MISSION

To conserve the okapi in the wild, while preserving the biological and cultural diversity of the Ituri forest

2020
PROJECT STAFF

President (US): John Lukas
On-Site Director (DRC): Rosmarie Ruf
Accountant (DRC): Mutahinga Mumbere Eleme
Asst. Accountant (DRC): Kambale Katsuva Julien
Program Manager (DRC): Nsafuansa Disiki Berce
Program Officer (US): Lucas Meers

AGROFORESTRY
- Muvi Yalala
- Enckoto Bameseto
- Makubuli Mwanika
- Masiyiri Mulawa
- Mpinda Tchinkunku
- Muhindo Muliwavyo
- Kasereka Tsongo
- Sambi Mukandilwa
- Lobo Lina
- Nandepa Pierre
- Bangeto Therese

INFRASTRUCTURE/MAINTENANCE
- Mbete Nguma
- Kababo Mutubule
- Panga Madro
- Sagbolo Yuma
- Paluku Kakule
- Mbusa Mughanda
- Muhindo Maliro
- Vusike Kiruzi
- Kasereka Katsuva
- Katsuva Kaposo
- Yangunapayi Makasi
- Abdala Morisho
- Baya Gbama
- Alezo Drudo

EDUCATION
- Jean Paul姆onga Kiete
- Gomo Akya
- Kasereka Kyove
- Mumbere Kayenga
- Toliba Maseko
- Carine Makonga
- Ozande Roger
- Sivunana Eric
- Kambale Mastaki
- Faustin Mbuza
- Abdoul Arim Kimakima

HEALTH CARE
- Mulowayo Katalayi
- Anzatepedanga
- Mbambu Mituho
- Yokudhu Alipa Franck
However, even in the midst of tragedies year after year coupled with dangerous living conditions, the Congolese people carry on with a smile; to me they are one of the most resilient groups of humans on the planet. The Institute in Congo for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) ecoguards and Okapi Conservation Project (OCP) staff are part of this resilient group of people, and because of this resiliency and determination, together we accomplished more in 2020 than we have in several years.

In this 2020 Annual Report you will read about the resiliency of the members of our women’s groups, who in addition to gathering firewood and water, feeding the family, and managing the household, find time to sew clothes and grow extra food to sell in local markets to take better care of their families. Our OCP staff members showed resourceful resiliency through the procurement of material and supplies and getting them to work sites over roads that are closed more often than they are open. They were able to build durable, high-quality structures that will serve the people using them for many years to come. Our construction team rebuilt five water sources that will give thousands of women and girls more time to learn new skills while keeping their families healthier.

To continue educating the people about the importance of conserving forests for okapi, our education team had to adapt to government mandates restricting public gatherings to no more than 10 people. Our educators broadened our radio network to reach many more people across the Ituri forest landscape with

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**LETTER FROM JOHN**

**PRESIDENT, OKAPI CONSERVATION PROJECT**

In DR Congo, 2020 was a year of another epidemic. While the world grappled to control a virus that killed millions, DRC moved from ending a 3-year battle with Ebola to fighting a new virus by using the same techniques used to conquer Ebola. Hand washing stations in every village, social distancing, temperature checks, and quarantines were critical preventative measures, and due to quick government action, a cooperative populace, and a rural landscape with few roads, COVID-19 has not been able to make a foothold in eastern DRC. The truth is, COVID-19 is not nearly as intense a threat to the Congolese people as attacks from rouge militias, forced migrations, and food insecurity.
expanded topics. Our resilient team traveled over rut-filled, muddy trails from radio station to radio station transmitting broadcasts that educate people on how to live sustainably on their land while leaving the forest intact for okapi.

Our Agroforestry team modified their distribution approach bringing seeds, tools and tree seedlings to the farmers rather than the farmer coming to our tree nurseries. Keeping everyone safe was the most important focus behind all our staff accomplished in 2020.

From the US side, we benefited from the generosity of LTA Research and Exploration, located in California, to organize a donation of 100,000 face shields from China to DRC for the health clinics throughout the Ituri and Haut-Uélé provinces where the Reserve is located.

Helping keep the healthcare workers safe is the best way to fight COVID-19 and other diseases affecting the people of the region. These resilient people deserve better and with your help, for which we are so thankful, we can improve their lives so they can join our efforts conserving okapi.

We are at heart devoted to conserving okapi in the wild, but we have realized over the last 34 years that without the support and active engagement of local communities to preserve the rainforest, we cannot conserve okapi. What I have observed from my several decades working to conserve wildlife is that animal populations are extremely resilient - if they have intact natural habitat with minimal human disturbance they will thrive - that is our goal for okapi which our team works toward every day.

With gratitude,

John Lukas, President
Okapi Conservation Project
BY THE NUMBERS

100,000
FACE SHIELDS DISTRIBUTED TO RURAL HEALTH CENTERS

5
FRESH WATER SOURCES BUILT FOR COMMUNITIES

OVER
89,000
TREE SEEDLINGS PLANTED

260
WOMEN PARTICIPATED IN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

112
EDUCATIONAL RADIO BROADCASTS GIVEN

3,000
CONSERVATION CALENDARS PROVIDED FOR COMMUNITIES

OVER
8,400
KILOGRAMS OF SEEDS DISTRIBUTED TO FARMERS

OVER
3,300
FARMERS ASSISTED

OVER
2,500
CAMERA TRAP IMAGES COLLECTED
the Okapi Dispensary in Epulu. The facility is readily available to receive patients, and as COVID-19 continues to threaten the Reserve where the vaccine is not available, they remain prepared to care for and initiate the quarantine process for the ill or injured. The Okapi Wildlife Reserve is fortunate to act proactively against the pandemic, however, with healthcare services limited in the region, lack of COVID-19 testing and no access to vaccinations, the threat of disease transmission remains.

Foreseeing the oncoming trials for healthcare workers and to help prevent the spread of viruses in the region, OCP rapidly began taking steps to buffer the country’s more remote but populated eastern region from the pandemic. With generous support from LTA Research and Exploration, OCP distributed 100,000 face shields to healthcare workers throughout the Ituri and Haut-Uélé provinces of northeastern DRC, where the Okapi Wildlife Reserve is located.

GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR REMOTE HEALTHCARE WORKERS

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is no stranger to viruses. Several Ebola epidemics have wreaked havoc over the past several years, and despite the virus’s presence and limited resources to prevent the spread, the Congolese people have conquered the disease each time, most recently with the Ebola epidemic in Eastern DRC ending in June 2020. But like the rest of the world in 2020, DRC was faced with another disease threat – COVID-19.

OCP has remained on the forefront of pandemic safety in the region, strengthening healthcare for staff and residents through
Coordinating a shipment of 100,000 face shields, enough to fill a 40 ft. shipping container, is no easy feat. After a 30-day voyage across the Indian Ocean from China, the face shields arrived in Mombasa, Kenya and then traveled by truck to Kampala, Uganda. They then had to be loaded into another truck and container owned by Okapi Logistics, which then traveled to the DRC border city of Bunia.

The face shields were then handed over to the provincial governments to be distributed across the two provinces with help from Samaritan’s Purse, a nonprofit that works closely with healthcare providers across the DRC. The shields were delivered to some of the most remote areas in the region, where poor road conditions often lead to long, difficult journeys.

Healthcare workers already put their own lives at risk working around the clock to save the lives of others. Giving them proper PPE is necessary to ensure that they stay safe, whether it be during this pandemic, or for future disease outbreaks to come.
SUPPORTING WOMEN TO SAVE OKAPI

Women fill a myriad of roles in the communities of the Reserve, and in a single day, women can act as water collectors, homemakers, firewood gatherers, caretakers, ICCN ecoguards, and farmers. Juggling so many responsibilities isn’t easy, and speaks to the resilience and drive of the women in this region. Working to uplift and empower the voices of women, our five Women’s Groups around the Reserve provide an opportunity for women to generate communal income through microenterprises to cover healthcare costs, their children’s education and other necessities.

The OCP Women’s Groups have been well-regarded by its members who continue to share how it improves their livelihoods and where we can focus to improve our support. The groups’ popularity leads to ever-increasing membership and improved livelihoods. Listening to these women and with support from our gracious supporters, OCP constructed two Women’s Centers - one in Mambasa and one in Epulu. The construction of the center in Epulu in 2020 comes after the popularity of the center in Mambasa 2019, which led to each one of our five women’s groups requesting a center of their own.
Living in such a remote area can make getting supplies difficult, but in the early stages of COVID-19, these masks were the only access to protection until supplies could make it across the poor roads, including our efforts to bring 100,000 face shields to the community health centers in late 2020.

Realizing the effect that women have on the protection of okapi, the rainforest, and support to the communities of the Reserve, we continue to help improve the livelihoods of women and their families to reduce pressure on the surrounding forest. Participating in Women’s Groups provides members with economic opportunities, a rainy-day fund for emergency expenses and their children’s school fees, and a place to meet free from other social responsibilities.

These Women’s Centers provide women a secure place to store their supplies and continue their work inside during unpredictable, inclement weather and shifting seasons. Before constructing these buildings, women were subject to the weather conditions for when they could meet and work, but now, they can continue uninterrupted by inclement weather, and increase their income to support their families. We continue to secure contributions to construct a Women’s Center in each of the three remaining villages where our women’s groups are located.

The women of the OWR continue adapting to the shifting government mandates to prevent the transmission and spread of COVID-19. To help provide for their communities, each women’s group began crafting face masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
The remote location of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve provides incredible opportunities to encounter wildlife. It is a place where okapi can visit your land, monkeys leap from tree to tree and African grey parrots chatter as they fly overhead. We are fortunate to be so integrated with nature, but being in such a remote location provides its challenges with poor infrastructure due in part by limited access, poor roads and difficulty in procuring supplies.

In late 2020, we completed construction on the new ICCN assistant warden’s residence (funded by a grant from USFWS), began construction on the Epulu Women’s Group Center (funded by a generous Wildlife Conservation Network donor), and constructed five clean water sources in the Mambasa and Wamba regions. All of these projects were initiated based on feedback from the community and to fulfill our mission to protect the endangered okapi and its habitat by supporting the ICCN eco-guards and local communities by investing in building their capacity and improving their livelihoods. However, the success of these construction projects is only possible because our incredible Infrastructure team, led by M’bete Nguma, knows how to navigate the complex challenges of sourcing construction materials and delivering them across some of the poorest roads in Africa.
Construction on the assistant warden’s residence began in 2019 and was completed in 2020, replacing the original residence destroyed in the attack in 2012. Since the attack, the assistant warden was operating from his home in the village of Epulu, quite a distance from the ICCN Headquarters at the Epulu Station. With security threats still present, it is important to have the assistant warden of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve close to the ICCN Headquarters giving them more oversight and faster response time in the case of a security breach or other emergency.

OCP is also investing heavily in support of the five women’s groups in villages around the OWR as women are a critical group to include in our conservation programs and disseminate our mission throughout the region. In 2020, we began construction on the Epulu Women’s Center that will not only serve as a place for the Epulu women’s group to meet, work, and develop small microenterprises, but the building will serve as the location of the Epulu radio station where OCP’s education team can broadcast their educational messages on protecting the rainforest.

The five water sources provide clean drinking water for thousands of residents of Wamba and Mambasa, including the indigenous Mbuti and a refugee camp near our base in Mambasa. Prior to the construction of these water sources, community members were forced to collect water from stagnant pools that were prone to waterborne diseases. Upon seeing the state of these sources, OCP found it imperative to improve these conditions. Providing even the most basic of needs, like access to fresh, clean water, allows people to begin thinking about their impact on the environment and ways they can help protect the rainforest, the source of their abundant drinking water.
AGROFORESTRY ENHANCES FOOD SECURITY

In response to COVID-19, our Agroforestry and Education teams quickly adapted to government-imposed restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and protect our staff and community. Our Agroforestry program is essential to the communities around the Reserve as it directly affects their ability to feed themselves and their families. Collaborating with us to implement sustainable agriculture practices, we knew we needed to continue our support for these farmers, especially with the importance of getting their crops in the ground in time for the oncoming rainy seasons.

With information about COVID-19 limited at the start of 2020, no one was sure where cases would appear next, how quickly the virus was transmitted, and no one knew how the disease would affect our communities. Not willing to risk our staff or residents, the Agroforestry Team formulated a plan to implement a no-contact delivery of seeds and supplies to farmers, and limited space on tours of our experimental gardens to ensure social distancing and limited contact to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Even with these restrictions, our agroforestry team was able to distribute and plant over 89,000 tree seedlings in 2020 - a record number of trees for us, in addition to distributing over 8,400 kilograms of vegetable seeds for local farmers.

In response to their quick and adaptive efforts, the Agroforestry Team was recognized by the Walt Disney Company with the Disney Conservation Hero award!
SIGHTINGS OF A WILD OKAPI

Victories can be hard won for wildlife conservation, and working in an insecure region while contending with a global pandemic doesn’t make victories any easier. So when reports came in of an okapi visiting a small plot of land near Epulu, we were eager to follow up and see what would bring an animal as elusive as the okapi to visit a populated area. When staff checked in with Mr. Gelo, the farmer who first spotted the okapi, they were surprised to see an okapi quietly browsing on the bean plants on his farm.

It should not be understated the rarity of seeing a wild okapi in person. There is a reason they are nicknamed the African Unicorn, and not discovered by Western scientists until 1901. In the Mbuti culture, who have shared the Ituri Forest with the okapi for over 40,000 years, the okapi’s elusiveness has given okapi the status of a forest spirit, and it is taboo for them to hunt the okapi for this reason. It wasn’t even until 2018 that OCP captured the first footage of an okapi calf in the wild via our camera traps. Even ICCN ecoguards, who patrol the Reserve over several thousand kilometers per year, consider themselves lucky to see an okapi while in the forest. Okapi in the wild are truly a rare sight to see.
Mr. Gelo participates in our Agroforestry program which helps prevent the need to use slash-and-burn agriculture within the Reserve. Slash-and-burn agriculture by small scale farmers leads to a slow advance of deforestation, reducing okapi and other wildlife habitat with each newly-cleared field. By using sustainable farming methods like nitrogen-fixing plants and crop rotation, Mr. Gelo was able to keep the forest around his farm healthy and intact, preventing the need to encroach into critical okapi habitat.

Nembongo, the local name given to the okapi, has discovered a favorability to the leaves of Mr. Gelo’s bean plants. OCP hired Mbuti to assist Mr. Gelo in planting crops that the okapi prefers to eat. Mr. Gelo’s excitement shows that OCP’s programs are helping build strong connections between the communities and the animals that share the forest. While male okapi can often have large territories, we hope Nembongo continues to visit Gelo’s field for leaves on a regular basis to document his behavior.
The Mbuti have shared the Ituri Forest with okapi for over 40,000 years. As the world continues to develop and we become more and more interconnected, it is easy for elements of culture and tradition to be lost.

When the Okapi Wildlife Reserve was first established in 1992, an important agreement between the Okapi Wildlife Reserve and the DR Congo (Zaire in 1992) was the preservation of Mbuti culture. Mbuti chiefs joined us at the table to ensure traditional territories were included within the boundaries. OCP does not take this responsibility lightly, working with the Mbuti to ensure their protection and collaborate in our conservation efforts. They are a part of the Reserve, and protecting it without including them would be a disservice to our mission and to the Mbuti.

Since the Reserve’s inception, the Mbuti have been working with ICCN and OCP to conserve the forest on a multitude of levels. They help ICCN have an ear to the ground within the Ituri Forest, letting them know about the movements of illegal poaching and mining operations. They also often serve as guides through the forest for ICCN ecoguards and our camera trap teams. Several of the Mbuti became ecoguards themselves in 2018. We ensure a direct
line of communication is kept open between Mbuti chiefs and our staff where we work together for the protection of the forest and their culture. In 2019, the Okapi Dispensary added a new ward exclusively for the Mbuti where open-air fire pits could be kept close to their hospital beds as it is a critical element to making them feel comfortable while being treated.

At the beginning of 2020, following a sighting of an okapi mother and calf by Chief Musa, the Mbuti helped us track the animals to locate their territory. Once we have established an okapi’s presence, we are able to set up camera traps to record their activity and behaviors. Very quickly they were able to find hoofprints and droppings to identify their territory. OCP and the Mbuti set up camera traps, and while the okapi mother and calf were ultimately never filmed, many other rare animals were recorded in the area.

Celebrations and ceremonies like International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples provide an opportunity for the Mbuti to share their traditions with the rest of the Reserve. Mbuti chiefs speak during each groundbreaking ceremony for a new building and traditional dance and culture is shared during World Okapi Day.

In 2020, we celebrated World Indigenous People’s Day which became a renowned event. Over 200 Mbuti from around the Reserve came together to celebrate the holiday with the rest of the communities in the Reserve. They shared their own values on wildlife and the Ituri Forest, as well as their own beliefs. Mbuti chiefs shared that it is considered taboo to harm okapi and chimpanzees in their culture, as they embody the spirits of the forest. The OCP Education team spent time with chiefs from many of the Mbuti tribes to record an oral history for use in our radio broadcasts. When the broadcasts aired during the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, we were pleasantly surprised to find an outpouring of support and interest from community members toward the Mbuti.
Okapi Conservation Project has had an established practice of employing radio broadcasting to disseminate information to as many people as possible living in and around the remote Okapi Wildlife Reserve. As the principal form of communication throughout the region, it is difficult to travel through a town or village and not hear radios playing from various homes or businesses. OCP uses this to our advantage, broadcasting news and educational information on protecting the rainforest and okapi, ways to increase crop yields in sustainable ways, reduce encroachment into the rainforest, and sharing alternative sources of income opportunities to eliminate the temptation to be involved with illegal activities that destroy the forest ecology.

In 2020 alone, 112 presentations were made twice a week over seven radio stations with topics ranging from a wide variety of subjects including:
- The cause and consequences of climate change,
- The value of the tree and nature conservation, and
- A telling of the land’s history and culture by the indigenous Mbuti.

Radio directors were eager to broadcast the content produced by OCP educators as they found the content captivated audiences, and would ask for the radio broadcasts to be replayed. Listeners took particular interest in the broadcasts focused on the Mbuti where we interviewed several chiefs to share the Mbuti’s deep connection to the rainforest, how they have lived in the forest for thousands of years, and the many recent changes to the forest they have observed and their way of life.
OCP’s experience with radio broadcasting proved critical as the growing threat of COVID-19 made its way around the world. Our broadcasts were able to quickly provide the community with important updates regarding the pandemic, sharing the latest information on preventing the transmission of COVID-19, and what to do if you show symptoms of the disease.

Because of the government restrictions that limited groups of people to 10, we could not celebrate World Okapi Day in the same fashion as previous years, but instead, we focused our efforts through radio broadcasts, focusing on ways each person can help protect okapi. After beginning in 2016, World Okapi Day spread to larger cities in DRC, including the population center of Kisangani and the capital of Kinshasa. World Okapi Day’s recognition is reaching more and more people each year, and we hope this shares with people around the world how incredible okapi are and encourages more people to help protect them.

With the astonishing success of the radio broadcasting, we invested in the effort and work toward improving the quality of broadcasts. The new Epulu Women’s Center has dedicated space for a professionally-equipped radio studio for OCP educators to produce and broadcast content that reaches the entire southern third of the Reserve. With these new capabilities, we will be able to provide conservation-focused content to a much wider audience.
2020 FINANCIALS

REVENUE

$408,100  INDIVIDUALS
$145,320  ZOOS & RELATED INSTITUTIONS
$91,744  FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS
$73,000  CASH RESERVE
$5,650  MISCELLANEOUS INCOME

$723,814  TOTAL

EXPENSES

$171,373  OCP EPU卢 OPERATIONS
$133,756  US/OCP OFFICE
$114,074  CONSERVATION EDUCATION
$95,282  INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
$78,639  COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
$74,744  HEALTHCARE
$42,845  ICCN SUPPORT
$12,737  BANK FEES

$723,450  TOTAL
DONORS & SUPPORTERS

ZOOS & RELATED INSTITUTIONS

AAZK - Greater Orlando
AAZK - Jacksonville
Beauval Nature Foundation
Bioparc de Doué-la-Fontaine
Brevard Zoo
Chester Zoo
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
Chicago Zoological Society
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden
Columbus Zoo & Aquarium
Copenhagen Zoo
Dallas Zoo
Dublin Zoo
Dvůr Králové Zoo
Fort Worth Zoo
Gulf Breeze Zoo
Houston Zoo
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens
Kölner Zoo
Lisbon Zoo
Los Angeles Zoo
Maryland Zoo at Baltimore, The
Nashville Zoo
Oklahoma City Zoo
Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium
Parco Zoo Falconara
Roosevelt Park Zoo
Sacramento Zoo
Safari West
Saint Louis Zoo
San Antonio Zoo
San Diego Zoo Global
Tanganyika Wildlife Park
Ueno Zoo
Walt Disney Company
White Oak Conservation
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wilhelma Zoo
Wroclaw Zoo
Wroclaw Zoo Foundation DODO
Wuppertal Zoo
Yokohoma ZOORASIA
Zoo Antwerpen
Zoo Basel
Zoo Bassin d’Arachon
Zoo Berlin
Zoo Leipzig
Zoological Association of America
ZooTampa at Lowry Park

FOUNDATIONS & GRANT ORGANIZATIONS

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AIR Fund
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Beagle Charitable Foundation
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CGMK Foundation
Circle of Life Fund
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Enterprise Bank Matching Gift Program
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George & Mary Rabb Charitable Fund & Louis F. Schauer Global Giving
Horne Family Foundation
Intel Match Gift Program
Lodestar Charitable Fund
Network for Good
Okapi Partners
Okapi Wines
Pfizer Match Gift Program
Poppi the Okapi
Raytheon Technologies Match Gift Program
Rochester Area Foundation
Rose & David Dortort Foundation
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The Dixit Family Gift Fund
Tusk Trust
University of Texas at Austin
US Fish & Wildlife Service
Wendy Obernauer Foundation
Wildlife Conservation Global, Inc.
Wildlife Conservation Network
Your Cause
## DONORS & SUPPORTERS

### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

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INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

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Onuk, Uran  
Ostgaard, Wendy  
Pagones, Alexandria  
Papen, Roeland  
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Pitcher, Andrew  
Poe, Jerry  
Poliitt, Nigel  
Pompa, Michael  
Porter, A.B & G.R.  
Pulos, Eloise  
Rauszus, Klaus  
Rausch, Kevin  
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Reidick, Christian  
Reinholt, Barbara  
Riazian, Maryam  
Riendeau, Nicole  
Robinson, Philip  
Rogers, Lynn  
Rogers, Becci
## DONORS & SUPPORTERS

### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

<table>
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<th>Donors &amp; Supporters</th>
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