

QUARTERLY REPORT FOR ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE LOBEKE NATIONAL PARK ON THE AFRICAN GREY PARROTS



SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER, 2024

Movement patterns, habitat utilization, and conservation education on the African grey parrots

To study the movement patterns of the African grey parrots

Trackers were to be used for this objective. Still, given the technical problems faced with the trackers we got, we used participatory mapping with locals from different villages surrounding the park to determine the movement patterns of the parrots. Through participatory mapping, we determined the areas frequented by the parrots using the local knowledge of community members. We transcribe this knowledge into a map showing the different areas where parrots are usually cited. Following what we gathered as information from the locals, the movement of the parrots was estimated to range from the Central African Republic through Cameroon and to the Republic of Congo. We went into detail to note specific areas around the community where people saw the parrots (figure 1).



Figure 1: Participatory mapping of areas where parrots are spotted around communities

To determine habitat utilization of the parrots in the Djanguï and Bolo Forest clearing

The Lobéké National Park has eight (08) forest clearings (Ngoa, Ndangayé, Djaloumbé, Petite savane, Djanguï, Djembe, Bolo, and Samba). The parrots visit only the Djanguï and Bolo Forest clearings.

The Djangu forest clearing, compared to the Bolo Forest clearing, has more habitat resources (trees, herbs, space (less competition with other animals)) and turned to attract more parrots. The home range of the parrots within the different forest clearings was delimited using a GPS, and maps showing their distribution within these clearings were developed (Fig 3&4) using the QGIS 3.4 Software.

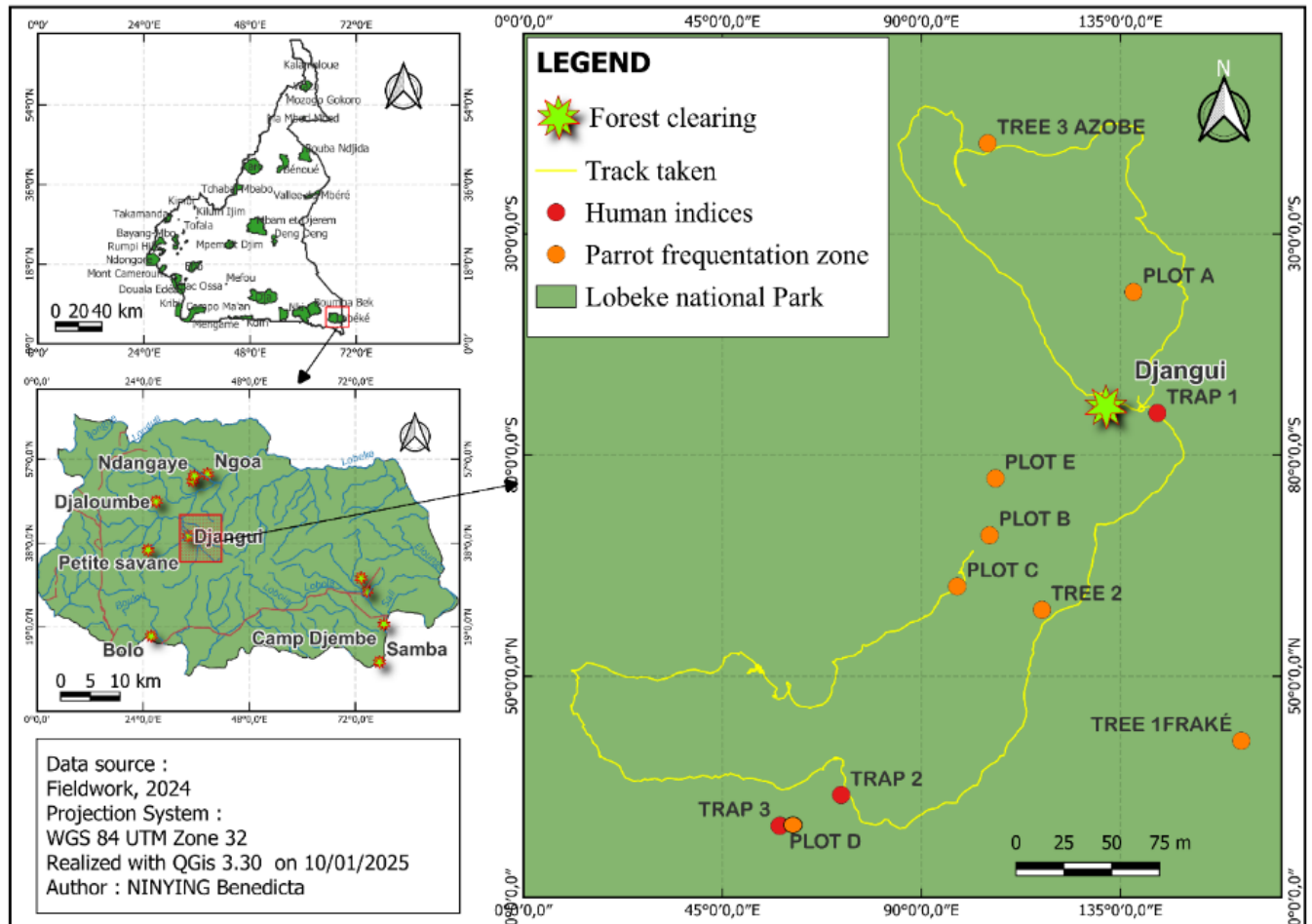


Figure 2: Areas and trees used by parrots in the Djangu Forest Clearing, as well as areas where poaching activities were registered

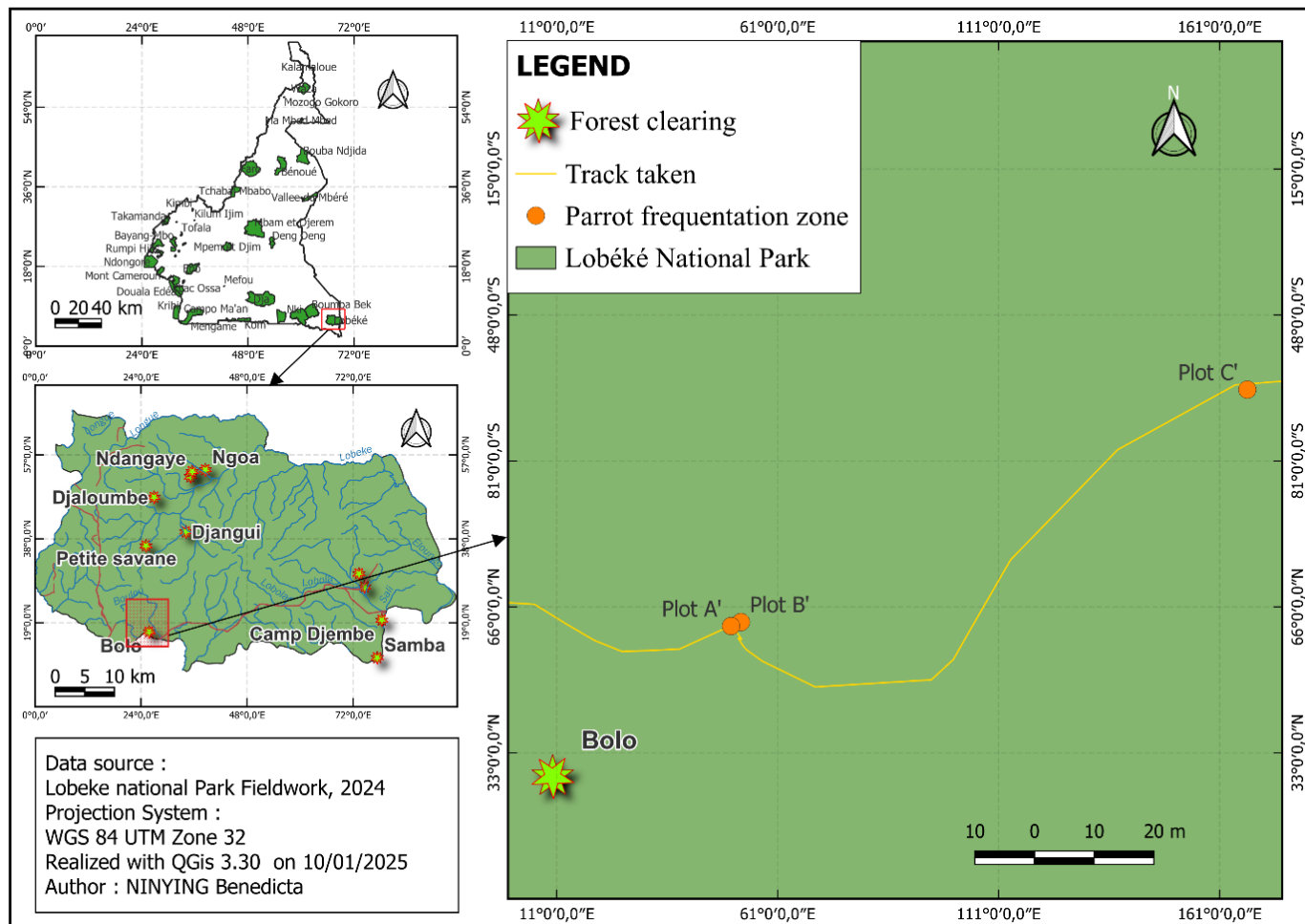


Figure 3: Areas used by parrots in the Bolo Forest clearing

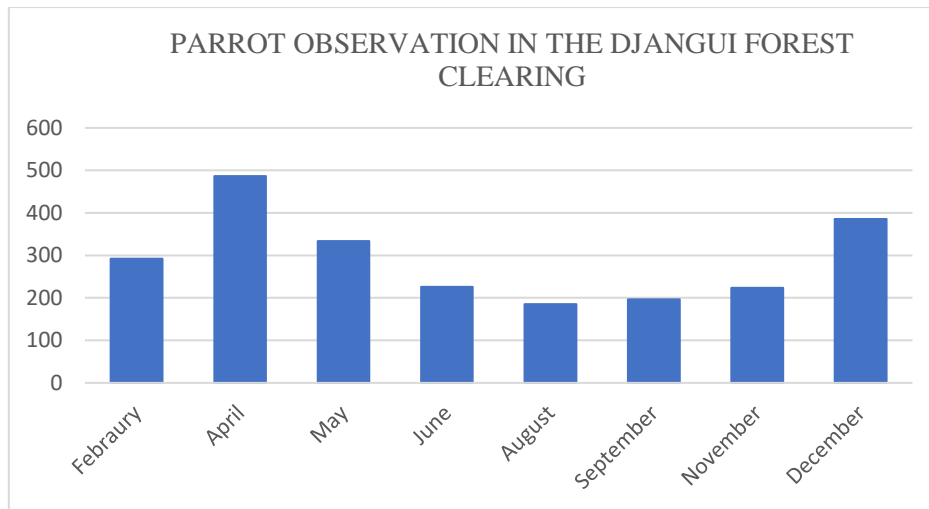


Figure 4: Average density of parrots registered in the Djangui forest clearing during different months

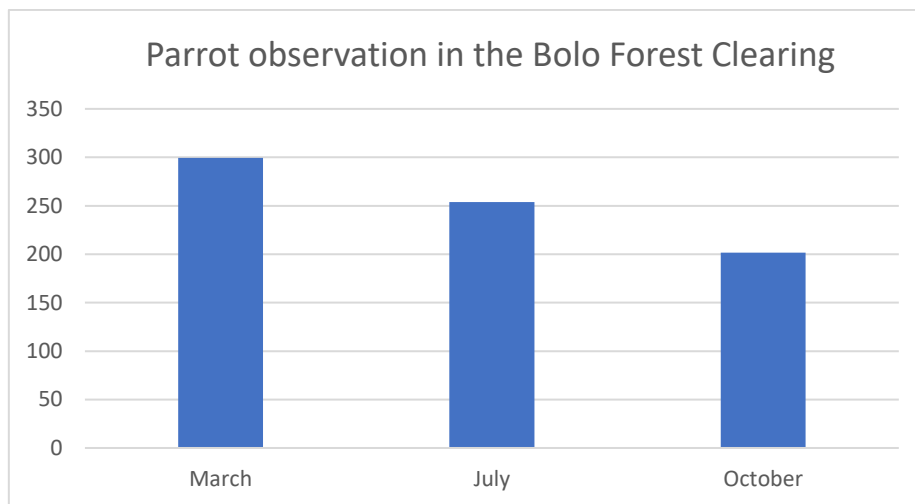


Figure 5: Average density of parrots registered in the Bolo Forest clearing during different months

More parrots were recorded during the dry season, which normally runs from October to March, but the dry season was prolonged in 2024 right up till April. The rainy season which normally starts in April and prolongs to September, started this year in May and was characterized by scanty rainfalls.

The month of October to December recorded the highest indices of trapping activities. Thanks to the presence of the Ecoguard we were able to destroy these indices (flags) because they disturbed the behavior of the parrots within the clearing. Fewer parrots visited the clearings, they turned to spend less time within the clearing and didn't land to feed

Conservation education with primary school pupils to promote the protection of the African grey parrots

We selected three (03) primary schools in three communities surrounding the park to carry out conservation education with its pupils of age range between 8-11 years old. We started the activity by testing the pupil's knowledge of the African grey parrots, we did so by asking the following questions:

1. Do you know the African grey parrots?
2. Where do you often see the parrots?
3. What do the parrots do?
4. What do parrots feed on?

5. Can anyone tell us the problems faced by parrots?
6. Where do parrots live?

We accompanied these questions with a hand booklet on the African grey parrots which contained all the answers to the question and some games for better understanding. The pupil of all three schools had a good awareness of the parrots and responded the first three questions very adequately. They gave the local names of parrots (Bantou name=sakou, Baka name=Koukulou, Badjue=Akue); they said they mostly saw the parrots fly around the villages (some of the pupils could mimic the parrot screeches), and others said they saw them in the forest and farmlands. The last three questions were not responded to adequately. During the exercises with the booklets, the pupils were asked to read out loud the notes on the different pages of the booklet and to color out the images (this was done to make the pupil better understand the parrots and their environment). For games, the pupils were asked to identify the legs of a grey parrot (page two of the booklet), and few got it right at the start. By the end of the exercise and teaching with the booklets, the pupil could answer all six questions and had to make a pledge to protect the parrots as well as educate their parents and other community members on what they had learned why it is important to protect parrots.

Handbook used in primary school to carry conservation education



Conclusion

At the start of the year 2024, we had as goal to study the movement patterns, habitat utilization, and community engagement in the protection of the African grey parrots. In order to do so, we had to buy trackers, study parrot density, their home range, and characteristics to know their habitat utilization within the Lobéké National Park, as well as exchange with local communities surrounding the park on the parrot species as well as their protection. We found that more parrots tend to come from bordering countries (Central Africa Republic and the Republic of Congo), and the parrots not only use resources within the Lobéké National Park but also around the park. The parrots visited Djanguï and mineral-rich Bolo Forest clearings out of the 8 clearings found within the park and fed on herbs and mineral-rich soil in these clearings. Lastly, the community members had a good knowledge of the parrots, their ecology and breeding, as well as their movement patterns.

Difficulties encountered during the study

The main difficulty encountered during this study was getting a tracker. Other difficulties faced included;

- High insecurity on the field, especially during the months of October, November, and December when capturing activities were high. We always had an ecoguard with us during field work, to limit the risk.
- The negative attitudes of some community members caused overheating during focus group discussions, but we tried to calm them down by assuring them it was strictly a thesis project.

Future directives

- Study in detail the effects of poaching on the behavior of wild parrots in the Djanguí and Bolo Forest clearing
- Get more funding to buy Satellite Argos trackers to track the movement patterns of parrots in order to determine where they come from and where they go when they are not in the forest clearings.

ANNEX



Photo 1: Pictures taken during conservation education with pupils