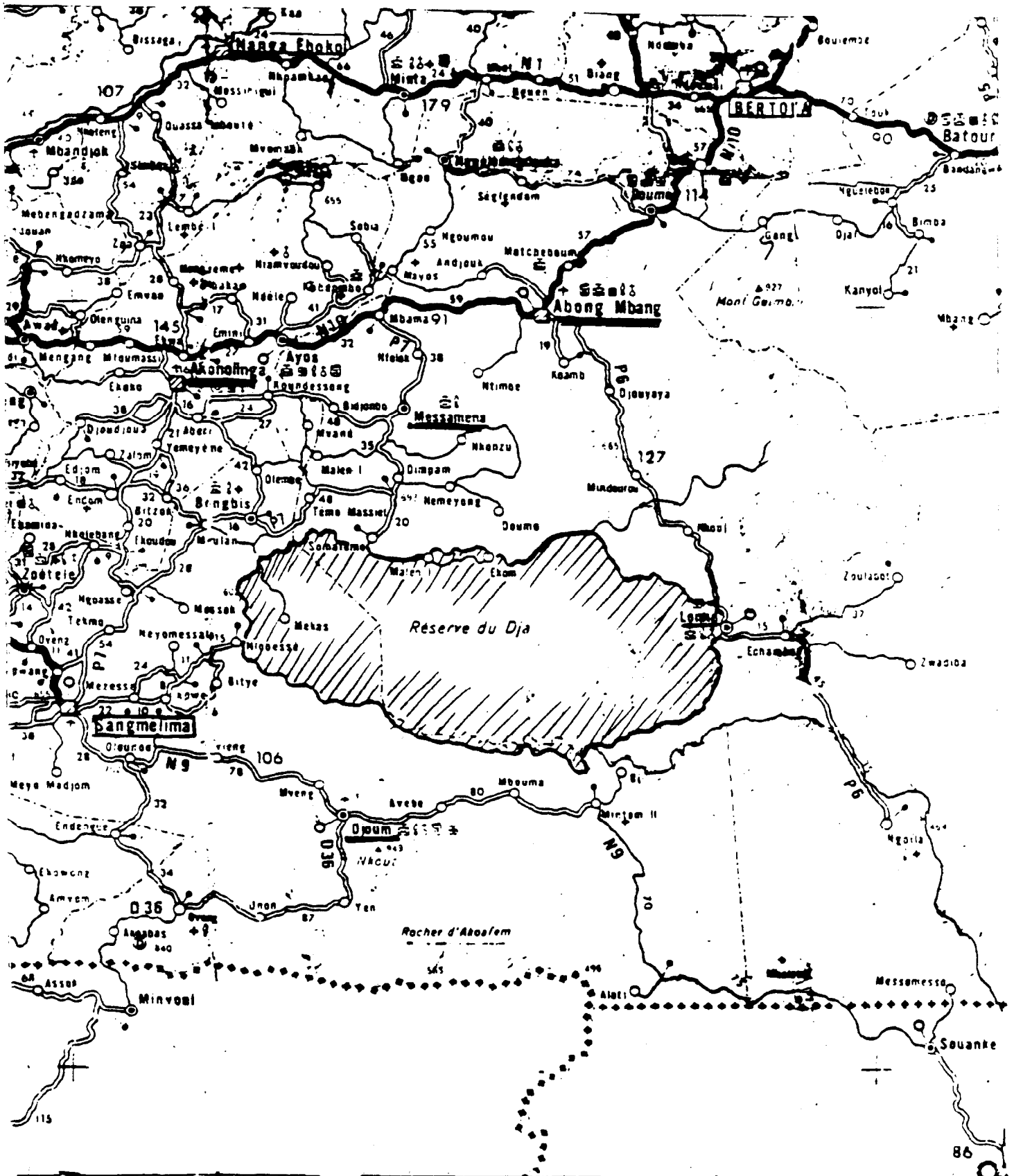
- (ii) Illustration remarquable de l'évolution. La forêt primaire de la réserve est intéressante par la diversité de ses espèces et son état primitif exceptionnel.
- (iii) Phénomènes et écosystèmes naturels exceptionnels. Les grands arbres et les cours d'eau sauvages coupés de rapides et de chutes offrent un panorama grandiose.
- (iv) Habitat d'espèces rares ou menacées. Il y a plusieurs espèces rares dans la réserve du Dja, notamment deux espèces de crocodiles, des chimpanzés et des gorilles de plaine.

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Carte de localisation de la réserve du DJA

Les différents accès

Echelle : 1/1 500 000



407 RESERVE DU DJA (CAMEROUN)1. DOCUMENTATION,

- (i) Fiches de données de l'UICN, Répertoire des aires protégées afrotropicales (Afrotropical Protected Area Directory) et Etude des aires protégées afrotropicales (Afrotropical System Review).
- (ii) Consultations; autorités gouvernementales camerounaises et personnel des organismes d'assistance technique au Cameroun, A. Allo, T. van der Zon, A. Dufresne, A. Cloutier, V. Balinga, S. Gartland, D. Thomas.
- (iii) Littérature consultée; Plan d'aménagement provisoire, préparé par l'Ecole pour la formation de spécialistes de la faune de Garoua.
- (iv) Visite du site et étude aérienne, mars 1987 (J. Sayer).

2. COMPARAISON AVEC D'AUTRES AIRES:

Par sa superficie, la Réserve du Dja est la cinquième région protégée d'Afrique, de type forêt humide guinéo-congolaise. Deux des sites plus vastes, et le sixième, Tai, sont déjà inscrits à la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Des trois autres sites plus importants par la taille, Maiko, au Zaïre, n'a pas une gestion suffisante pour lui permettre d'obtenir le statut de bien du patrimoine mondial, Seti-Cama, au Gabon, est le siège d'importantes activités d'exploitation pétrolière et a perdu la presque totalité de son couvert forestier, et Lefini, au Congo, transmet peu d'informations.

Le Dja se situe dans une zone de transition entre les forêts du Biafra, au sud du Nigeria et au S-O du Cameroun, et les forêts du bassin du Congo. Ces forêts ont la plus grande diversité biologique d'Afrique. La diversité des plantes est probablement plus élevée dans les régions plus humides qui entourent le Parc national de Korup, la diversité des vertébrés y est sans doute aussi élevée qu'au Dja. Les forêts du sud du Cameroun sont donc les plus importantes d'Afrique pour le maintien de la diversité biologique.

Le Dja occupe, et de loin, la première place dans Protected Areas System Review de l'UICN et du PNUE (Etude UICN/PNUE du réseau des aires protégées) pour le Cameroun. C'est sans conteste le premier site pour la conservation de la forêt tropicale humide d'Afrique de l'Ouest. Les travaux de Letouzey (1968) sur la phytogéographie du Cameroun indiquent que si la plus grande partie de la forêt du sud-est se compose de vieilles formations secondaires dérivées d'une époque antérieure d'agriculture de rotation, les forêts de la région du Dja sont essentiellement non perturbées. La faune et la flore assurent la transition entre les communautés côtières et celles du bassin du Congo, et ne sont incluses dans aucune autre région protégée. Le Dja ne reçoit que 1600 mm de pluie par an, dont trois mois avec moins de 100 mm. L'expression de "forêt semi-sempervirente" conviendrait donc mieux pour le décrire. La réserve est bien plus sèche que le Parc national de Korup, ce qui expliquerait sa flore moins diverse. La faune en vertébrés est plus riche que celle de Korup.

Le Dja se distingue de toutes les autres aires protégées du Cameroun. Les seules régions présentant quelques traits similaires et susceptibles d'être protégées se situent dans le nord-est du Gabon et éventuellement dans le nord du Congo.

3. INTEGRITE:

La région n'est pas perturbée sur 90% de sa superficie, et il ne pèse sur elle aucune menace immédiate. Elle n'a qu'un faible potentiel économique. Plusieurs milliers de personnes vivent au bord de la réserve, le long des routes de Somalomo à Chouam et de Bissomho à Mékas. Ces habitants sont sédentaires et vivent de la culture du cacao et du café. Ces plantations sont relativement stables et forment une mosaïque dans la forêt. Il y a également quelques cultures de subsistance, mais peu de signes de cultures de rotation ou d'expansion récente de l'agriculture. La réserve est suffisamment vaste pour que la préservation de son intégrité n'exige pas le déplacement de sa population. La réglementation de la réserve pourrait être adaptée pour autoriser la poursuite des activités agricoles actuelles, tout en décourageant une immigration supplémentaire, et l'expansion de l'agriculture.

La population vivant à l'intérieur et en dehors de la réserve l'utilise largement pour la chasse. Les éléphants, les buffles et diverses antilopes font l'objet d'une chasse commerciale intensive. Là encore, l'étendue de la réserve est telle qu'il est peu probable que la chasse constitue une menace réelle pour la faune, à l'exception toutefois de l'éléphant dont la chasse devrait être contrôlée. La chasse de subsistance, affectant des animaux de taille petite ou moyenne, devrait être autorisée dans la réserve, à proximité des villages situés le long de la limite.

La réserve a récemment fait l'objet de prospection minière mais il n'y a aucun dépôt exploitable. Les dépôts calcaires au nord de Bi, à la limite S-E de la réserve, font l'objet d'une étude plus approfondie qui pourrait entraîner une extraction à ciel ouvert, pour la fabrication de ciment. L'afflux de population qui s'en suivrait pourrait poser des problèmes, et la limite de ce secteur devrait être étroitement surveillée.

Des inventaires forestiers ont eu lieu récemment dans la région, en violation de la législation existante qui interdit de telles études sans l'autorisation du délégué général au Tourisme. Leurs résultats sont contradictoires quant au potentiel du bois, mais diverses parties ont donné des assurances qu'aucune exploitation n'aurait lieu dans la réserve elle-même. Outre les contraintes légales qui pèsent sur l'exploitation du bois, la région est protégée par le fait qu'elle est relativement inaccessible. Toutefois, il y a des endroits où l'exploitation du bois serait intéressante, d'où le risque de pressions qui pourraient se faire plus pressantes à long terme.

La future route trans-africaine Bangui-Atlantique devrait passer près de la limite sud de la réserve. Les plans en sont au tout début, et il est encore temps de s'assurer que les considérations écologiques seront prises en compte avant que le tracé définitif ne soit arrêté, ce qui aurait des conséquences importantes pour la réserve, dont l'accès serait grandement facilité, tant pour la gestion que pour le tourisme; l'existence de la route le long de la réserve y attirerait des paysans et augmenterait la pression en faveur de l'exploitation du bois. La mise en place d'une autorité de gestion efficace avant la construction de la route permettrait de contrecarrer ces menaces.

Le personnel de protection est constitué par un gardien et quatre gardes. Le gardien vit à 50 km de la limite de la réserve, mais un nouveau logement et un bureau sont en construction à Somalomo, à la limite de la réserve, pour un coût de 100 000 dollars américains. Le bâtiment devrait être achevé en 1987, et la structure de base est déjà construite. La gestion actuelle est pratiquement limitée à des patrouilles sporadiques anti-braconnage. Le Département de la faune et des parcs nationaux n'a

pas d'infrastructure pour la réserve -- à part le bâtiment en construction. Les menaces actuelles sont si faibles que l'insuffisance de gestion n'est pas un problème. Toutefois, il est indispensable qu'à moyen terme la conservation soit présente sur place, que la promotion et le contrôle du tourisme soient développés, et que la loi soit mise en oeuvre.

4. COMMENTAIRES ADDITIONNELS:

Le Dja est devenu réserve de la biosphère en 1981. Ses perspectives de conservation à long terme seraient meilleures si la partie inhabitée -- la plus vaste -- obtenait le statut de parc national. Comme le Dja relève du Département de la faune et des parcs nationaux, ce changement de statut pourrait se faire par simple décret. La législation actuelle relative aux réserves permet, semble-t-il, au Département de la faune et des parcs nationaux d'autoriser la population à poursuivre ses activités agricoles, tout en empêchant de nouveaux établissements et l'extension des zones cultivées. Seuls les résidents actuels et leurs descendants immédiats devraient jouir de ces droits. La législation actuelle permettrait également de classer comme zones tampons certaines régions de la Boucle du Dja, donnant par là-même au département de la Faune et des Parcs nationaux un droit de regard sur les activités humaines. La zone tampon jouerait pleinement son rôle si elle couvrait une bande de trois à cinq kilomètres de large à l'extérieur de la Boucle du Dja.

5. EVALUATION:

La réserve du Dja est une région de forêt humide parmi les plus vastes, les plus riches en espèces et les mieux préservées d'Afrique. Elle est plus grande, moins perturbée et moins menacée que toute autre au Cameroun ou dans les pays voisins; c'est donc l'une des rares régions où une vaste forêt humide a de grandes chances de rester totalement protégée à long terme. La faune et la flore y sont remarquables; c'est la seule forêt humide de ce type particulier qui soit totalement protégée. Elle remplit donc les Critères ii et iv d'inscription à la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

6. RECOMMANDATIONS:

La réserve du Dja devrait être inscrite sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Le comité pourra alors envisager de recommander ce qui suit:

- prier instamment le gouvernement camerounais de réévaluer le statut juridique de la réserve pour qu'elle bénéficie d'une meilleure protection;
- encourager les autorités à terminer la construction du siège du parc à Somalomo pour qu'il y ait une présence réelle de gestion dans la réserve, conformément au plan de gestion préparé par l'Ecole pour la formation de spécialistes de la faune de Garoua;
- demander au gouvernement camerounais de faire en sorte que la planification de la route trans-africaine prenne en compte les conséquences négatives éventuelles pour la réserve, et que le développement rural dans la réserve n'encourage pas l'expansion de l'agriculture et des établissements humains dans la réserve ou à proximité;
- demander que des études détaillées de la faune et de la flore soient réalisées pour définir la richesse naturelle de la réserve.