

Chimpanzee © Kens Canning



Okapi © Jiri Hrebicek

Build Connectivity for Endangered Wildlife in the Congo Rainforest

Despite being a critical stronghold for some of Earth's most threatened species, a carbon store second only to the Amazon rainforest, and home to over 75 million people, the Congo Rainforest is being destroyed at an alarming rate.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) holds about 60% of the Congo rainforest. But 80% is unprotected, leaving it open to mining, charcoal production, subsistence slash-and-burn agriculture, and both legal and illegal resource extraction. Deforestation in DRC has exceeded 1 million acres each year since 2016, with 2023 having the greatest loss of 1.3 million acres—an area larger than Grand Canyon National Park. The past 25 years of civil unrest and lawlessness in the Congo have blocked many global conservation efforts to save habitat for threatened species.

With support from our generous donors, Rainforest Trust has been working with local partners in eastern DRC since 2014 to protect the dense forests in the buffer zone around the 2.7-million-acre Maiko National Park and the 1.5-million-acre Kahuzi-Biega National Park to the south. These forests provide vital refuge for iconic threatened African species like African Forest Elephant, Grauer's Gorilla, Chimpanzee, Okapi, Giant Ground Pangolin and Grey Parrot.

We now have the opportunity to support our partner, Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers, in working to establish eight Community Forests (known as CFCLs) totaling 316,294 acres in collaboration with Bambuti Indigenous communities to the north of Maiko National Park. This protection will block a deforestation front approaching from the east, exacerbated by the opening of new roads and the exploitation of mineral resources.

CONNECT A VITAL RAINFOREST CORRIDOR FOR IMPERILED MAMMALS

This project will close significant gaps in protection between Maiko National Park and the 3.4-million-acre Okapi Wildlife Reserve to the north—connectivity that is crucial for wide-ranging mammals. According to the IUCN Red List, there also may be an extant sub-population of Grauer's Gorilla in or around the project area, which is yet to be confirmed on the ground.

PRESERVE THE CONGO RAINFOREST AS A CARBON VAULT

The Congo Basin is the last major tropical forest on Earth that continues to absorb more carbon than it emits, acting as a carbon "sink." This project stores 76,516,385



316,294
ACRES

\$1,879,309
PROJECT COST

\$5.94
COST PER ACRE

76,516,385 mT
CO₂ EQUIVALENTS
STORED

KEY SPECIES:

African Forest Elephant (CR),
Okapi (EN), Chimpanzee (EN),
Giant Ground Pangolin (EN),
Grey Parrot (EN)



metric tons of carbon equivalents, an amount that would be emitted by driving over 18 million gasoline-powered passenger vehicles for one year. Locking carbon up in the rainforests is the most impactful and cost-effective method there is to protect the planet from climate change.

SUPPORT INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN SAFEGUARDING FOREST RESOURCES

Our partner's mission is to secure the land and property rights of Bambuti Indigenous People and local communities for the protection and sustainable management of natural resources for present and future generations. The status of Community Forest forbids industrial activities while allowing for the artisanal use of the forest for customary purposes.



Other Rainforest Trust projects in the region:

- Save the Critically Endangered Grauer's Gorilla and Lock Up 28.6 Million Tons of Carbon
- Final Frontier for Okapi and Grauer's Gorilla in Congo

African Forest Elephant © Roger de la Harpe



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