

Location



Introduction

The Republic of Congo is located on the west coast of Central Africa to the west of the Congo River. It is bordered to the west by Gabon, to its northwest by Cameroon and its northeast by the Central African Republic, to the southeast by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to its south by the Angolan exclave of Cabinda and to its southwest by the Atlantic Ocean. The coastline is 169km long and is comprised of sandy beaches, mangroves and coastal lagoons.

Congo is divided into 12 Départements (districts), of which 2 are on the coast: Kouliou and Pointe Noire. It has a tropical climate, with a rainy season from November to April in the south, persistent high temperatures and humidity being astride the equator.

Regional Seas and Biogeography

West and Central Africa Regional Sea
Guinea current LME

Habitats

→ Mangrove

Some mangrove areas occur along the coastline of Congo, restricted to coastal lagoons and estuaries (particularly the Noubi and Kouilou estuaries).

→ Seagrass

Seagrass can be found in Congo, providing important habitat for manatees and sea turtles.

Biodiversity Hotspots

→ Ramsar sites

Cayo-Loufoualeba is a complex wetlands in the south of Congo, including the Malonda mangrove, the Loemé and Malonda rivers, Cayo and Loufoualeba lakes, small streams, marshes and submerged forested islets. It is an important refuge for hippopotamus (VU). It hosts significant numbers of waterbirds.

Bas-Kouilou-Yombo RAMSAR site includes the Kouilou estuary, other permanent and temporary rivers, lakes, the Yombo lagoon, marshes, swamp and mangrove forests. The site is important for hippos (VU).

→ National Parks and ecological reserves

Conkouati-Douli National Park (also a RAMSAR site and IBA) is a wetland system on the Gabonese border including beaches, mangroves, lagoons, lakes, permanent rivers and streams, marshes and submerged swamp forests. It also extends offshore. It is a refuge zone for many seabirds and waterbirds and also supports sea turtle populations, being a very important site for nesting leatherback turtles (VU). The large Conkouati lagoon provides habitat for hippos (VU) and African manatees (VU).

→ IBAs

The Lower Kouilou Basin IBA overlaps with some territory of the Bas-Kouilou-Yombo RAMSAR site, but its boundaries extend more to the north east, to the edge of the Conkouati-Douli National Park. The main part of the site is marsh, including mangroves, lakes and flooded forest. The site supports large numbers of wading birds.

→ IMMAs

No IMMAs have been designated in Congo.

At risk Wildlife

In this section, some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are

species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). A more complete list of IUCN listed species is found in Appendix 1.

➔ **At risk birds**

Although not many bird species breed in Congo, many pass through on their migrations and a few species are resident. Resident wading species include snipe, godwit, knots, sandpiper, curlews, rail, ibis, hornbills, plover, lapwing and herons, as well as a few species of duck and geese. Seabirds including gannets, cormorants, storm-petrels, shearwaters, great white pelicans and a number of gull and tern species.

➔ **At risk reptiles**

Congo provides important nesting beaches for olive ridley and leatherbacks – with the beaches of the Conkouati-Douli NP and those south of Pinte Noire being particularly important. Congo also provides important foraging grounds for juvenile green and hawksbill turtles. Pointe Indienne (just north of Pointe Noire) is an important feeding area. Occasional nesting of green and loggerheads has been observed. Nesting takes place from September to April.

➔ **At risk mammals**

Congo's coastal waters support populations of many cetaceans, including migrating humpback whales, Brydes and sperm whales, and Atlantic humpback dolphins (CR).

The African manatee (VU) occurs in most coastal wetlands, especially in Conkouati-Douli NP, in the Kouilou River and its wetlands, including Lake Nanga and in the lower Loeimeï River.

Past experience with oil spill and potential risks

No major oil spills have occurred in Congolese waters, although there have been reports of some acute pollution occurring in inland areas.

International and Regional Treaties and Agreements

➔ **Oil spill and HNS Response**

- CLC Convention 69
- CLC Protocol 76
- CLC Protocol 92
- FUND Protocol 76
- FUND Protocol 92
- FUND Protocol 2003
- LLMC Convention 76
- LLMC Protocol 96
- OPRC Convention 90
- HNS Convention 96
- HNS PROT 2010
- OPRC_HNS 2000
- BUNKERS CONVENTION 01

➔ **Marine Biodiversity Protection**

- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- Abidjan Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West and Central Africa Region
- GI-WACAF (The Global Initiative for West, Central and Southern Africa)

Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response

➔ **National Contingency Plan?**

Congo has a national oil spill response plan which was revised in 2009 – the Plan National d'Intervention d'Urgence en cas de déversement des hydrocarbures (PNIU). It does not make specific reference to oiled wildlife response. Oil companies operating in Congo, via the Association des Operateur Pétrolier du Congo

(AOPC), have an agreement to pool their response equipment in the event of an incident.

→ **Role of Competent National Authorities**

authority with responsibility for oil pollution response at sea is the Ministère des Transports, de l'Aviation Civile et de la Marine Marchande/Préfecture de Pointe-Noire. Coastal pollution response is under the responsibility of the Ministère de la Défense Nationale, via the Pointe-Noire Préfecture as a point of contact. The PNIU states the following levels of responsibility:

- Le Comité National d'Intervention (activates the PNIU)
- Etat Major de Commandement (coordinates oil spill response)
- AOPC (participates in oil spill response).

Volunteers can participate in shoreline cleanup but a plan does not exist to coordinate their involvement.

National Parks in Gabon are managed by the Ministère de l'Economie Forestière et Développement Durable (MEFDD), so they would likely be involved in the event of an oil spill impacting the territory of Conkouati-Douli National Park.

Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response

→ **Formal guidelines?**

A national oiled wildlife response plan is being developed by the Ministère de l'Environnement et the MEFDD.

→ **Response objectives and strategy**

No reference.

→ **Euthanasia or rehabilitation?**

It is likely that the authorities would allow rehabilitation of oiled wildlife.

→ **Impact assessment**

No reference.

→ **Notification and early response**

No reference.

→ **Wildlife responders**

The NGO Renatura has been conducting sea turtle monitoring throughout the Congolese coast and protection of their turtle nesting zones for 20 years. Renatura also works with local fishermen to assist with release of sea turtles trapped in fishing nets and conducts monitoring of cetacean populations (largely Atlantic Humpback dolphins) in Congolese waters. They would likely play a key role in the event of an oiled wildlife incident in Gabon.

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Congo works with the authorities and other partners to promote and develop Marine Protected Areas and also conducts monitoring of marine and terrestrial wildlife species. They would likely get involved in an oil spill where wildlife was threatened.

→ **Cooperation between stakeholders**

WCS collaborates (via financial and technical assistance) with authorities on management of the Conkouati-Douli National Park. WCS and Renatura have also worked together to provide training to local community teams on monitoring of sea turtle populations.

An agreement exists between Congo and Angola to share oil spill response resources.

→ **Permanent facilities**

There are no known wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Congo.

→ **Current processes**

No reference.

Documentation and references

General References

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Renatura Congo. <https://renatura.org/#Nosactions>

The Congo Marine Program. Newsletter January-March 2018. <https://congo.wcs.org/Initiatives/Wildlife-Health.aspx>

The Sea turtles of Africa. <https://www.seaturtlestatus.org/articles/2017/the-sea-turtles-of-africa?rq=congo>

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Appendix 1

→ At risk birds

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Cape Gannet / *Morus capensis* / EN / /

Cape Cormorant / *Phalacrocorax capensis* / EN / /

African manatee / *Trichechus senegalensis* / VU / Resident/migratory /

Atlantic Humpback dolphins / *Sousa Teuszii* / CR / Resident/migratory /

Hippopotamus / *Hippopotamus amphibious* / VU / Resident /

Leatherback turtle / *Dermochelys coriacea* / VU / Nesting (forages offshore) / September to April

Hawksbill turtle / *Eretmochelys imbricata* / CR / Nesting (forages offshore) / September to April

Green turtle / *Chelonia mydas* / EN / Migratory (forages offshore) /

Olive ridley turtle / *Lepidochelys olivacea* / VU / Migratory /

Loggerhead turtle / *Caretta caretta* / VU / Migratory /

African dwarf crocodile / *Osteolaemus tetraspis* / VU / Resident /

→ At risk reptiles

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

→ At risk mammals

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)