

Congo Brazzaville Wildlife trip report

The Republic of Congo is an incredible country. Very peaceful, good infrastructure, friendly people and stunning rainforest and beautiful natural areas. Most people associate the country with its neighbour, Democratic Republic of Congo/DRC, which is often in the news for political unrest and health issues. We spent a week in the country with most of our time focused on Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the central part of the country. This was not a dedicated mammal or birding tour with set targets but rather just exploring the forest.



Our tented lodge was situated right in the heart of the forest and about two minutes' walk from a bai which is a forest clearing often used by wildlife as a source of water, food, and minerals. The beautiful hide is perfectly situated to sit and wait for wildlife to appear. This specific bai is a favourite hangout for several **Western Lowland Gorilla** families and we had daily visits and it was very entertaining to watch the antics of especially the younger ones in a natural setting. The lodge staff were brilliant, and they regularly brought fresh coffee, allowing us to enjoy the setting. The Bai also attracted **Guereza Colobus Monkey** who joined them on tow of the days. We had **Sitatunga** in the Bai early one morning and **Black-fronted Duiker** was pretty much always present in the Bai, and this can be a tough species to see.



Western Lowland Gorilla

Other wildlife we saw around camp include **Putty-nosed and Moustached Monkey**, **Green Bush Squirrel**, and a relaxed **Forest Elephant** spending most of one morning in and around the camp.

The Congo Rainforest is brilliant for birding and some of the great species seen around camp include Hartlaub's Duck, Great Blue Turaco, Blue Malkoha, Cassin's and Sabine's Spinetail, Congo Pied, Piping and White-thighed Hornbill, Grey Parrot, Spotted Greenbul, Cassin's Malimbe, African Shrike-flycatcher, Purple-headed Starling, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher and Brown Illadopsis.

We did explore further away from camp and towards the river where we did a boat cruise on a typical central African rainforest river with its dark water and stunning thick riverine rainforest vegetation. We did visit another forest Bai or clearing from where we did a fantastic walk seeing the forest subspecies of **Cape Buffalo** which look completely different with the reddish coloration. Our local guide, who grew up in this area was extremely knowledgeable about all things in the forest and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. We did see **Agile Mangabey** and Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike on the walk to make it even more memorable.



Cape Buffalo

Other wildlife seen while moving around the forest include an unbelievable sighting of a massive male **Bongo**. We were all so shocked to see this elusive animal just standing there looking at us that nobody took a photograph, but that sighting was arguably the highlight of the trip for most of the serious naturalists. We also saw **Peter's and Yellow-backed Duiker** as well as **Crowned Monkey and Grey-cheeked Mangabey**. Other interesting birds seen on walks include Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Eastern long-tailed and Western Dwarf Hornbill, Yellow-spotted Barbet, Gabon Woodpecker, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Yellow-lored Bristlebill, Western Nicator, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Yellow-capped Weaver, Black and Blue-headed Bee-eater.



Black-fronted Duiker

It was a truly unforgettable experience and fantastic that there is a more affordable way to experience this incredible part of the continent. And so much truly spectacular wildlife that is normally very tough to see. Cannot wait to be back next year.