

GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK PROJECT
SUMMARY REPORT 1997-2000
INTERNATIONAL RHINO FOUNDATION, with support from COLUMBUS ZOO, US
FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE, DISNEY FOUNDATION, INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT
FOUNDATION
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INTRODUCTION - Summary Overview

The last three years of the project have been a period of immense change for Garamba National Park, the project and the country. At the start of 1997 the country was still Zaire, but the headquarters of the park was occupied by mercenaries on the side of ex-President Mobutu, although anti-poaching continued as normal. There were a minimum of 27 northern white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) (a potential maximum of 31), some 11,000 elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), 25,000 buffalos (*Synceros caffer brachyceros*) and over 3,600 hippos (*Hippopotamus amphibius*). (Smith & Smith 1997, 1998).

In February the AFDL (Alliance des Forces Democratique pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire) arrived at the park, guards were disarmed, anti-poaching ceased, poaching increased and advanced south into the rhino sector. By April the country was the Democratic Republic of Congo and anti-poaching effort gradually increased again in collaboration with the occupying forces, but in July 1997 our aerial survey revealed 10 occupied poaching camps within the rhino sector and numerous fresh carcasses of large mammals.

A collaborative effort by the main long term technical advisors who had been working in different protected areas in the country, backed by the committed funding organisations, joined forces with the new Ministry of Environment and the revised Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature to examine the status of the protected areas, the urgent priority needs, to raise emergency support and to plan for the long term future. President Kabila himself made a commitment to give environmental protection a priority in the new government.

In 1998, Garamba was re-equipped with guard uniforms, equipment and with fuel, and a series of intensive rhino surveys revealed 26 known rhinos, of which four were new calves, implying a loss of five previously known animals. A survey of the park showed, however, that during the period of loss of control, half the elephants, two thirds of the buffalos and three-quarters of the hippos had been killed.

In 1998, the World Wide Fund for Nature who had been the largest long term financial supporter of the project changed policy, to focus more on political support and influence and less on direct field work, and made major cuts in their support for Garamba. All their support was planned to end in June 2000, but may still continue in a small way. This left the IRF, with its major backer Columbus Zoo, as the main committed supporter and the need to raise further support. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which had made a major emergency commitment in 1997, continued to maintain support. Although a joint planning meeting was foreseen, it did not take

place due to break down into the second war in August 1998, which necessitated the exit from the country of the technical advisors and senior ICCN personnel.

The second war is far less clear cut than the first Liberation War, and factional unrest, authoritarian uncertainties and division and exploitation of the country still continues. However, thanks to the continued support of the Columbus Zoo through IRF, the guards have continued to receive bonus payments as salary substitutes and have continued to work throughout. Poaching has never increased to the extent it did in 1997 and only one rhino is known to have been lost. Negotiations are underway to try to get the aircraft of Frankfurt Zoological Society or the Technical advisors'/Wildlife Conservation Fund private aircraft in, to carry out rhino and large mammal surveys in March and April.

In order to address the immediate and long term problem of conserving World Heritage Sites through such periods of civil and regional unrest, to give a larger, international authority and recognition of neutrality to the personnel of these sites, to give the strength of unity and the value of combined skills and experience, and in order to build for the future of conservation in the country, the technical support personnel with the ICCN personnel and government approval, have worked to develop a major \$4 million project which is being funded by the UN Foundation through the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO. As the original conceivers of the idea and the main motivators, the technical advisors of Garamba and the Okapi Faunal Reserve (Epulu) have been leaders and committed workers in this effort. The project has been accepted, the final project document is being reviewed and the programme is already beginning. It does not take over all funding needs and is based on a continued commitment from existing partners, but it will give a far stronger and more optimistic framework in which conservation of Garamba and the other World Heritage Sites in the DRC can operate, through both war and peace.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

January 1997 - January 2000

- By December 1996, virtually all expatriate personnel from missions and projects had left the region as the war front approached following a wave of pillage by retreating forces.

1997

- 15th January 1997:., Project Leader, Fraser Smith, with Jack Greef , Consultant for the Game Rangers Association of Africa to **evaluate law enforcement training in Garamba National Park (GNP)**, flew in to Bac Garamba Base in the Park. The headquarters was occupied by mercenaries under Christian Tavernier on Mobutu's side. Although not welcomed by the mercenaries Smith & Greef carried out the evaluation and support to the ICCN guards doing anti-poaching for 2 weeks and returned to Nairobi.
- Mid February as the AFDL forces approached, Smith and a Mission Aviation Fellowship pilot flew in to Bac Garamba to **evacuate the Piper aircraft and some equipment**. Although tense due to mercenary troops waiting for evacuation, the mission was accomplished.
- The next day **the AFDL arrived**, guards were disarmed, anti-poaching ceased and contact with the park was lost.
- Coordinator Monitoring & Research (CMR) put together a manual outlining Law

Enforcement Monitoring Methods at GNP. (Hillman Smith 1997)

- March: Smith attempted to fly to GNP via Goma with civil permission, but was blocked by military clearance and the aircraft seized. After negotiations, it was returned two weeks later.
- March: 1 young male adult rhino (1a/4a) killed by two guards.
- May: **contact with the park was restored**, a vehicle sent to the border and Smith went in overland, where despite continually changing occupation troops, anti-poaching operations were gradually being restored. Major looting had occurred in February, involving some park personnel as well as military.
- June : Project Leader and Coordinator Monitoring & Research flew in to carry out an **intensive aerial survey of the southern sector**. Eighteen rhinos were seen in 8 groups, and there were estimated to have been probably 24 present. 49 fresh poaching camps were seen and 10 groups of poachers present in the rhino sector. Fresh carcasses less than 2 weeks old of 29 elephants, 24 buffalos, 16 hippos, 1 giraffe and 1 waterbuck were counted. Most were still taken for meat, but a few elephants had only tusks removed. (Smith & Smith 1997)
- The previous Chief Park Warden, C.P. Muhindo carried out an evaluation for ICCN of the personnel involved in the looting and made recommendations about disciplinary measures.
- July: The CMR and Terese Hart of CEFRECOF with several personnel from Epulu initiated negotiations with the new **Ministry of Environment Conservation of Nature and Tourism and ICCN** and reported on the urgent problems in the sites. The Minister hosted a Round Table Conference of all parties , financially supported by the Ambassador of South Africa, which began the collaborative conservation planning and implementation process that has characterised the conservation strategy of DRC. The American Ambassador was also extremely supportive and promoted emergency support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- An agreed priority for Garamba was **training for the guards** to help support them through this crisis and develop the specialised skills to be able adequately to protect the park in the face of increased poaching pressure. Project proposals were written, negotiated and agreed over the period August 1997 to February 1998, for the Game Rangers Association Training Unit, or another that was more readily available.
- October : The PL presented a paper on the effects of war on conservation and possible solutions, with Garamba as an example, to the International Ranger Federation Symposium in San Jose, Costa Rica, at the invitation of the Game Rangers Association. (Smith & Smith 1997)

1998

- January: The PL and park staff carried out survey flights over Garamba and surrounding areas to investigate reports of rebel groups occupying the park. There were no groups in the park
- February: The CMR was part of a **delegation to see President Kabila**. In the end, only the CMR and the Minister had an audience with him. The importance of conservation issues in general was emphasised and in particular the question of Garamba was addressed and he agreed not only to the training proposal and the firm that had been negotiated to carry it out, but also offered to send his forces up to police the boundaries of the park. They arrived in June 1998. However, WWF for policy reasons were unable to

fund the training programme.

- March: PL began re-establishing full operations at the park and replacing the the CMR participated in the ICCN planning workshop in Kinshasa.
- With disciplinary measures, including transfers, of ICCN personnel implicated in looting completed by ICCN, **back pay** for all personnel who had worked since the War started was carried out and **regular payment schedules** established again, with IRF support. This was based on a system worked out with the Chef de Parc which a) raised the rate of payment for those who were working and had continued to do so under such difficult conditions, b) was calculated on days worked rather than subtracting days absent, which all had agreed was a more positive approach and was also necessitated by the fact that guards had only begun to work bit by bit after the war and some had done far more than others, and c) a system that focused on rewarding work carried out and results, rather than merely paying a retainer. This system was clearly defined and agreed and spreadsheets set up to calculate it automatically and trained personnel were able enter the data from the law enforcement monitoring results.
- April: A full **stock of diesel, avgas, uniforms and equipment** for the guards was flown in by Antanov.
- April: **An intensive rhino survey** was carried out to evaluate the rhino situation after the war. 24 different individual rhinos were found and identified, including 4 new calves born since the Liberation War. (Hillman Smith et al 1998) No fresh carcasses or fresh poaching camps were found, which, compared with the count in 1997 showed how much the poaching had been reduced.
- May: A second **rhino** survey was carried out using 2 aircraft and 2 consultants as well as the usual research team. 22 rhino individuals were seen, but as one of these was an animal that had not been seen in April, it brought the minimum to 25. (Mackie 1998 and Hillman Smith et al 1998b) Two reports of long and verified observations since then of a further individual (M9) by guards on foot brings the total minimum at that time to 26 rhinos.

The age and sex structure was:

Male adults	3
Female adults	7
Male sub-adults	6
Female sub-adults	2
Male juveniles	2
Female juveniles	2
Infants	3

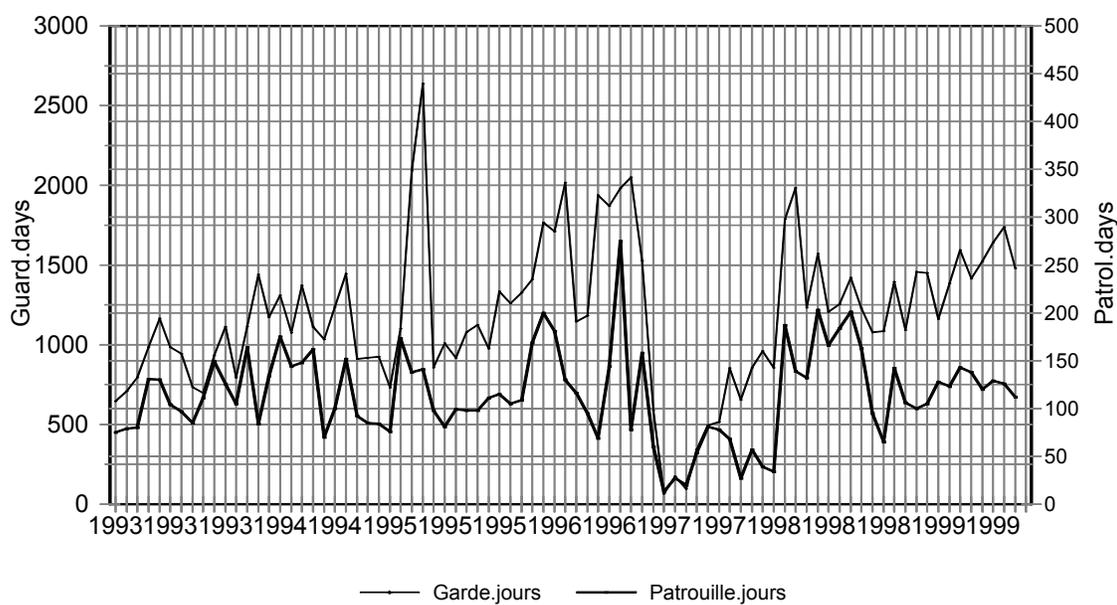
- May: A systematic aerial survey of the whole park was carried out. Results compared with those for the same type of survey in 1995 are given in the Table:

SPECIES	1995 POP.EST.	SE	1998 POP.EST.	SE
Elephant	11,175	3,679	5,874	1,339
Buffalo	25,242	8,299	7,772	2,063
Hippo	3,601	1,294	786	207
Giraffe	178	108	144	73

Waterbuck	1,680	669	1,362	433
Hartebeeste	2,819	590	1,685	398
Kob	6,601	1,495	6,505	1,558
Warthog	5,606	1,261	4,765	668
Roan	81	78	8	7

Correlating with the carcasse counts from the June 1997 aerial survey and the reports of carcasse findings by patrols, evidence points to these major losses of elephants, buffalos and hippos having occurred largely during 1997.

Parc National de la Garamba Guard.days & Patrol.days 93-99



- Law enforcement monitoring records show that during the period from March to June 1997,

Figure 1

anti-poaching patrols were down to a quarter of the patrol day coverage compared with the same period in 1996. Figure 1 shows the drop in patrol days in 1997.

- During the same period, poaching, using the normalised measures of armed contacts per unit patrol day, rose massively (Fig.2)
- In June 1998, WWF made a visit to hand over the project to ICCN, and for the military consultant Mike Buser to carry out another training needs assessment. A major meeting for the future of Garamba was planned for August in Kinshasa.
- A unit of government military forces arrived to protect the borders of the park and work with the park staff.

- A situation of back-up rear support bases was developed to keep support flowing to the guards, in the form of the monthly salary substitutes and performance based bonuses (from IRF) and rations and medicines (from WWF). These bases were at Aru/Ariwara on the DRC/Uganda border (Conservateur Ligilima), at Kampala (Ir. Amube Ndey) and at Nairobi (Conservateurs Principal Mafuko & Mbayma, Fraser & Kes Smith). Ir Amube Ndey was based at the University of Makerere, Kampala, where he learned English, sat in on some of the Msc course and followed a McArthur-MUIENR field training course. He was often the conduit for transfer of funds to the park. At other times, Dr Mbayma or Fraser were the main agents of transfer of bonuses and return of reports and monitoring information.
- Principal guards Atama-to and Eza Kobode continued to organise anti-poaching patrols and when ammunition was depleted, Atama-to arranged a further 1,500 rounds.
- With support from Kambale Kisuki, Vice Minister of Transport and Communications with responsibility for the environment of the RCD, Dr Mbayma arranged a further 4,000 rounds and good communications..
- Since October 1999, Amube Ndey and Conservateur Ligilima have been back full time at the park. Dr Mbayma is largely back there. The PL has made several visits and the PL and CMR have applied for clearance for the aircraft to do a rhino and a large mammal survey.
- In December 1999 and early 2000, the **SPLA** from across the border in Sudan began major collaborative operations around Garamba. This has resulted in recovery of several weapons.
- Incidents of poaching as measured by contacts per 100 patrol days have gone down.(Fig.2)

Rhinos

- One rhino is known to have been killed in December 1998, but there is no hard evidence of more killed.
- Limited observations of rhinos have continued to be reported throughout.
- On the recent visit of the PL to the park during February and early March 2000, in 5 days of walking **three young females with calves of between 1 and 6 months old were found**. These were 5dF *Jengatu* with a very young calf of about one month old, whose sex was thought to be female, but unconfirmed; 3cF *Etumba* with a calf of 3-4 months possibly female, and 6aF *Oeuf de Pacque*, with a male calf of about 6 months. For each female it was her first calf.

UNF/WHC project

- In April a meeting was held of the field and technical partner personnel from the World Heritage Sites in DRC (later known as **Naivasha 1**), to exchange information, collaborate on experience, address problems under the current circumstances and jointly develop ways forward. It was extremely valuable, particularly as it was seen as a meeting of site representatives as opposed to representatives of organisations.
- The major development that ensued from the meeting was acceptance in principle of the idea of developing **a project concept to support the World Heritage Sites** both in the immediate time of armed conflict and political instability and in the long term.

Discussion had begun in late 1998 between Garamba project personnel and representatives of the UN Foundation. This had been followed up by Kes Smith and Terese Hart, who therefore became the main movers in developing the concept, proposal and working document for this project. It was to support the Sites through the World Heritage Centre and build for their future, while at the same time developing the capacity of World Heritage Centre to conserve Sites in areas of armed conflict the world over. A \$4 million project was approved by the UN Foundation board on 2nd November and a meeting was held in mid November to jointly develop the implementation plans. Kes lead the writing of the full project document, which was presented in early February, and has since been accepted. The main focus of work for the CMR throughout the year has therefore been this project, but it has been successfully accepted, and provides a strong framework for support to all five sites, while recognising and needing the continued input of the partner organisations, who also form the implementing agencies for each site and joint activity.

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- Hillman Smith, K, F. Smith, Giningayo P., Amube N. (1998) Evaluation of the status of the northern white rhinos in Garamba National Park in April 1998, following the Liberation War and associated events; GNPP Report
- Mbayma Atalia (1997) An assessment of the distribution of the northern white rhinoceros in the Garamba National Park (DRC) and delimitation of the park sensitive area; Msc thesis, Darwin Initiative, DICE, University of Kent at Canterbury.
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- “ (1997b) -Evaluation de l'état du Parc National de la Garamba, Haute Congo, en juin 1997; GNPP Rapport pour presentation a la Table Ronde reunissant le gouvernement de la Republique Democratique du Congo et les organisations oeuvrant pour la conservation de la Nature, Kinshasa juillet 1997 Park Project Report (GNPP), WWF/ICCN
- “ (1997c) Annual Report for financial year 1996/7; GNPP Report WWF/ICCN
- “ (1997d) Conservation Crises and Potential Solutions, examples of Garamba National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo; Paper presented to the 2nd World Congress of the International Ranger Federation, Costa Rica September 1997