

Conservation Action Plan for West African Chimpanzees named the investigation of the presence of the chimpanzee in Burkina Faso as a priority, as did the 2005 *World Atlas of Great Apes and their Conservation*. Following an alleged sighting of a chimpanzee in south-eastern Burkina Faso in 2011, and based on unconfirmed reports of the subspecies in the south-west, our research team aimed to investigate the status of *P. troglodytes verus* in Burkina Faso.

Between 11 May and 16 July 2012 we conducted reconnaissance surveys totalling 250 km in five forest reserves along the southern border of Burkina Faso: Arly National Park and Pama Partial Reserve in the south-east, Comoé-Léraba Partial Reserve in the south-west, and Koulbi Protected Forest and Nazinga Game Ranch and Reserve in the south central region. While conducting a preliminary primate survey we searched for any signs of the presence of chimpanzees; we found no chimpanzee faeces, tracks, feeding signs or nests, and made no sightings, across the five study sites.

We supplemented our surveys with interviews with seven farmers, 12 forestry guides, and five forestry officials. We presented each participant with a series of animal pictures, only one of which was *P. troglodytes verus*, to control for bias, asking for a yes/no answer as to whether they had ever seen each animal in the wild. We were prepared to follow up on any potential leads with forest surveys but no new leads were acquired. Only three individuals reported ever seeing chimpanzees in Burkina Faso. Two reports came from the region of Arly National Park, from 1999 and 2002, respectively. The third report was from Comoé-Léraba Partial Reserve more than 13 years ago. The positions of Arly National Park and Pama Partial Reserve north of Benin and Togo, from which chimpanzees are considered to be extirpated, and the lack of knowledge of chimpanzees amongst forestry officials and guides, makes the south-east an unlikely habitat for chimpanzees. Our findings suggest that chimpanzees may have never occurred in the south central region of the country, including Koulbi Protected Forest, which is close to both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Comoé-Léraba Partial Reserve seems to have harboured seasonal populations of chimpanzees in the past, as reported in multiple sources for 1969–1988. These groups were probably moving north from Comoé National Park in northern Côte d'Ivoire, just 35 km south of Comoé-Léraba. We suggest that this seasonal behaviour has ceased and/or the regional population has dramatically decreased because of three inter-related reasons: (1) the high degree of poaching in Comoé-Léraba (we encountered signs of poaching at a rate of 0.29 km<sup>-1</sup> surveyed); (2) the once well-protected Comoé National Park suffered a massive decline in its chimpanzee population after management was forced to leave the park during 2001–2011 during a period of political unrest; (3) the land between Comoé National Park and Comoé-Léraba is not protected or managed, leaving

large mammals in the area extremely vulnerable to habitat loss and poaching.

We suggest that, although confirmation of absence can never truly be made, the perennial or seasonal presence of *P. troglodytes verus* in Burkina Faso is unlikely. This Endangered great ape has lost its foothold in Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Gambia, remains in only a small section of Ghana, and is experiencing a catastrophic population decline in Côte d'Ivoire. These findings highlight the continually shrinking range of the West African chimpanzee, which has been increasingly fragmented, and the species locally extirpated, over the past several generations.

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#### 14th Conservation Workshop for the Biodiversity of Arabia

The 14th Annual Conservation Workshop for the Biodiversity of Arabia was held at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah, UAE, during 3–6 February 2013. This regional forum brought together 120 participants representing UAE, Algeria, Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Oman, as well as from the USA, UK, South Africa, and New Zealand. The workshops are hosted by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority of the Government of Sharjah, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qassimi, member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah. The 14th Workshop in 2013 had two parallel themes. The protected areas and planning theme looked at Bioregional Planning and Strategic Planning for Species Conservation. A species assessment theme conducted a formal regional Red List assessment of the breeding birds of Arabia.

Bioregional Planning had been introduced at previous workshops in 2010 and 2011, at which the Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi accepted a mandate to produce a regional biodiversity assessment, under the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative. In a series of meetings, workshops, and with extensive data sharing from across the region, the Initiative's team was able to undertake the first detailed systematic assessment for the entire Arabian Peninsula using six derived layers: integrated marine and terrestrial habitats, land use and marine condition, formal protected areas, species distributions, ecological processes, and opportunities and constraints. This assessment enabled the development of a comprehensive habitat map for the Peninsula and the identification

of 36 Priority Areas for conservation. In a series of working group sessions participants reviewed and prioritized the above list, identifying key sites for focused action, including a number of potential Transboundary Conservation Areas.

The Species Conservation Planning component used the framework provided by the IUCN Species Survival Commission to examine the key elements of Regional Species Conservation Plans and how these may be translated into National Species Action Plans. Delegates reviewed the status of species planning in their countries and then, with reference to the Regional Plans for the Arabian leopard *Panthera pardus nimr* and the Arabian oryx *Oryx leucoryx*, drafted examples of objectives, targets and actions that could be taken up at a national level, and also assessed the constraints and limitations in drafting such national plans. A final session considered possible candidate species or groups of species for the development of regional and national plans. For the regional Red List assessment of the breeding birds of Arabia, including the island of Socotra, conducted in collaboration with BirdLife International, more than 360 species were assessed, including all those that are endemic and near-endemic to Arabia, and the more widespread species.

As in 2012 the Workshop included a technical training component, with a day and half of hands-on exercises, regional case studies, and equipment assessments relating to the selection and application of VHF, GPS, PTT and geolocator tags for wildlife tracking.

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### **Rediscovery of Marca's marmoset and the challenges for its conservation**

In 1914 an expedition organized by Theodore Roosevelt and Candido Rondon went to the confluence of the rivers

Aripuanã and Roosevelt (then known as the River of Doubt) in Brazilian Amazonia, where three specimens of an unknown marmoset were collected. The skins, sent to the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, were found in 1993 by Ronaldo Alperin, who described them as a new subspecies, *Callithrix argentata marcai*. After a taxonomic reassessment of *Callithrix* the taxon became *Mico marcai*.

Two expeditions to relocate the species have recently visited the confluence of the rivers Aripuanã and Roosevelt. In January 2012 interviews with local people suggested potential survey sites. Following these leads, we found a group of three *M. marcai* on the left bank of the Aripuanã river, confirming the continued presence of the species in the type locality. In January 2013, supported by the Conservation Leadership Programme and the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Institute, we made further observations of *M. marcai*, sighting it 24 times. Mean group size was four, similar to that of other species of *Mico*.

As elsewhere in Amazonia, habitat loss is the main threat to primates in this region. Forest is being lost through selective logging and expansion of cattle ranching, and now there is a new threat from infrastructure projects. These include the expansion of transport systems and the construction of seven hydroelectric plants in the Aripuanã and Roosevelt basin. These projects will affect eight protected areas and at least five indigenous areas. In the known range of *M. marcai* about 640 families will be displaced by one of the hydroelectric plants. It has taken almost 20 years to verify that *M. marcai* still lives in the wild and it is currently categorized as Data Deficient on the IUCN Red List—will it now move immediately into one of the threatened categories?

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