

Brief Communication:

A Top Priority Site for Primate Conservation in Côte d'Ivoire Soon Designated as a Protected Area?

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The Rainforest Trust is working with the Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire (CSRS) to create a community forest reserve protecting the Tanoé-Ehy Forest. Ensuring the success of this project is critical to protecting Côte d'Ivoire's remaining rainforests and safeguarding the future of some of Africa's most critically endangered primates.

Indeed the Tanoé-Ehy Forest, 12,000 ha in southeast Côte d'Ivoire, provides habitat for a number of rare and highly threatened primate species and is a priority area for primate conservation in West Africa (Gonedélé et al. 2008). The Tanoé-Ehy Forest is considered the only forest where the possibly extinct Miss Waldron's red colobus (*Piliocolobus badius waldronae*) may be rediscovered, where a viable population of the critically endangered diana roloway guenon (*Cercopithecus diana roloway*; Figure 1) was confirmed, and where a viable population of the endangered white-naped mangabey (*Cercocebus atys lunulatus*) still occurs. The Tanoé-Ehy forest is also one of the last refuges for the vulnerable white-thighed colobus (*Colobus vellerosus*).

Despite its importance, the Tanoé-Ehy forest and wetland area has received little attention until recently and primate habitat is threatened by unsustainable land use, such as oil palm farming and chainsaw milling. Meanwhile, monkeys living in this forest are killed for bushmeat by the impoverished and ill-informed local communities.

In 2006, a community-based management project for the Tanoé-Ehy forest was initiated by eight neighbouring communities with the support



Figure 1. Diana Roloway Monkey of Côte d'Ivoire. Photograph by J.M. Lernoould.

of local and international partners including WAPCA and Mulhouse Zoo, the Wildlife Division of Côte d'Ivoire, and three local conservation NGOs (SOS Forêts, ACB-CI, and SCNCI). The project's approach is based on a combination of conservation-oriented scientific studies, pragmatic conservation field actions, and flanking measures. The main

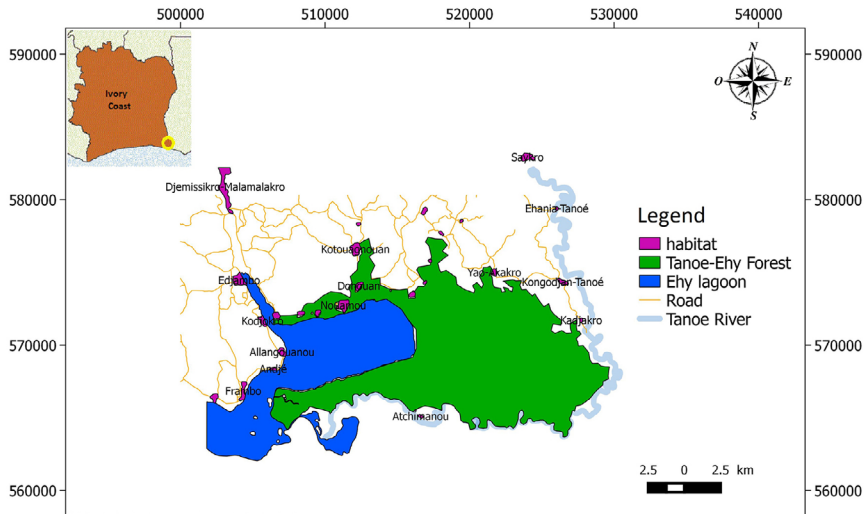


Figure 2. The Tanoé-Ehy Forest of Côte d'Ivoire. Map prepared by RASAPCI-CSRS.

activities of the project comprise awareness raising campaigns, forest surveillance, and biological and socio-economic surveys. The project is actively involved in the formalities of obtaining an official status for the community-managed reserve, while it provides support of local development, community-organization and capacity building for conducting conservation activities.

Management committees were formed in eight different villages with their bylaws officially registered by the national administration. In the two districts of the project area a paramount association comprising the different management committees was officially established as well. The last step of the community organization process will consist of establishing a “federal association” comprising both paramount associations. The future federation will be the main interlocutor of the government and will work with external institutions for policy making, while the two paramount associations will play a coordinating role for the field-based activities carried out by the eight management committees (Koné, 2015).

For the established committees and associations to be functional they are offered regular training sessions, continued coaching, and logistic support as this experience is new in Côte d'Ivoire and carried out by rural communities with little experience with modern standards of forest management.

Surveillance patrols and awareness raising campaigns have been successfully initiated by the communities to stop oil palm expansion and to mitigate the threats posed by illegal chainsaw milling and poaching. Particular attention is paid to trans-border synergy with Ghanaian stakeholders in view

of the creation of a transboundary conservation area.

So far, the major obstacle to the designation of the Tanoé-Ehy Forest as an official community-managed forest has been the cost of its demarcation by an official geometrician. More than USD 80,000 is needed and this is far beyond the amount the communities can contribute. A call for donations initiated by the Rainforest Trust will no doubt enable us to overcome this obstacle. For more information on the fund-raising initiative see <https://www.rainforesttrust.org/project/cote-divoire/> and for more information on the Tanoé-Ehy conservation project see <http://www.panorama.solutions/content/community-empowerment-conservation-critically-endangered-primates>.

LITERATURE CITED

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