

This is a modified version of a series of three blog posts I wrote on my website, danielhoops.com, about my trip to the Central African Republic, and Sangha Lodge in particular, in December 2017. This version highlights specifically the animal-finding aspects of my trip. I've also kept the part where I discuss my rationale for going on this trip, since most travel advisory sites advise against going to the Central African Republic. Feel free to contact me through my website or at daniel.hoops@mail.mcgill.ca, especially if you can help identify any of the unknown animals below!

I saw an ad on Twitter looking for volunteers to work at a lodge in the rainforest of southwest Central African Republic (CAR for short), doing, among other things, research on wild pangolins. As far as I knew there was no place in the world where wild pangolins could be seen reliably, and yet here was [Sangha Lodge](#), looking for people to go and hang out with them! Now I was not – and am not – in a position to uproot my life to go live in the African jungle, as tempting as that prospect may be. I did, however, immediately e-mail the lodge to inquire about visiting as a tourist.

Arranging to visit as a tourist turned out to be quite easy; the lodge runs periodic “[organized tours](#)”, which are more organized plane-sharing than anything else. Since most independent travellers can't afford the very expensive charter flight that is the only way to get to the lodge, Sangha Lodge organizes for people to come at the same time, making the charter affordable. One of these tours happened to fit perfectly into my schedule.

Arranging my life for a visit to CAR was another matter, though. CAR is not a safe place, by any stretch of the imagination. It is desperately poor and subject to ethnic, religious, and greed-based violence (and, if you ask me, the former two are just the latter in disguise). The travel warnings from places like [Canada](#), the [United States](#), [Britain](#) and [Australia](#) are the stuff of nightmares. My family read these warnings and freaked right out. My family is also relatively well connected and resourceful, and they picked up their phones. They got in contact with people like the Canadian high commissioner for CAR, the UNHCR representative for CAR, and a former Australian diplomat who had visited CAR. All very senior people, well informed and knowledgeable. They all had the same terrifying story to tell as the official travel warnings, and I came under intense pressure, up until the day I left, to abandon my trip.

In my opinion official travel warnings tend to be exaggerated and can be hyperbolic verging on paranoid (not unlike the safety regulations dreamt up by universities). As for the officials, all the people my family talked to had two things in common: (1) they were all senior authority figures and (2) none of them were in CAR or had spent time there recently. With respect to (1), people in high places tend to be very risk averse because, for example, the Canadian high commissioner would get in a lot of trouble if he said anything that strayed from Canada's official advice on visiting CAR, especially if something were to happen to me.

This is not to say that I was determined to visit CAR no matter what, but just that I wanted to make up my own mind. I did my research by looking up news stories (particularly those published by [African outlets](#)), reading online trip reports from people who had [visited Sangha Lodge](#) and/or [travelled through CAR](#), and ultimately getting in touch with people living and working in CAR, where there is a large United Nations peacekeeping and development presence. The picture these sources paint is not necessarily different from the official one, as CAR is indeed poor and plagued by violence, but it is a tapestry. Parts of CAR are far too dangerous to visit, but other parts are not. For example, parts of the capital, Bangui, are controlled by the UN, and are relatively calm. The part of CAR where Sangha Lodge is located, in the far southwest corner, has never seen violence, not even during the height of the civil war in 2012. I am being honest here about the risks – visiting CAR is not like visiting Italy, or even Tanzania. I would not land at the airport without a fixer waiting for me and a meticulously pre-arranged itinerary. But with these things in hand I decided, and I remain convinced, that it is safe to visit CAR under the auspices of Sangha Lodge.

I mentioned having a “fixer” waiting at the airport. A fixer is someone who makes sure things run smoothly in places where there are “unofficial fees” for transiting through places like airports and checkpoints. In CAR you must know when and how to bribe your way along, or else you can find yourself in a lot of confusing trouble. (I feel compelled to note that the people demanding bribes in these situations are relatively low-level government employees and it is likely that they only rarely and sporadically get paid, if at all. Demanding bribes is probably their only way of keeping food on their tables). Sangha employs a fixer, William, who managed the lodge until moving to Bangui so that his kids could go to school there. The whole thing works relatively efficiently – if you know the system.

On my way to Sangha I had a spare day in Bangui, and I arranged with William to see the one Bangui-area tourist attraction I had been able to find on the internet – Boali Falls. The falls, about an hour north of the city, are impressive in the sense that they are big and loud. Unfortunately they are surrounded by the ruins of a resort complex, which in turn is surrounded by hydroelectric projects (both completed and under construction), so the whole thing together is rather underwhelming. The abandoned buildings of the resort are rather interesting, if you find postwar relics interesting. I was particularly fascinated by the ruins of the resort’s Cyber Café, a thing I think of as thoroughly modern but which has now existed long enough to be established, destroyed in a rebellion, and partially reclaimed by nature.

The highlight of my daytrip to Boali was actually the side-trip we took. While driving to Boali I saw a sign at a turn-off advertising “Lac des Crocodiles, 10km” and I was very pleased we were able to visit the lake on our way back. At the turn-off, our driver Nestor pulled the car over and William negotiated the purchase of a live chicken, which was then bound and placed under the glovebox. When we arrived at the lake, we were greeted by a small

visitor's center painted with beautiful murals, and a young man eager to feed our chicken to the crocodiles. He stood on a platform over the edge of the lake and dangled the chicken by its feet, luring a small sacred crocodile (*Crocodilus suchus*) out of the water.

The ten kilometres between the main road and Lac des Crocodiles are spectacular in their own right. The road is one of the few places where a habitat known as Forest-Savannah Mosaic is relatively accessible in central Africa. I took the opportunity to look for birds along this road for a couple of hours after visiting the lake, and returned just to bird here, without visiting the lake or Boali Falls, after my time at Sangha. The bird diversity here is quite different from that further south and west in CAR, and my hosts at Sangha Lodge said that other birders had reported that this location is an excellent place to find bird species unique to drier central African habitats. I would highly recommend a trip out here for any birders lucky enough to visit Bangui.

The morning after my trip to Boali Falls, William and Nestor picked me up and we drove to the airport to catch a puddle-jumper flight to Sangha Lodge, in the southwest corner of CAR. The owner of Sangha Lodge is a man named Rod Cassidy, and he was there to meet us at the airstrip along with his staff and many locals. Rod's advice to me was to start birding right away, as the wildlife around the airstrip tends to be unique because the airstrip is a unique grassy area in the middle of a massive rainforest. I was blown away by Sangha Lodge. The lodge is perched over the Sangha River, and on the first night we were treated to a river cruise. Big trees hung over the banks, monkeys occasionally causing a ruckus in the canopy. Parrots and hornbills flew overhead, presumably back to their evening roosts, and Rod regaled us with the story of the lodge and his past. He spent many years traveling across Africa as a birding guide, which was music to my ears! I spent a glorious week at Sangha Lodge trying to see as many animals as possible. My advice is to spend as much time as possible walking the trails around the lodge, at night, first thing in the morning, and in the afternoon after the day's activity. The more time on the trails, the more animals seen!

I think that's about it for the relevant parts of the blog. Sorry if there are a few non-sequiturs, I tried to smooth them all out but I may have missed a few. For a much more long-winded version, check out danielhoops.com/blog

Here is a complete list of all the mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians I was able to find and identify:

Mammals

I identified mammals based on [Kingdon's Mammals of African, second edition](#). After my trip I confirmed the IDs from my notes and pictures using the [Handbook of the Mammals of the World](#). I assigned the animals I saw to subspecies based purely on range maps.



African Forest Elephants digging for mud in Bai Hokou.

African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) - Practically guaranteed at Dzanga Bai, also frequent at other bais, like Bai Hokou. Otherwise quite hard to see, even though they are present everywhere.

Southern Needle-clawed Galago (*Euoticus elegantulus*) - Seemed relatively common on the trails around Sangha Lodge at night. I saw three during my time there.

Demidoff's and Thomas's galagos are almost impossible to tell apart in the field based on physical appearance, from what I've heard. However, apparently they can be relatively reliably distinguished by behaviour (and by call, though I didn't hear them make any sounds).

Demidoff's Dwarf Galago (*Galagoides demidovii anomurus*) - Sangha Lodge's owner, Rod, said these are not easy to see. I assigned one galago I saw to this species because it was foraging low in the understory of the forest, at about my eye level, and was moving by scrambling through the vine thickets.

Thomas's Galago (*Galagoides thomasi*) - I assigned the rest of the galagos I saw to this species because they were high up in the forest canopy and because they would move by running along branches lengthwise and leaping from tree to tree. If I am correct in my IDs, these are fairly easy to see at night on the trails around Sangha Lodge, though you'll need a good pair of binoculars to see anything beyond their intense eyeshine.

Milne-Edward's Potto (*Perodicticus edwardsi*) - Fairly common on the trails around Sangha Lodge at night.

Moustached Monkey (*Cercopithecus cephus cephus*) - Common, I saw them in several places but most easily in the forest around the visitor's centre in Dzanga-Sangha NP.

Putty-nosed Monkey (*Cercopithecus nictitans nictitans*) - Common and easily seen around Sangha Lodge.

Crowned Monkey (*Cercopithecus pogonias grayi*) - Apparently common around Sangha Lodge, but I only managed to spot them once, in a mixed group with putty-nosed monkeys.

Grey-cheeked Mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*) - I saw them one morning on the hike into Dzanga Bai.



A blurry, heavily cropped picture of a western guereza at Dzanga Bai.

Western Guereza (*Colobus guereza occidentalis*) - Seen foraging on the ground at Dzanga Bai



Mongambe, the silverback of one of the two habituated gorilla groups tourists can visit, near Bai Hokou.

Western Lowland Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) - Guided tours will lead you to one of two habituated groups, so sightings are almost guaranteed. I also saw an unhabituated silverback on one of the mud tracks in Dzanga-Sangha NP, which was one of the most spectacular animal sightings of my life. They're also occasionally seen foraging in Bai Hokou.

I had a particularly hard time identifying the squirrels I saw, and I saw lots! I saw at least one individual of each of the following five species well enough to confidently ID them to species, but most that I saw went unidentified.

Striped Ground Squirrel (*Euxerus erythropus limitaneus*) - One seen on the roadside passing through a grassy area on the outskirts of Bayanga Village.

Thomas's Rope Squirrel (*Funisciurus anerythrus mystax*) - Seen around Sangha Lodge.

Ribboned Rope Squirrel (*Funisciurus lemniscates mayumbicus*) - Seen around Sangha Lodge.



Red-legged sun-squirrel

Red-legged Sun-squirrel (*Heliosciurus rufobrachium*) - Seen at Dzangha Bai.

Forest Giant Squirrel (*Protoxerus stangeri eborivorus*) - One seen at the visitor's centre in Dzanga-Sangha NP.

Before arriving at Sangha Lodge I'd never heard of anomalures. When I left I'd seen half the world's species!



It took us forever to identify this Beecroft's anomalure.

Beecroft's Anomalure (*Anomalurus beecrofti*) - One seen at night on the trails around Sangha Lodge.

Lord Derby's Anomalure (*Anomalurus derbianus*) - Seen reliably inside a hollow tree on the Sangha Lodge property.

Lesser Cane Rat (*Thryonomys gregorianus*) - One seen running across the road on the outskirts of Bayanga at sunset.

As with the squirrels, most of the bats I saw went unidentified. Most were little more than shadowy blurs silhouetted against the dusk.

Pel's Pouched Bat (*Saccolaimus peli*) - These massive bats were easy to see around Sangha Lodge, particularly flying over the river. They are identifiable by their huge size.



Pangi, one of the two habituated long-tailed pangolins living around Sangha Lodge. There are much better pictures of her elsewhere on the Internet.

Long-tailed Pangolin (*Manis tetradactyla*) - Easily seen at Sangha Lodge by joining the trackers that follow habituated individuals from sunrise to sunset. Otherwise practically impossible to see.



Forest buffalo (left) and giant forest hog (right) hanging out together at Dzanga Bai.

Giant Forest Hog (*Hylochoerus meinertzhageni rimator*) - Regularly seen at Dzanga Bai.

Forest Buffalo (*Syncerus nanus*) - Reliable at Dzanga Bai.



Bongo!!!!!!

Bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*) - Occasionally makes an appearance at Dzanga Bai, making that the best place in the world to see them.



Western Sitatunga at Bai Hokou.

Western Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus gratus*) - Occasionally seen at Bai Hokou.

Can anyone help identify these:

The hollow tree where the Lord Derby's anomalure is found, I identified two species of bats. This was quite challenging, I was literally going back-and-forth between looking straight up with my binoculars and reading through Kingdon's guide. I identified two bats down to genus: slit-faced bats (*Nycteris sp.*) and woolly bats (*Kerivoula sp.*). Unfortunately [Vladimir Dinnet](#) does not list a woolly bat species as occurring inside that tree. Does anyone know what kind(s) of slit-faced and woolly bat roosts in there?

Targets for next time:

Tree Hyrax - Their extremely loud calls were heard nightly around Sangha Lodge, sometimes very close to the trails. I think I could have found them if I had known what I was looking for, I thought I was looking for some kind of nocturnal bird!

Agile Mangabey - Usually easy to see as there is a habituated group at Bai Hokou but unfortunately when I was there the trackers were on strike.

De Brazza's Monkey - Apparently occasionally seen in the swampy area near Sangha Lodge but I didn't get enough time to properly explore this area in the daytime.

Brush-tailed Porcupine - There is a cave where they live not far from Sangha Lodge, but when we went they were very skittish and ran too deep into the cave for us to see. They can also be reliably seen by going hunting with the Ba'aka.

Tree Pangolin - Apparently regular on the trails around Sangha Lodge at night, though I think Rod might be a little over optimistic (he said they're seen approx. once per four night walks).

Red River Hog - My favourite pig, I was really hoping to see them. They're regular at Dzanga Bai, so I was just unlucky.

Birds:

I identified birds almost exclusively by sight, using the second edition of the [Birds of Western Africa](#). I'm just not good enough at African bird calls to rely on them. However, Rod Cassidy, the owner of Sangha Lodge, was a professional birding guide in Africa before buying the lodge, so I was able to rely on him for help with some hard-to-ID birds. He also loaned me his Swarovski telescope to use at Dzanga Bai, which very much came in handy.

My bird list is [here](#). It is 173 species long, and I don't think it's worth reposting. Instead, I'm just going to mention some highlights. Also, I should note that my list may not be complete, I think I forgot to write down some of the common and/or introduced species I'd seen previously.

Plumed Guineafowl (*Guttera plumifera*) - Seen with Rod's help on the trails at Sangha Lodge.

African Green Pigeon (*Treron calvus*) - This spectacular bird was common around Sangha Lodge and Dzanga-Sangha National Park

Yellow-throated Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx flavigularis*) - Not an easy bird to see, Rod help me track down one that was calling around Sangha Lodge early one morning.

Black Spinetail (*Telacanthura melanopygia*) - The diversity of spinetails around Sangha Lodge makes identification a challenge; I found four species on my trip, of which this is the least reported (according to eBird).

Forbes's Plover (*Charadrius forbesi*) - A Central and West African specialty, these were common at Dzanga Bai. There were many other waders at Dzanga Bai as well, a good telescope is necessary if you want to identify them.

Dwarf Bittern (*Ixobrychus sturmi*) - One seen at Dzanga Bai at the edge of the forest.

Black Goshawk (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) - A spectacular bird to see emerge from the forest at Dzanga Bai.

Dark Chanting-goshawk (*Melierax metabates*), **Bataleur** (*Terathopius ecaudatus*), **Red-necked Buzzard** (*Buteo auguralis*) - Three spectacular African raptors all seen riding the thermals from the road to Lac des Crocodiles.

Fraser's Eagle-owl (*Bubo poensis*) - Rod found one at Sangha Lodge after dinner one evening.

Red-billed and Black Dwarf Hornbills (*Lophoceros camurus* and *Horizocerus hartlaubi*) - Both dwarf hornbills are rather difficult to see, but can be spotted in the forest canopy around Sangha Lodge.

Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill (*Bycanistes subcylindricus*) - Rod says he doesn't think these are present in the area, but I swear I saw one - the diagnostic black-and-white undertail pattern in particular - fly across the river during our river cruise.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) - Despite seeing this bird regularly in all my hometowns (Toronto, Montreal and Canberra), I was extremely pleased to see a Sky Ferrari perched on the cell tower in downtown Bangui.

Gray Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) - My #2 most wanted bird of the trip, they were so common at Sangha Lodge and around Dzanga-Sangha NP that I could have gotten sick of them if they weren't so wonderful. The palm wine boat tour is particularly good for seeing them in large, riotous flocks.

Red-eyed Puffback (*Dryoscopus senegalensis*) - A particularly hard rainforest bird to see, I only saw it once, at Dzanga Bai.

Black-headed x African Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone rufiventer x viridis*) - While hanging around Bai Hokou village, I saw what looked like a black-headed paradise-flycatcher, except it had black underparts and white tail streamers of intermediate length. What a weird bird.

White-bearded Greenbul (*Criniger ndussumensis*) - I saw this around Sangha Lodge, and was able to identify it to species only with Rod's help.

Lesser Bristlebill (*Bleda notatus*) - I was lucky in finding an army ant swarm while wandering the Sangha Lodge trails and, though the experience was stressful for trying to avoid being encircled by the ants, it was great for birding those understory skulkers that are otherwise quite difficult to get a look at.

Xavier's Greenbul (*Phyllastrephus xavieri*) - I saw this greenbul only once, birding around the Bai Hokou village.

Green-backed Eremomela (*Eremomela canescens*) - This seldom-reported bird seems pretty easy to see on the road to Lac des Crocodiles.

Gosling's Apalis (*Apalis goslingi*) - This Central African specialty was easy to see at Sangha Lodge.

Yellow-footed Flycatcher (*Muscicapa sethsmithi*) - This did not seem like an easy bird to see, but I found one extremely confiding individual hanging around the Bai Hokou village.

Can anyone help identify this:



This bird was seen and photographed at Dzanga Bai. Yes, this is the best (i.e. only) picture we managed to get. Can anyone identify it from this?

Targets for next time:

Red-necked Picathartes - I was sad to have missed my #1 target bird. Rod has a reliable spot for them, but unfortunately a poacher had camped there recently (the remnants of his fire pit were still very evident) and there were no birds to be found. We did see their weird mud nests.

White-collared Starling - Rod suggested that the road to Lac des Crocodiles is a good place to look for this species because previous groups had found them there.

Pennant-winged and Standard-winged Nightjars - Rod said that these can be found hawking over and around the airstrip at Bayanga, but we didn't manage to arrange a night trip there. Also, the road to Lac des Crocodiles is almost guaranteed to have them, but I don't think driving this road at night is a good idea in the current security situation.

Greater Painted-snipe - I was convinced that if I scanned Dzanga Bai long enough and hard enough with the telescope I would find one, but I never did.

Reptiles

Reptiles were the hardest to identify because (1) there is a huge lack of knowledge as to what reptiles live in Central Africa, (2) they are extremely diverse (particularly certain groups of lizards and snakes), and (3) diagnostic differences between species can be subtle. Luckily reptiles have long been my passion, and I can identify almost all reptiles to family on sight, most reptiles to genus on sight, and for the easier groups (monitor lizards, boids, crocodylians, etc) I can identify them to species on sight. However, for a lot of the small, skittish lizards, it just wasn't possible to identify them on my trip. I took pictures of them if I could get my camera out and focussed before they ran away, and others took notes on their appearance as best I could. Once I got home, I used the primary (scientific) literature to figure out what species in that family or genus could be present in CAR, and then how to tell those species apart. My main source of information for what reptiles are present in CAR was [Chirio & Ineich, 2006](#).



.A young Central African dwarf crocodile in the swamps near Sangha Lodge.

Central African Dwarf Crocodile (*Osteolaemus teraspis*) - I saw a young one spotlighting in the swamps on my first night at Sangha Lodge. Rod doubted that I'd find one, and I wasn't able to find it again on subsequent nights despite intensive searching, so I think they are pretty rare in the area and I was extremely lucky.



A young sacred crocodile at Lac des Crocodiles near Boali Falls.

Sacred Crocodile (*Crocodylus suchus*) - A young one was lured out of the Lac des Crocodiles with the promise of a live chicken, however [a hive of angry bees](#) came to the chicken's rescue. The poor croc retreated back to its lake unfed as we all ran off screaming.



A Calabar burrowing python found at night near the Picathartes waterfall, Sangha Lodge.

Calabar Burrowing Python (*Calabaria reinhardtii*) - One found at night spotlighting below the picathartes nesting site. My guide completely freaked out when I picked it up. He was new, very keen to make a good impression (which he did), and thought he was watching his great opportunity disappear before his eyes because who would hire him again when his first tourist committed suicide by snake? After I explained (repeatedly and at length) that this particular snake was not dangerous, he eventually asked to hold it.

Jameson's Mamba (*Dendroaspis jamesoni jamesoni*) - There aren't many wild animal experiences I treasure more than watching a two-meter-long, bright yellow mamba move effortlessly from a sunny patch on the rainforest floor up a palm tree and into the safety of its crown of thorny fronds. The mamba made no hurry and kept its head elevated and eye on me the whole time. I would have walked right by it had a squirrel not been alarm-calling at it, and even then I spent the first few minutes trying to ID the squirrel before I thought to try and figure out what had got the squirrel so worried. How many other amazing, fully exposed but well-camouflaged animals did I walk right past?



A beautifully coloured male African five-lined skink at Boali Falls.



A baby African five-lined skink with a beautiful blue tail.

African Five-lined Skink (*Trachylepis quinquetaeniata*) - Common around man-made structures at Boali Falls and Lac des Crocodiles.



A speckle-lipped skink basking on the deck at Sangha Lodge.

Speckle-lipped Skink (*Trachylepis maculilabris*) - Common around Sangha Lodge.



A Makolowodé's skink hanging above the door to my cabin. I took a bunch of pictures of this guy, and he never moved. Later, I realized he was dead.

Makolowodé's Skink (*Trachylepis makolowodei*) - Common around Sangha Lodge.



A small Finch's agama near Boali Falls.

Finch's Agama (*Agama dorian*) - Common around man-made structures at Boali Falls, Lac des Crocodiles, the Mausoleum of Ange-Félix Patassé, Dzanga Bai and Sangha Lodge.



Moreau's tropical house gecko in my cabin at Sangha Lodge.

Moreau's Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia*) - Seen on the interior walls of my cottage at Sangha Lodge, as well as the dining hall.



A coalescent house gecko in my cabin at Sangha Lodge.

Coalescent House Gecko (*Hemidactylus coalescens*) - Common both in the buildings at Sangha Lodge, and around the bases of trees in the forest.



The one picture I was able to get of the sawtail lizard before it took off.

Sawtail Lizard (*Holaspis guentheri*) - I saw this gorgeous lizard on a tree limb beside the observation hide at Dzanga Bai. That was the only one I ever saw, so I suspect they aren't easy to find unless you can get up high.

Ornate Monitor (*Varanus ornatus*) - Rod was surprised when I told him on my last day that I had yet to see one. He said he frequently sees them wandering around the camp. I made a concerted effort to find on that morning, and finally came across a baby on the bank of the river across from the camp. It was gorgeous, and well worth the effort.

Can anyone help me identify:



1. This gorgeous agama was hanging around on the tree by the Dzanga Bai elevated hide, and I have no idea what it is. Not only is its colour scheme not one I've seen described anywhere for any African agamid, but something about this individual says "female" to me, which would make its beautiful colours even more unusual. If you know what it is, please let me know!



2. I chased this agamid around my cabin at Sangha Lodge trying to get decent pictures. Something about this one makes me think it's a male, but I still have no idea what species it could be.

Targets for next time:

Central African Slender-snouted Crocodile - Rod says these have been hunted out from the area, but the guides in the Dzanga-Sangha NP were familiar with it. It might be worth trying to hire a Ba'aka guide to see if they can take to you a good spot for them.

Gaboon and Rhinoceros Vipers - I borrowed a rake and tried raking through leaves at the bottom of a pit with no luck. Rod says he's only seen them two ways: when they're swimming in the river or fleeing army ants. I suspect they aren't rare, but the quality of their camouflage and their habit of not moving make them almost impossible to find.

Broadley's and Variable Bush Vipers - Both these spectacular snakes should be present in the rainforest of southwest CAR. Spotlighting at night is probably the best way to find them (along with luck) but I didn't come across any - and I spotlighted quite a bit!

Ball Python - One of the most popular pet snakes in the world, I'd love to see this gorgeous animal in the wild. Flipping debris on the road to Lac des Crocodiles would probably give a decent chance of finding one (and who knows what else!)

Conrau's Dwarf Gecko - These tiny but spectacularly coloured gecko are around Sangha Lodge, I'm sure. They prefer dense vegetation in sunny spots in the forest. I'll have to look harder next time.

Savannah Monitor - I've got no idea what kind of hunting pressure they might be under, but they should be present in the savannah mosaic around Lac des Crocodiles. It'd be worth wandering around the area, or at least keeping an eye out while birding.

Cameroon Stumptail Chameleon - I would LOVE to see a species of dwarf chameleon. I suspect find it is a matter of keeping a close eye on the ground while walking along rainforest trails.

Amphibians

Although the data on amphibian diversity in Central Africa is just as terrible as the data on reptiles, two things made the amphibians easier to identify. First, their diversity is a heck of a lot lower, so the number of species that could possibly be present is less daunting. Second, an academic, David Modry, had recently done a survey of frogs at Sangha Lodge, and left behind a picture book of all the species they found. This was very useful. Unfortunately the data doesn't seem to have made it into any publication yet.



Greshoff's Wax Frog

Greshoff's Wax Frog (*Cryptothylax greshoffi*) - Common on the trails around Sangha Lodge at night.



White-lipped Frog

White-lipped Frog (*Amnirana albolabris*) - Common in the swamps near Sangha Lodge at night.



Perret's Grassland Frog

Perret's Grassland Frog (*Ptychadena perreti*) - Common in the grassy areas of Bai Hokou.



Benito River Night Frog

Benito River Night Frog (*Astylosternus batesi*) - Not easy to find. I found a couple in the creek that flows down from the *Picathartes* nesting site.



Buea Screeching Frog

Buea Screeching Frog (*Arthroleptis variabilis*) - We managed to find a couple spotlighting at night on the trails around Sangha Lodge.



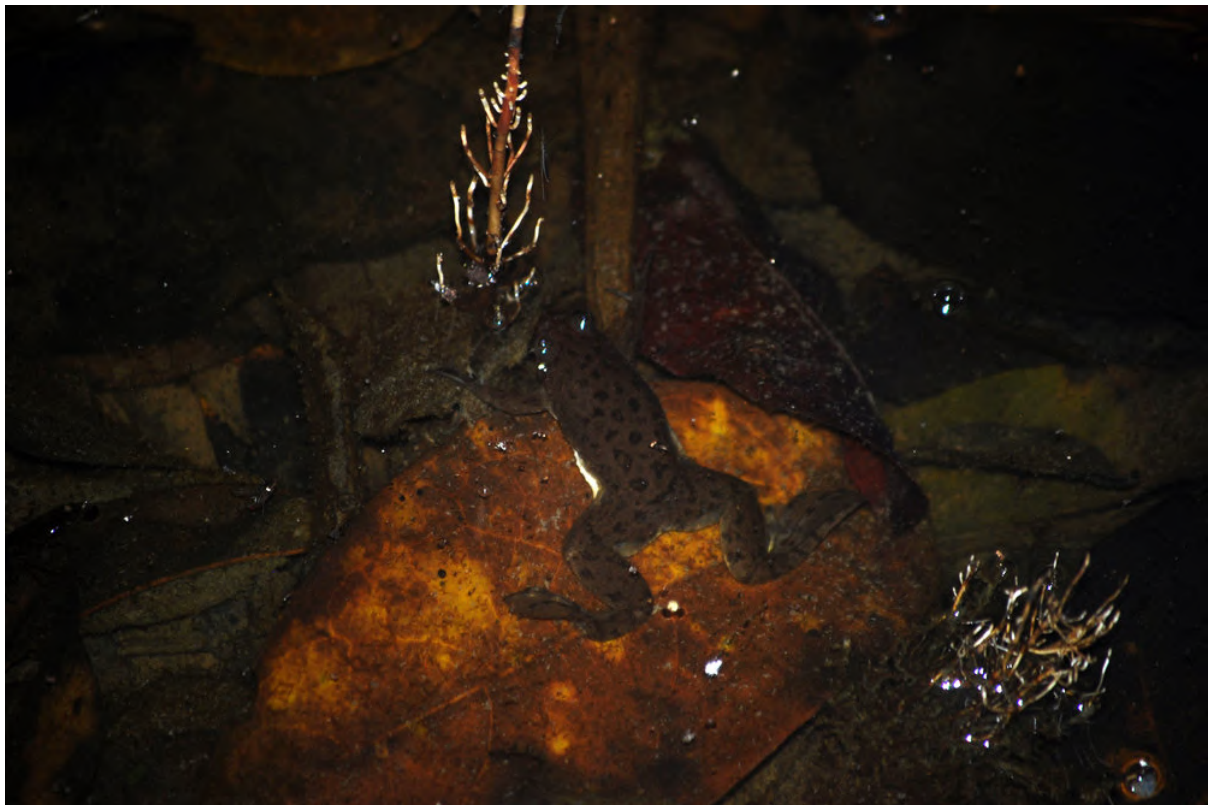
Eared River Frog

Eared River Frog (*Phrynobatrachus auritus*) - A few individuals found in the swamps near Sangha Lodge.



Oban Toad

Oban Toad (*Sclerophrys camerunensis*) - This human-associated species is relatively easy to find at night around the Sangha Lodge buildings.



Central African clawed frog

Central African clawed frog (*Xenopus power*) - This, the northernmost of the four species that *Xenopus laevis* was split into, was common in the swamps around Sangha Lodge at night. This was surprising because it is not included in David Modry's picture book. Maybe its presence is seasonal?

Can you help me identify:

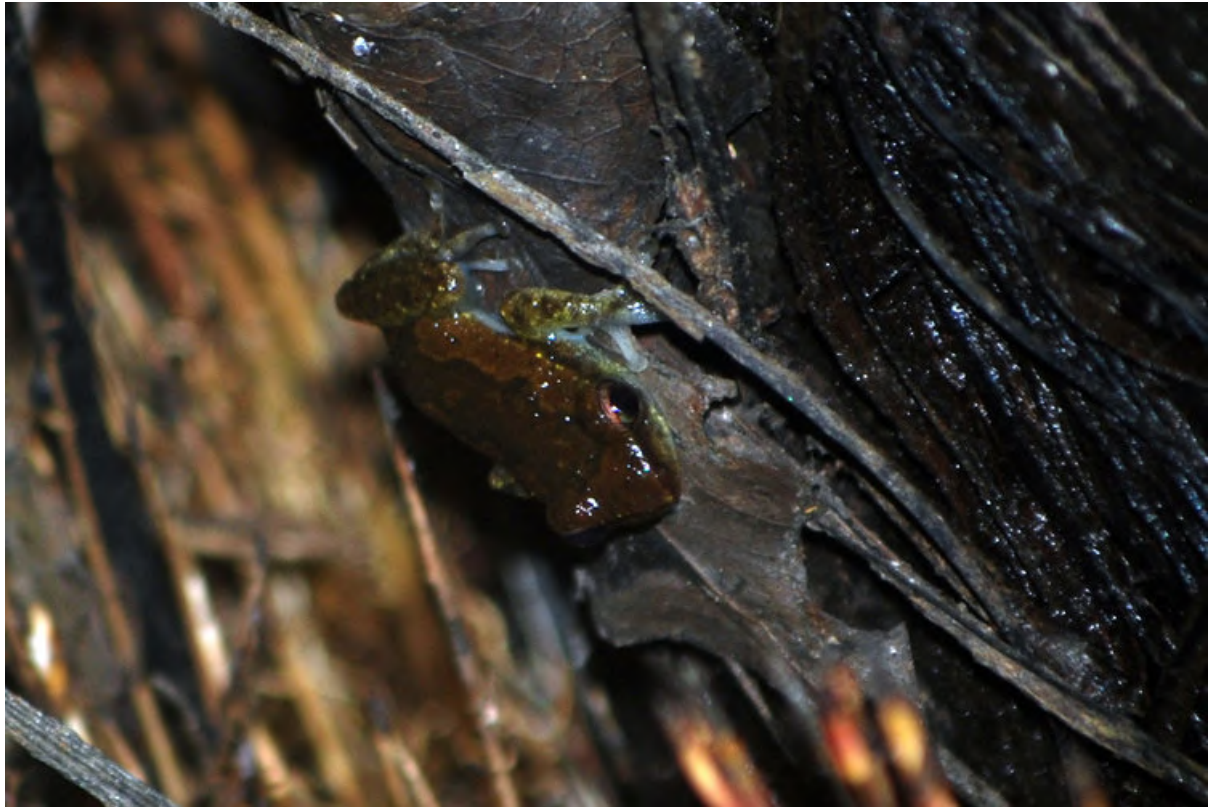


1. I think this is just a weakly patterned eared river frog. Any other opinions?



2. I'm pretty sure this is *Hyperolius brachiofasciatus* based on the description in [AmphibiaWeb](#), but identifying newly-metamorphosed froglets like this one is quite difficult. Does anyone have any insight?





3. I think this might be *Leptopelis calcaratus*? But something about it just doesn't seem to fit for that species...



4. David Modry has this listed in his book as *Hyperolius sp.* Anyone know if it's been described?

Targets for next time:

Congo caecilian - I have never seen any kind of caecilian in the wild. This terrestrial species should be pretty common in the rainforest, but I suspect we didn't get enough rain when I was there to bring them out of their burrows.

Bolifamba Reed Frog - This spectacularly coloured frog reaches its westernmost distribution in southwester CAR.

Accra Snake-necked Frog - Another spectacularly coloured frog, this one found in dryer savannah regions. Lac des Crocodiles seems like a good place to look for them, but you'd have to be there during the rains.

Cameroon Toad - Among the most beautiful of toads, this species is found in rainforests in the vicinity of large rivers, so Sangha Lodge seems like the perfect place to go looking for them! Maybe I have to spotlight more along the river's edge, as opposed to in the forests and swamps.