

OKAPI CONSERVATION PROJECT



ANNUAL REPORT 2011



THE MISSION OF THE OKAPI CONSERVATION PROJECT is to conserve the okapi in the wild while preserving the biological and cultural dynamics of the Ituri Forest. The okapi is an endemic species of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is the national conservation symbol of the country. As a flagship species, the okapi serves as an ambassador representing the incredible diversity of species found in the region.

The objective of the GIC Okapi Conservation Project is to protect the natural forest systems of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (OWR -13,769 km²) by supporting and equipping government wildlife rangers; providing training and infrastructure development to improve protection of wildlife and habitats; assisting and educating communities to create an understanding of sustainable resource conservation; and by promoting alternative agricultural practices and food production in support of community livelihoods.

Okapi Conservation Project 2011

The Okapi Conservation Project in Epulu and White Oak Conservation Center are pleased to share the Okapi Conservation Project 2011 Annual Report with our partners and supporters. This report represents nearly 20 years working in partnership with the Institute in Congo for Nature Conservation (ICCN) to help operate the Okapi Wildlife Reserve and protect the okapi and wildlife of the Ituri Forest. The dedicated OCP and ICCN staffs working in Epulu have had another impressive year working in and around the Okapi Wildlife Reserve through the programs of wildlife protection, conservation education, agro-forestry and community assistance. The end of the year included a special birth of a male okapi at the Station in Epulu, the eleventh calf born since the start of the project in 1987, and the first birth since 2003.



An important international gathering of the Okapi EEP and Okapi SSP holders was held in November and hosted by the Jacksonville Zoo. ICCN Okapi Wildlife Reserve Director JJ Mapilanga had the opportunity to attend and meet the participants and provided a report on the current status of the okapi and the Reserve and his view of the challenges he and the rangers face to protect the okapi. The group also came to White Oak Conservation Center for an afternoon and we were happy for everyone to come together for a few days of okapi discussions.

We wish to recognize and thank our zoo partners in the Okapi SSP and Okapi EEP, as well as our donors around the world, for their incredible support of the Okapi Conservation Project. The funds you generously provide empower the Congolese people of ICCN and the OCP and enable the operation of an entire protected area, a pristine equatorial rainforest home to the okapi and myriads of unique and mysterious species.



Don't forget to visit us on
Facebook page, blog and Twitter account, all dedicated to the Okapi Conservation Project.



Okapi Global

- The Okapi Conservation Project continues to work with our new NGO partner KfW, a German aid program now working with ICCN in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. Working closely with the Okapi Wildlife Reserve Conservation Coordination Committee, KfW has engaged technical personnel and has initiated important infrastructure projects over the next five years in support of the people and wildlife of the region. KfW also produced a five year business plan for the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in 2011.
- The OCP Facebook page now has over 1100 friends and we are regularly publishing reports, photos and videos for the Project. The Okapi Conservation Project website was initiated in 2011 www.okapiconservation.org with unique photos and information about okapi and the Okapi Wildlife Reserve.

We continue to work with Ebay's Global Giving to raise funds for specific OCP projects including preventing slash and burn agriculture through agro-forestry practices and helping to address bushmeat hunting by protecting wildlife in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. This source raised \$2013 in 2011.



- The Okapi Conservation Project continues to administer UNESCO funds for the Okapi Wildlife Reserve OWR which includes support for infrastructure and equipment for ICCN for wildlife protection as well as for immigration control on the main road (RN4) (right) through the OWR. As a World Heritage Site in Peril the funds provided by UNESCO in 2011 and 2012 to address the persistent threats to the OWR are significant.



John Lukas President of White Oak Conservation Center (above, second from right) visited the OCP in July to review programs and progress, to provide equipment and materials, and for planning exercises with staff and ICCN wardens. OCP Director Rosmarie Ruf traveled to White Oak in June to review planning and budgets. ICCN Okapi Wildlife Reserve Director JJ Mapilanga traveled to Jacksonville and White Oak in November to attend and present at the international Okapi EEP and Okapi SSP meetings. Ms. Ruf and Mr. Mapilanga traveled to Kinshasa to attend the annual meeting COCOCongo of organizations concerned with conservation in the DR Congo.



OCP Spotlight – Epulu and Okapi

Located in the middle of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, the town of Epulu serves as the headquarters for the Institute in Congo for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) and as a base for the Okapi Conservation Project. Epulu has been known as the center for the world's okapi since the early 1920's when American explorer and writer Patrick Putnam established a small menagerie, including captive okapi, from where he entertained guests and tourists. During Belgian Congo colonial times Epulu was established as a hunting and capture station, from which a number of live okapi were sent on to zoos in Europe and the US, introducing the world to this mysterious forest giraffe.

As part of the Okapi Conservation Project's Okapi Ambassador program, okapi continue to be maintained in large naturalistic enclosures at the Epulu Station. The animals are available for viewing to the various tourists and travelers who pass through on the Trans – African Highway which passes through Epulu - the only place in the DR Congo that okapi can be seen by the Congolese. Averaging approximately 3000 visitors per year of which 95% are Congolese, tour guides relate the story of the okapi and Epulu Station, and the current efforts to conserve the forest and okapi to visitors.

- The USAID Central African Regional Program for the Environment CARPE continues to provide funds for the education team's work with communities around the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. Projects in 2011 included film production, radio conservation programs and conservation seminars with officials and schools. The OCP is a subcontractor for this 3 year CARPE grant agreement with our partner WCS and the CARPE program was again renewed in 2012.



The Okapi Conservation Project welcomed a new addition in December when a male okapi calf was born at the Epulu Station, DR Congo on December 21 and is being well cared for by his mother. There was initial concern as this calf is smaller than normal but mother and calf have settled into a comfortable routine and the calf is growing. This is the eleventh okapi calf born in Epulu since the inception of the Okapi Conservation Project in 1987. The calf's mother "Tayari" 16 and father "Isa" 19 were also born in Epulu and this calf represents an important second generation of okapi born at the breeding and research station.

The okapi in Epulu, at White Oak Conservation Center, and in zoos around the world serve as important ambassadors, introducing visitors to the mysteries of the okapi and its life and home in the African rain forest. We celebrate this birth as a welcome holiday gift for Okapi Conservation Project staff and Okapi Wildlife Reserve wardens and rangers, who work diligently to protect the okapi and wildlife in the Ituri Forest of the DR Congo.

- Back at home, White Oak Conservation Center has also received okapi from Epulu, including three animals over the 24 year history of the Okapi Conservation Project. These animals provided many offspring to bolster the captive population,

which has grown appreciably during this period. Our zoo partners provide significant donations towards our work in support of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. The okapi ambassadors at zoos around the world, all descendants of animals from Epulu, provide opportunities for millions of people to know and care about the okapi and its forest home.

Okapi Wildlife Reserve – Institute in Congo for Conservation of Nature (ICCN)

The ICCN Okapi Wildlife Reserve is managed by ICCN Director J.J. Mapilanga with the help of Conservator Principal (Warden) Gishlain Somba. They oversee the 110 Okapi Wildlife Reserve rangers and manage the wildlife protection and security in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, research projects, community conservation programs, and work in close partnership with the Okapi Conservation Project.



The Okapi Conservation Project is initiating a second project for the construction of permanent ranger housing at the Zunguluka Patrol Post (above) located on the main road of the eastern border to the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. This patrol post is a critical entry and exit point for all vehicle and pedestrian traffic through the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, as well as a base for forest patrols in the eastern portion of the Reserve. This project will construct housing for rangers and their families in support of their wildlife protection work in OWR. The project is possible through a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service African Elephant Fund – Wildlife Without Borders.

Education Center, the Ugandan Wildlife Authority and the Uganda National Museum as part of ongoing training for the team.

- Interpretive materials including 1000 posters and 2000 calendars focusing on protected animals in the Ituri Forest were designed, published and distributed by the education team. KfW financed education activities with the OCP team including the production of 2000 calendars and 50 conservation lesson brochures and broadcasting of radio programs on conservation topics related to the Okapi Wildlife Reserve on Radio Amkeni and Radio Candip in the towns of Bunia, Mambasa, Nepoko and Wamba.
- The OCP education team produced and distributed copies of conservation laws, conservation lesson brochures, and OWR posters to villages between Mambasa and Byakato.
- Epulu hosted school visits of 35 students from Tourism School in Butembo and 70 students from Maendeleo Secondary school in Oicha.



Women demonstration in Mambasa

- During the last 3 years, the Okapi Conservation Project has been working to empower local people in the Ituri region and is internationally recognized for our efforts. The Project's work focuses on training and providing more than 62 women with knitting and sewing material, improving community agriculture, supporting soccer teams, and providing educational tours for the group at the okapi breeding facility in Epulu.
- Embroidery produced by the women has been distributed to orphans in the towns of Mambasa, Niania and Wamba. Vegetables were grown and distributed among association members and more than 10 women are now able to make a living from tailoring. The Okapi Conservation Project women's soccer team won tournaments in Niania and Mambasa and women are able to disseminate conservation messages during the soccer matches.
- The OCP continues to build upon the powerful film media and recently produced a film clip on the impact of mining in the Mongwalu sector (outside the OWR). The film will be used in

education programs to illustrate the destructive techniques and poor working conditions associated with mining in the region. Additional education materials were produced and distributed including the 2011 wildlife calendars, as well as a Wildlife of the Ituri poster soon to be printed and distributed. Radio programs with conservation messages were again produced for stations in the towns of Mambasa, Bunia, Nepoko and Wamba.

Agro-forestry Update

The Agro-forestry team continues to work with farmers around the OWR. Gathering seeds and planting and transferring seedlings take up a large portion of our efforts. As nitrogen fixing leguminous plants, *Leucena* and *Calliandra* seedlings form the important basis for farmer's plots and are the first trees planted to restore the soil in preparation for planting vegetables and food items. Both can also be used for fuel wood as they grow larger.

- Total of farmers participating with the OCP program : 245
- Forest area covered: 285 hectares, 95% in farms using leguminous tree species to rehabilitate the plots for better production
- Distributed seeds and tools :
 - Seeds: 1000 kg of rice, 325 kg of peanut, 250 kg of beans, 60 kg of corn, 11,250 m of cassava stem.
 - Tools : 150 hoes, 150 machetes, 150 files, 8 axes



- Gardening :
 - 3.5 kg of various vegetable seeds were collected
- Reforestation : 26076 seedlings were grown and distributed
 - Fertilizer trees: 18105 seedlings (69, 43 %)
 - Agroforestry trees: 1104 seedlings (4, 23 %)
 - Others: 6867 seedlings (26, 33 %)



Association Calliandra-corn in Wamba

Community Assistance

The Project's medical dispensary continues to treat families of the rangers and people living and working in Epulu. In 2011 3177 consultations were recorded, including 888 patients under 5 years old and 2289 patients over 5 years old. 382 patients were admitted for care at the clinic. 12 antenatal consultation sessions were organized and 16 births were recorded (10 girls and 6 boys). 6 cases of death were recorded. Epidemiological data represented 4178 cases, out of which endemic malaria (39.9%), diarrhea, caused mostly by lack of good drinking water and toilets in pygmy camps (11.6%), respiratory infections (10.8 %), typhoid fever (7.5%) and worms (2.8%).



- All 6 nurses at the Okapi Clinic received refreshment training at Nyakunde Hospital in Beni in different departments.
- Support to the local women's associations consisted of providing uniforms, beans, seeds, and sewing material to 80 women in Wamba, Niania, Epulu and Mambasa. 5 women have now started their own sewing workshops.



The OCP continued to provide medical and food ration support to old pygmy chiefs Makubasi (left) and Mayanimingi as well as some retired ICCN personnel (below)



The Bafwakoy community local committee in Wamba has used their roofing materials provided by the OCP to cover part of primary school in Tibi village.



OCP Spotlight: Meet Marcel

The Assistant Director of the Okapi Conservation Project is Marcel Enckoto (*left in photo*), a Congolese national born in eastern DR Congo. Marcel has been working for the Okapi Conservation Project since July 1990 after receiving his degree in Human Sciences (Linguistics and Psychology). He is married with 4 children, who go to school in Butembo, DRC. Marcel feels the okapi is important as a scientifically unique species and has worked nearly his entire life to ensure its protection. He enjoys speaking with and education people, both nationally and internationally about conservation. It takes great courage to tackle the big challenges of traveling around the Okapi Wildlife Reserve to teach about conservation while dealing with major issues like poor roads, poverty, political instability and persistent illegal activities.

OCP Spotlight – Community Conservation Committees

The Okapi Conservation Project education team is focusing on the developing community conservation committees in the northern sector of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. The towns of Wamba and Mungbere are difficult to reach because of the extremely poor road system, however these communities are critically important to the future of the Reserve because many of the inhabitants there rely on the forest for their livelihoods.

The education team, along with the Institute in Congo for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) rangers, encouraged customary chiefs and local government administrators to become involved with formal community conservation committees. The committee members are tasked with communicating with their communities about the Okapi Wildlife Reserve conservation objectives. They are provided with resources such as information booklets and flyers, and technical support in areas such as agro-forestry and school rehabilitation, as well as bicycles and basic office supplies to help them travel and distribute information throughout their constituencies. This program is financed by a grant from UNESCO in support of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve World Heritage Site.



Five conservation committees were initiated in Wamba (57 participants) and Mungbere (28 participants) in 2010. The education team's recent mission was to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the conservation committees. Three of the committees had done a good job of internal organization, rehabilitating school infrastructure and agricultural tasks and will now also focus on curbing illegal activities associated with the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. Leadership problems with the other 2 committees were resolved and efforts will now be focused on getting them up to speed. The committees suggested they would like regular contacts with ICCN leadership to help their progress and to conduct special lobbying with military official based nearby in the city of Isiro to help solve poaching problems.

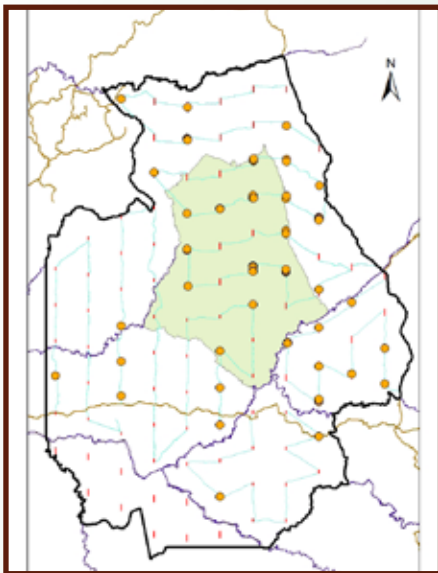


Photos from Epulu by John Lukas



OCP Spotlight: A Lifeline in the Bush

One of the OCP's responsibilities is to maintain Epulu's grass airstrip, our connection with the outside world, for project personnel, tourists, officials and dignitaries. It is also a lifeline in the event of emergencies, where critically ill patients can be flown to hospitals in larger nearby cities, or for evacuation in the event of dangerous civil unrest. The strip requires critical maintenance so that airplanes can safely land and disembark. A thankless job, this involves a work crew who cut the incessant growth of the 1200m by 60m patch of grass, which the forest constantly tries to retake. The crew also has to keep the airstrip clear of grazing goats and soccer playing children when planes are trying to land! This past year KfW funded construction of a new passenger receiving area at the airstrip.



OCP Spotlight: OWR Wildlife Census

In 2011 wildlife populations in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve (OWR) were surveyed through a project organized by the Wildlife Conservation Society with support by a team from the Zoological Society of London working in the DR Congo. Most of the Reserve was surveyed through a series of foot transects, a significant and challenging accomplishment for the team. In addition to okapi, the team also looked for elephant, chimpanzees and other primates, antelope, and human sign and activities. One rarely has the chance to see okapi in the forest, so the surveys rely on tracks and scat counts observed along transects and then extrapolated to the OWR's entire 13,760 km². While this method is not as accurate as actual sightings, by using the same methodology as in previous surveys (1996, 2003) we get an appreciation of the changes in population densities for these key wildlife species. The survey report has not been completed but the map of the OWR gives a preliminary indication of okapi densities.

WCS okapi survey 2011. Bold dots indicate heaviest densities. The southern sector was not completely surveyed. The central area outlined in yellow is the core sector of the Reserve where no hunting or human use is allowed.



We would like to express our thanks to the zoos of the global okapi conservation community and our individual donors, who contributed to the Okapi Conservation Project in 2011. Please know that the okapi, wildlife, and people of the Ituri Forest depend on our help and are surviving because of your care.

Okapi EEP and Okapi SSP Zoo Partners

Antwerp Zoo
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
Copenhagen Zoo
Dallas Zoo
Disney's Animal Kingdom
Forth Worth Zoo
Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association
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Foundations and Agencies

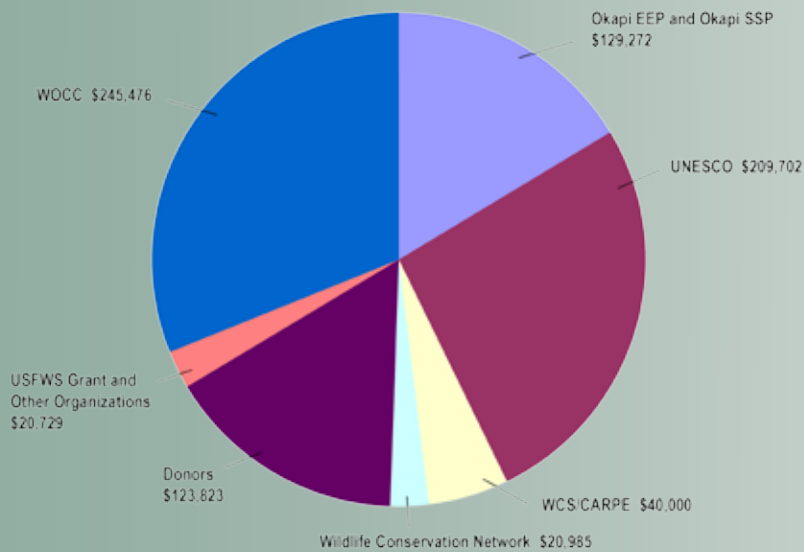
Theo Westenberg Estate
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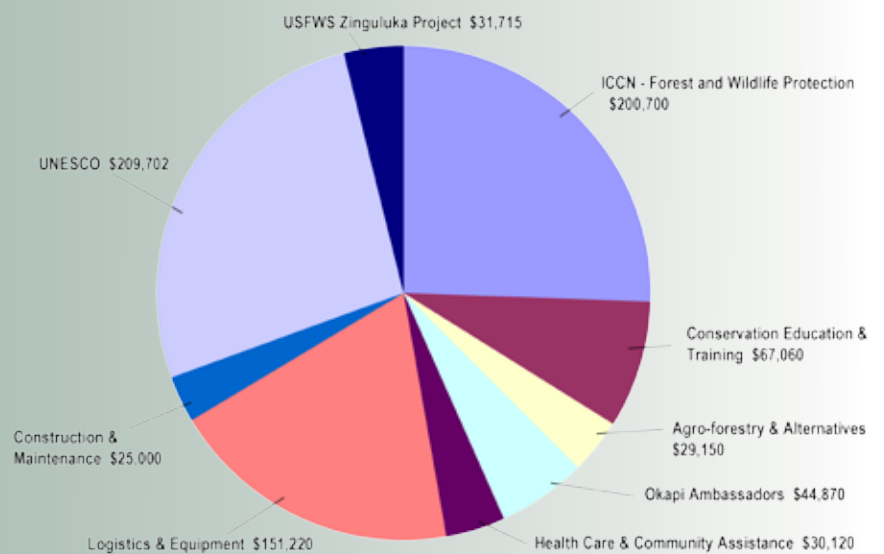
We would like to recognize and thank the Jacksonville Zoo and particularly Dan Maloney, Craig Miller and Diana Dodge for hosting the international Okapi EEP and Okapi SSP meetings in November. A big thanks to SSP Coordinator Ann Petric, EEP Coordinator Sander Hoffman and International Studbook Keeper Kristin Leus for putting together the meeting and to all the meeting participants who joined us in Jacksonville.

OCP Revenue 2011



Total Revenue \$789,537

OCP Expenses 2011



Total Expenses \$789,537

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photo credits: LuAnne Cadd, Molly Feltner, John Lukas, Stephanie Ruitan, Steve Shurter

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